



A Qualitative Case Study of English Tutorial School in Thailand: Teachers' and Students' Perceptions

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Abstract

English language tutorial school has gained currency in the field of English as a Second Language Teaching (ESL), leading to increasing attention in research and practices regarding the language teaching and learning in tutorial schools. The present study addressed two questions: What are the teaching methods employed in an English language tutorial school, and what are the students' and teachers' perceptions towards such methods? By examining the teaching methods in an EFL (English as a Foreign Language) tutorial school in Thailand, and how the teachers and learners perceive such methods; this study found that an orderly eclectic teaching method was employed, and the student's and the teachers' perceptions towards the method varied considerably. The result of this study suggested that there should be a combination of both traditional teaching methods and contemporary ones.

Keywords: tutorial school, EFL, teaching methods

1. Introduction

In Thailand's educational system, the English language has always been considered a necessary foreign language for Thai students. This has resulted in the proliferation of English teaching and learning among the vast majority of Thais. In addition, English plays an instrumental role in enabling many Thais to either land decent, well-paying jobs or be admitted to a premier university. An educational phenomenon that has been garnering considerable attention is the advent of tutorial schools that specialize in English language instruction. At the same time, voices have been heard concerning the role of such a shadow educational option whether it is beneficial and whether it has embraced pedagogical approaches and methods that truly "educate" Thai learners of English.

Although studies abound that examine various aspects of English language instruction in the ESL/EFL context, relatively few studies have focused on the teaching of English in a tutorial situation. (e.g. Ankrah-Dove, 1982; Applebee & Langer, 2003; Baker, 2008; Draper, 2012; Turnbull & Arnett, 2002; Wiriyachitra, 2002). Additionally, having worked for an international tutorial school herself, the researcher found that the teaching in the tutorial school could be different from normal schools, universities, and institutes in Thailand in a number of ways including different teaching methods, methods, atmosphere, teachers, and so forth. Therefore, this research investigated English as a foreign language teaching in an international tutorial school. In so doing, the researcher attempted to explore the teaching methods



employed at an international English tutorial school and the students' and the teachers' perceptions towards the teaching methods. In this respect, a well-known international language tutorial institute in Thailand was studied. The students and the teachers of the institute were selected as the subjects of this research.

2. Literature Review

This section describes the theoretical framework of this study. The framework including the concepts of the role of input and output in Second Language Acquisition (SLA), interactional hypothesis, sociocultural theory, teaching methods and approaches, and related research studies are explained below.

The Concepts of the Role of Input and Output in Second Language Acquisition (SLA)

Based on the Comprehensible Input Hypothesis (Krashen, 1982), second language (L2) learners need, not explicit grammar instruction, but considerable authentic language input that is slightly beyond their current level of knowledge ($i+1$). Over an extended period of time, L2 learners will automatically acquire the L2 provided that they keep receiving comprehensible input. Although his Hypothesis seems appealing to classroom teachers, from the research point of view, the $i+1$ construct is not feasible because of the lack of operational definition. Therefore, even though Krashen's argument might sound practical, it is not without criticism.

Figure 1 The Second Language Acquisition Model by Krashen (Cook, 1993, p. 54)

As opposed to Krashen, White (1991) suggests that incomprehensible input may be more crucial to SLA because it can provide negative feedbacks essential for learners to develop their language ability. When learners encounter incomprehensible input, they may be pushed to modify those interlanguage rules to accommodate the unknown structures. Later, Gass (1997) suggests that comprehended input should be of a greater importance because comprehended input refers to input that is understood by learners. The difference in terms of speaker and hearer control is crucial because learner controls the intake and the likelihood of input becoming intake is partially dependent on the level of control.

On the contrary, Swain (1985) argues comprehended output is also necessary because learners will acquire L2 if communicative demands urge them to produce comprehensible output, and they may test and modify their interlanguage hypothesis. Swain (1985) conducted a research study in France and revealed that, based on comprehensible input alone, learners could achieve native-like proficiency in their comprehension, but their proficiency and accuracy in production were not as good as native speakers despite years of exposure. To support this, Hamavandy & Golshan, (2015) conducted a comparative study and revealed that input-based teaching was not superior to the output-based equivalent. Therefore, it can be concluded that both input and output play important roles for learners to acquire a second language.

Interactional Hypothesis

Interaction Hypothesis was introduced by Michael Long in 1983. Long proposes that language proficiency is promoted by interaction and communication. According to Long (1983), social interaction and communication contribute to the development of language proficiency because learners will learn when they have to negotiate for meaning. Interlocutors modify their conversations, recruiting strategies such as comprehension checks, clarification checks, and comprehension requests. Nevertheless, many researchers claim that interaction should not be considered to be a

cause of acquisition since it can only set the scene for potential learning (Fang, 2010). Gass & Selinker (2008) claim that interaction may function as a setting for learning rather than being the means by which learning takes place. In addition, Ellis (1984) notes that interaction is not always positive. Interaction can make the input more complicated, or produce amounts of input which overwhelm learners. Therefore, interaction may have a complex role in second language acquisition, one that transcends the interplay between input and output.

Sociocultural Theory

Sociocultural Theory (SCT) is premised on the notion that all kinds of learning are first social and then individual. Therefore, learning cannot be separated from social interactions and relations, interaction with teachers, classmates, computer-assisted learning programs, learning materials, and interactions with native speakers outside classroom are necessary for learners to acquire an L2. Figure 1 below encapsulates the enabling roles of SCT vis-à-vis L2 learning.

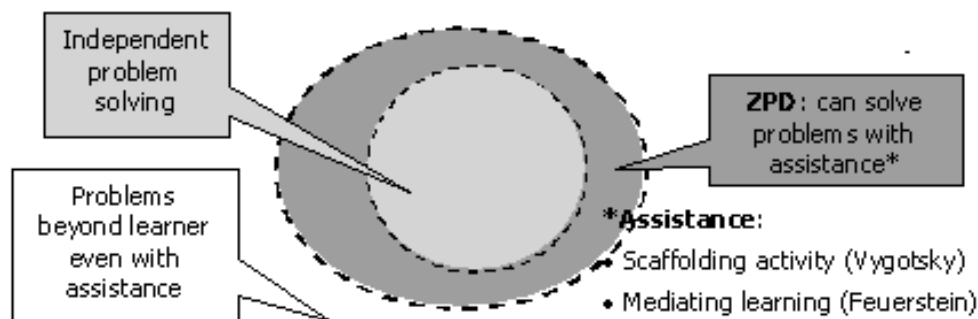


Figure 1: Zone of Proximal Development

As interpreted by Aljaafreh & Lantolf (1994), appropriation is a process of transition from intermental to intramental functioning, “a dynamic process of reconstruction and qualitative change in which the novice and the expert collaborate in constructing a mutual activity frame” (p. 467). In other words, appropriation is the goal of mediation (Boblett, 2012). This corresponded to Vygotsky’s genetic law of cultural development, which states that every stage in a child’s cultural development made two appearances, first between people on the social level (inter-psychologically), and then inside the child on an internal level (intra-psychologically) (Vygotsky, 1978). In the same way, scaffolding is based on the interaction (i.e. mediation) between expert and novice, the goal of which is the novice taking in (or appropriating) the content of a particular social interaction.

Related Research Studies

The concept international language school focused in this research is related to shadow education which refers to private supplementary tutoring offered outside the mainstream education system (Bray, 2003). In 2014, Chan & Bray (2014) conducted a research in Hong Kong and exposed that students felt that shadow education was more beneficial because it focused on examinations. Similarly, Matsuoka (2013) conducted a research study on school socioeconomic in Japan and revealed that the school composition effect became relatively weak when compared to shadow education. The researcher also pointed out that students in high-socioeconomic status (SES) schools are more likely to seek shadow education highlighting the importance



of family economic capital to obtain additional learning opportunities. In addition, Lao (2014) researched on Thai state policy on private tutoring and disclosed that the Thai state was unequivocally embracing “public-private partnership”, treating students as consumers and endorsing private tutoring as a contributor to the development of Thailand's human resources. In short, there are evidences illustration that shadow education has gained currency in Asia because students feels they can receive privileged provision of education from shadow education, and in the case of Thailand, it is supported by the government.

On the contrary, some other studies illustrated that shadow education might not suit Asian students. Yung (2015) conducted a study on private tutorial school in Hong Kong and revealed that tutorial school may not be effective in increasing students' overall English communication skills or proficiency as grammar teaching was more emphasized. Chang (2011) also conducted a contrastive research of grammar translation and communicative language teaching in Taiwan. The researcher revealed that grammar translation was more suitable for teaching grammar for Taiwanese college students. Another research study was on prospects and problems of communicative language teaching in the secondary level education in Bangladesh by Arefeen, Akter & Haque (2011). The result revealed that CLT alone could not fulfill its purpose in Bangladesh, and there should have been a mixed method based on CLT. Also in 2013, Wahyuni conducted a research study on the effectiveness of using direct method to improve students' speaking ability in Israel. The findings revealed that direct method could help students increase vocabulary and become more confident to speak up because students had to speak English in front of the class.

Apart from teaching methods and approaches, several research studies on EFL in South East Asia revealed that there is the L1 influence, Chen (2006) conducted a study on the effect of the use of L1 in a multimedia tutorial on grammar learning in Taiwan. The findings revealed that most error types occurred were closely related to L1. Similarly, Liu, Sung, and Chien (1998) also concluded that the less English proficiency learners possess, the more L1 interference was found in their English writings. The researchers conducted a research study which revealed that beginning EFL learners relied on their L1 to retrieve words more than advanced EFL learners. In short, it can be concluded that using L1 in teaching L2 is not effective because L1 transfer has impact on learners.

In addition, the use of computer and technology is also discussed in language instruction. Several researchers revealed that language instruction that combines technology such as computers and software has become popular and effective for learners. Concerning this, numerous EFL research studies (Blake, 2000; Cheng, 2003; Cheng & Liou, 2000; Egbert, 2002; Higgins, 1993; Kramsch & Andersen, 1999; LeLoup & Ponterio, 2003; Skinner & Austin, 1999; Strambi & Bouvet, 2003; Willetts; 1992; Williams & Williams, 2000 as cited in Chen, n.d.) suggest that integration of technology can improve academic performance, enhance motivation, and promote learning. Also, Lasagabaster and Sierra (2003 as cited in Chen, n.d.) conducted a similar research study to examine the attitude of 59 undergraduate students toward Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL) software programs. The findings revealed that the students had a positive attitude toward learning language with computers. However, some students felt that learning with a teacher was more effective. Grubbs, Jantarach, & Kettem (2010) conducted a research study and revealed that most English learners have positive perceptions of native speaking teachers, specifically related to oral skills (speaking, pronunciation and vocabulary

usage) and to the knowledge they bring of the English-speaking world's culture. In contrast, non-native speaking teachers are seen by students as good role models, hard-working and demanding.

Wahyuni (2013) suggested that a foreign language could be taught without translation or the use of the students' native tongue if there were elicitation that could convey direct meaning to students. According to Richards and Rodgers (1986) as cited by Wahyuni (2013), these language teaching principles and procedures of this method are as follows: 1) Classroom instruction was conducted exclusively in the target language; 2) Only everyday vocabulary and sentences were taught; 3) Oral communication skills were built up in a carefully graded progression organized around question-and-answer exchanges between teachers and students in small, intensive classes; 4) Grammar was taught inductively; 5) New teaching points were introduced orally; 6) Concrete vocabulary was taught through demonstration, objects, and pictures; abstract vocabulary was taught by association of ideas; 7) Both speech and listening comprehension were taught; and 8) Correct pronunciation and grammar were emphasized.

English Language Teaching and Learning in Thailand

Thailand has had a comparatively short history of involvement with the English language (Kirkpatrick, 2010) and is classified as an 'expanding circle' country (Kachru, 2005) where English is used as a means of intercultural communication. However, English is increasingly referred to as essential lingua franca in Thailand as it is used for cultural, commercial and intellectual purposes (Baker, 2008; 2009; Kirkpatrick, 2010). It is also viewed as a necessary skill and status symbol for the urban middle classes (Simpson & Thammasathien, 2007) but not in the case in rural or poorer communities since access to English education is limited (Kosonen, 2008; Hayes, 2010). Due to the importance of English, the Thai government has been attempting to promote English language development in the country by drafting English in the Thai national curricula as a mandatory subject in schools. However, the majority of Thai students fail to communicate in English. The problems of English language teaching and learning in Thailand are caused by factors including: (1) Teachers' insufficient English language skills and native speaker cultural knowledge; (2) lack of opportunity to use English in their daily lives; (3) university entrance examinations which demand an international tutorial teaching and learning method; and (4) interference from the mother tongue (Thai) particularly in pronunciation, syntax, and idiomatic usage, which lead to unsuccessful English teaching in the country.

This research aims to investigate and answer the research questions to enrich the field of English as a Foreign Language Teaching (EFL). In order to investigate the teaching methods employed by the tutorial school, this study will be conducted to answer two main research questions as follows:

1. What are the teaching methods employed at the institute?
2. What are the students and the teachers' perceptions towards teaching methods employed at an international English language teaching school?



3. Methods

Data collection

Semi-structured interviews: Fifteen students and three teachers were interviewed. The questions in the interview asked respondents to concentrate on the teaching methods employed at the institute and the participants' perceptions towards the advantages and disadvantages of the methods and methods. Appointments were made to interview 3 teachers and 15 students over a two month period. The interviews were conducted in the teachers' native language (English) and the students' native language (Thai) in order to gain precise information without language obstacles. The interviews were completed anonymously; names are neither collected nor recorded.

Classroom Observation: three different teaching episodes were observed. Each episode lasted approximately one hour. The teacher and students in each episode were not the same group of people. The details of classroom activities were noted and recorded while observing the classes.

Learner journals: the data gained from learner journals were analyzed to support the data gained from the interviews and classroom observation. Students at the institute were asked to write a journal after their classes over a four-week period. The participants were asked to provide details of their teaching and learning experiences and feelings towards them.

Data Analysis

Content analysis was used to analyze the data obtained from the three research instruments. Content analysis refers to the analyzing and the interpreting of any qualitative materials, especially qualitative texts: interview transcripts, documents, or case studies (Patton, 2002). One of the core meanings of content analysis is pattern which refers to descriptive findings. In this research, data were analyzed to discover the patterns which suggested the answers for the research questions.

4. Findings

In reporting salient findings of the study, the researcher attempted to do so based on the two research questions as follows

1. What are the teaching methods employed at the institute?
2. What are the students and the teachers' perceptions towards teaching methods employed at the institute?

What are the teaching methods employed at an international English language tutorial school?

Orderly Eclectic Method

The data gained from the research instruments seems to allude to an orderly eclectic way of teaching which refers to a combination of audiolingualism, communicative language teaching, and direct method. Firstly, audiolingualism was demonstrated through the use of computer and technology at the institute. Computer lessons were designed for students to practice speaking and listening. The findings revealed that utterances in the lessons were modified according to the language levels which were in consistent with Krashen's (1980) notion of comprehensible input.

From the classroom observation, there were lessons students could access through the computer program at the institute. Each lesson contains 6 sections which are: Listen, Repeat, Read, Speak, Confirm, and Write. This sequence was in congruence with Richards and Rodgers' (1986) notion of Audiolingualism which

comprises repetition, inflection, replacement, and restatement. For example, since students were required to listen to and repeat the utterances immediately after they hear them. It was apparent that Richards and Rodgers's (1986) repetition method which referred to the situation when a student repeated an utterance as soon as he or she heard it was applied in computer lesson. Moreover, students had to choose word forms that were consistent with the tenses and voices in their speeches. This was related to Richards and Rodgers' (1986) idea of inflection which referred to the situation where one word in one sentence appeared in another form when repeated. A combination of both traditional methods and contemporary ones was in evidence within each section in the computer lesson. Grammar lessons and drills are still presented in the contents of the lessons. Therefore, what seems to be new and modern here does not offer a new way of teaching and learning, rather it clings to the old way of teaching but uses technology as a tool. This means that there is no dichotomy between the use of technology and the traditional way of teaching. Instead, a combination of both to help students learn the target language effectively should be encouraged.

Another method within the orderly eclectic method of the institute is communicative language teaching. From the classroom observation, students were encouraged to speak and interact with teachers and other students in English classes that were activity-based such as cooking classes, student parties, movie trip, reading club, and so forth. Students are also required to take part in role-plays both with computer, the teachers and other students. Moreover, students were asked to participate in activities outside the institute, bringing the learners to an environment beyond the classroom so as to acquaint them with the language used in various real life situations and contexts. In addition, that students are provided with the opportunity to produce comprehended output and receive feedbacks from teachers and peers is related to Swain's (1985) Comprehensible Output Hypothesis which states that learners can learn effectively from producing output, testing their L2 hypotheses, and receiving feedbacks from their interlocutors. Therefore, students can notice the gap in the L2 production and work to stretch their interlanguage capacity through the use of CLT at the institute.

The last teaching method within the orderly eclectic method is direct method. From the data collection, it could be seen that grammar was taught inductively through the use of target language in classrooms and oral communication. When students encounter the language barriers or inability to spontaneously produce their output as there was still a gap in their interlanguage capacity, demonstration was immensely used. Instead of giving students answers immediately, teachers gave students hints or demonstrations of the words the students do not know. No direct answers were given unless there was no other means to help students understand the teaching points or vocabularies. Consequently, students were encouraged to learn and practice their communication skills in English through oral communication rather than formal learning and explicit grammar memorizing. At the institute, the target language was the prime language of instruction which was promoted through the creation of total English environment, in which students are exposed to authentic input necessary for second language acquisition to take place (Krashen, 1982). However, not all the input at the institute is authentic as students are also exposed to modified input in the computer lesson. Therefore, the input at the institute is the 'graded' input, as both authentic input and modified input are parts of the teaching at the institute.



In conclusion, the teaching method employed at an international English language tutorial school is an orderly eclectic method which is a combination of three teaching methods: audiolingualism, communicative language teaching, and direct method. Since computer is used as a tool to demonstrate traditional audiolingual teaching method at the institute, there seems to be no dichotomy between traditional method of teaching and technology, rather both should go hand in hand to help students accomplish their language goals. Similarly, there is also no dichotomy between authentic and modified input at the institute as the first half of the course contains a set of modified inputs which is followed by authentic input in the latter half. Therefore, input is still vital for language teaching at the institute, but it has to be graded input rather than either authentic input or modified input.

What are the students and the teachers' perceptions towards teaching methods employed at the institute?

From the data gained from the research instruments, the student's and the teachers' perceptions towards the orderly eclectic teaching method employed at the institute vary considerably ranging from highly positive to somewhat negative. A number of students reported that they found orderly eclectic way of teaching at the institute effective. Both the teachers and the students stated in an interview that he felt his English improved after having studied at the institute.

Student A: My English was so poor before I studied at the institute, but now my English has improved a lot. I think my English was 4 out of 10 before I came to the institute, now I give myself 8 out of 10.

Teacher A: If students come to study regularly, they will be able to improve their skills...the method itself works with all students, but it will never work for students who do not follow the methods or do not study correctly.

It can be seen that both students and teachers had positive attitude towards the teaching method employed at the institute. Many students mentioned that the effectiveness of the teaching method of the institute lied on the flexible and accessible characteristics of the computer lessons. Concerning the computer lessons, a student revealed in an interview that;

Student B: I like to study at the computer lab because I can access it whenever I want. I sometimes come to study here or sometimes study at home. It's really convenient I think that these lessons are very useful because I can practice whenever I have time.

From the classroom observation, the researcher noticed that students tended to participate more in activity-based classes. For example, students baked brownies in a class and asked their teachers when they did not know a vocabulary. In one class, students ran around the institute to ask people questions and fill their scavenger hunt sheets. Another class the researcher observed was an English movie trip at the cinema and teachers asked students questions about the movie. Students seemed to enjoy the activities. After the classes, the researchers interviewed the students and found that students felt the activity-based communicative language teaching method was

beneficial because they subconsciously learned the language and felt less anxiety. Concerning this, students revealed in their journals that

Student G: I like to learn English here because there are many activities every day. Some activities are fun like cooking and games.

Student J: My listening and speaking skills improve because I have to speak English all the time. I want to be good at English, so every time I have a question I will ask teachers and practice.

Students K: I was not so confident when I had to speak English. I used to translate from Thai to English before I spoke. Now I learn how to speak without translating because we have to speak English all the time and I get used to it, and finally I feel more confident to speak.

In addition, students revealed that they became more confident to speak English because they saw that their friends were speaking English, and that no one spoke Thai. Students felt the urge to speak English and felt less stressed when they saw that other students were speaking in English and making mistakes as well. An excerpt from the learner journal illustrated this point that;

Student L: I like to come to the institute because everybody speaks English here, so I don't feel shy or embarrassed to speak. There is nowhere else I can speak English because people around me speak Thai. So coming to the institute is like coming to a place where English can be used, like in another country.

The result indicated that using English as the only language of instruction and communication was effective in the participants' opinion. This statement supported Vygotsky's (1978) Sociocultural Theory which stated that lack of opportunity for students to use English in their daily lives holds back the process of development. Also the results supported Wiriyaichitra's (2001) research result which pointed out that Thai lack opportunities to use English in their daily life, leading to the ineffectiveness of English education in Thailand.

Many students disclosed that they found authentic input necessary for learning; therefore, studying English with native speaking teachers was reported to be effective. This is in congruence with Richard's (1986) notion of direct method. Overall, students revealed that they found that learning English with native speaking teachers is more effective because they were confident that the language use and the pronunciations were accurate. In addition, students believed that the native speaking teachers could correct their speeches and provide them with corrective feedbacks when they made mistakes which was considered to be necessary for them to acquire English. For this aspect, students disclosed that:



Student M: the teachers here are native speakers. For me it is crucial to learn English with the native speakers because they know what is actually spoken in real situations, unlike Thai teachers.

Student N: I want to improve my accent when I speak English. I can speak English but I think my accent is not so good. I want to speak English with British or American accent. So it is very important that I study with teachers from the UK or the US.

It was found in the present study that native speaking teachers were perceived as the key element of effectiveness of the teaching methods. This is in congruence with Phothongsunan, 2006; Grubbs, Jantarach, & Kettem (2010) who suggested that Thai students believed that talking to foreigners is useful in improving their English. Despite the fact that the demonstration of eclectic method through the use of computer employed by the institute was effective in helping the students learn English has been confirmed, many students revealed that using computer programs to learn English was not effective because computers could not interact with students. Some students felt disappointed to realize that they had to study with computer and receive modified input instead of studying with native speakers. Students revealed in the interviews and the journal that:

Student D: I don't like the Computer lab because it's boring. Computer cannot really talk with us. I think it is more effective and enjoyable to study and interact with a teacher.

Student E: I didn't know at first that I had to learn through computer a lot. When I came to enroll at this institute, I expected to join classes with teachers like most schools I have known. I was a bit disappointed and now I feel that my English hasn't improved at all. I don't think this is worth my money and time.

Student F: I don't think we need the computer. We can just study join the activities and learn from that. The computer is boring.

It can be seen that the participants' perceptions towards the use of computer vary tremendously from highly positive to negative. The computer-assisted learning program seemed to help learners learn more conveniently as it was available at all time; yet it failed to provide students with authentic input and responses students needed to acquire the target language. Therefore, it can be concluded that the use of computer program can be a double-edged sword since the use of computer which seems to be modern and helpful nowadays does not necessary lead to effective English learning in students' opinion. Moreover, a number of participants reported that the communication-based teaching and learning was not effective for students who were shy to speak English or lacked confidence to participate in activities conducted in English. It was observed that Thai students are passive. This fact went together with the collectivist nature of Thais, leading to the collectivistic behaviors and the tendency not to stand out of the group. As a result, some students avoided participating actively in activities and led to little or no language acquisition. Concerning this, a student revealed in a journal that:

Student H: "I don't like to study here much because I don't like to join activities. I'm always shy so I avoid speaking in front of many people. I think the institute is good for people who enjoy socializing and joining activities, but that simply isn't me."

From the interviews, both the students and the teachers said that English was the only language spoken in the institute; nevertheless, some students still spoke in Thai. These students revealed in the interviews that they felt nervous when they had to speak English in front of other people; some students felt uncomfortable speaking English because they were not used to speaking English; other students said that they worried that they would make grammatical mistakes or pronounce the words they wanted to say wrongly. Concerning this, a student said that:

Student O: I don't want to speak English because I'm afraid of making stupid mistakes in English. Sometimes it takes a long while before I can speak a sentence in English because I have to think of grammar and vocabularies. And I think my accent isn't very good because I still speak English with Thai accent.

Student P: I think the institute is good for people who have some basic knowledge in English before they come to study at the institute. I have seen many people who come here and start at Survival 1 (Beginner). I can see that they have a very hard time because everybody speaks English here. Some of them lose heart when they feel they can't speak English as well as their friends can. So my suggestion is if they want to study at the institute they should have some basic knowledge of English.

Interestingly, 3 out of 6 students who stated that they felt uncomfortable learning English in the total-English environment were from beginner levels; 2 other students were from intermediate level; and only 1 student in advance level suggested that total-English environment was ineffective for Thai students. This illustrated that some students feel they have to struggle when participating in activities conducted in English, especially when they are at the beginning stage of learning. Possibly, Krashen's affective filter which blocks the comprehensible input from reaching the LAD is still there at the institute despite the attempt to use activities to reduce anxiety and affective filter.

Apart from students' shyness to speak English which some students reported to be a result from the activity-based teaching and learning approach, a number of students disclosed that insufficient grammar teaching was also a result from this approach as well as reported by a student as follows:

Student I: It is too bad that grammar isn't focused on here. Usually we just come here to speak even when what we're speaking isn't correct. We are encouraged to speak which is a good thing, but the problem is sometimes we don't know what is correct and sometimes we just keep saying the wrong words or sentences because we see that other people speak it.



As can be seen, the institute employed mixed methods of teaching relative to each teaching scenario. Students themselves did not have any preference in terms of teaching methods. What they were concerned about most was whether they could understand the lessons. This implies that the teacher must cultivate a mindset that is not only flexible but also educational—that is, he/she must be willing to experiment with ideas and take risks. Rigidly clinging to a particular teaching method appears not healthy. Further, if the notion of learner autonomy is going to take firm roots, it will have to be adjustable, taking into consideration diverse needs and wants of the L2 learner.

5. Conclusion

The main purposes of the present study were to examine the characteristics of the teaching methods and to explore the students' and the teachers' perceptions towards the teaching methods employed at the institute. The data was collected through semi-structured interviews, classroom observation, and learner journals. The participants of this study were 15 students and 3 teachers of the institute who have studied or taught at the institute for at least 1 year prior to the study. The researcher interviewed the participants and observed the classes taught at the institute, and analyzed the journals students were asked to write and submit to the researcher. The data was collected in Bangkok, Thailand.

It was found from the study that the prime teaching method employed at the institute was the orderly eclectic method which comprised of three distinguished teaching methods in EFL which were: 1) audiolingualism, 2) communicative language teaching, and 3) direct method. The use of computer as a tool to aid teaching and learning at the institute was also present. Also, the communicative language teaching through activities was applied. Finally, the use of English as the only means of instructions and the use of both modified and authentic input were reported to be employed by the institute. For the perceptions towards the teaching methods, the findings revealed that the students' and the teachers' perceptions vary considerably from highly positive to somewhat negative.

Limitations of the Study

This study is concerned with the effectiveness of the teaching methods of the institute. The researcher had found that some students who reported that the teaching methods of the institute were effective also practiced speaking and listening outside the institute. These students reported to have practice English at home and some were particularly interested in learning English themselves, not just come to study because they were told by their parents or their bosses. For this reason, it could be seen that there were some other factors apart from the teaching methods employed at the institute that contributed to effective learning and acquiring English that this present study did not cover.

Pedagogical Implications

The results from the present study suggested that using English as the medium of instruction is beneficial for students to acquire English. Most students reported that their English improved because they had a chance to practice speaking and listening skills in the total-English environment where they could internalize their knowledge and produce their own output to test their interlanguage hypothesis. Moreover, the results revealed that the integration of the computer-assisted teaching method and the

communication-based teaching method was perceived by the teachers and the students as a double-edged sword. Using both the computer programs and activities could help students to acquire a language more effectively than the grammar translation normally used in school; however, excessive use of computer and activity-based teaching method can lead to students' anxiety and frustration.

Recommendations for Further Research

Firstly, as mentioned in the limitations of the research, the data from the interviews and the learner journals were still limited. There are two aspects of this limitation: 1) the interview questions and 2) the journals. Future research should extend the interviews questions and encourage the participants to write and submit the journals to receive more information for further analysis.

Secondly, the participants of this present study were 15 students and 3 teachers. The data gained from the interviews were limited partly due to the small number of participants. If further research is conducted in a larger group of participants, the researcher should be able to gather more information. Also, since this present study was conducted only in the institute, it could not represent all the English language tutorial schools in Thailand. Future study should be conducted focusing on a larger number of tutorial schools and participants, so that generalization could be achieved.

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