Development of English for a Communication Skill Activity Based on the Critical Thinking Approach for 2nd Year English Major Students

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ABSTRACT

The purposes of this research were to: 1) develop an activity based on the critical thinking approach for the 2nd year English major students studying in Sakon Nakhon Rajabhat University, Sakon Nakhon, Thailand in order to achieve the efficiency criteria of 75/75; and 2) compare the achievement scores of the pre–communicative skill with the post–communicative skill after using the developed activity. The sampling group consisted of 54 the 2nd year English major students studying in Sakon Nakhon Rajabhat University, Sakon Nakhon, Thailand, in the 1st Semester, academic year 2015, selected by purposive random sampling. The research tools were the activity based on the critical thinking approach for the 2nd year English major students, and the learning achievement test. The research was a one–group pretest–posttest design. The data were analyzed by mean, standard deviation, and t–test (Dependent Samples).

The results of this research were as follows:

1. The efficiency criteria of the activity based on the critical thinking approach for the 2nd year English major students were 86.36/84.00 which were higher than the set criteria of 75/75.

2. The posttest average score of English communication skill of the students after learning and using the development activity was higher than the pretest score at the .01 level of significance.

Keywords : English for communication skill, creative thinking approach.

INTRODUCTION

English has spread widely all over the world, first because of the influence of the British Empire and, second due to the pre-eminence of North American influence in the world. In Europe, English has advanced as an international language especially after World War II, leaving behind other preeminent languages such as French.

English is now used by millions of speakers for a number of communicative functions across Europe. It has become the preferred language in a number of ambits like international business or EU institutions. Time and again, it is also the language chosen for academic discussion, as most scholars face the need to read and publish in English for international diffusion.

English is also directly influencing other European languages at different levels, but it is especially obvious in the field of technical terms – lexical borrowings are often introduced in many languages without the slightest adaptation. English seems to have been adopted as the language of globalization these days as the language of global culture and the international economy (Graddol, 1997 : 4).

Proficiency in English is seen as a desirable goal for youngsters and elderly people in all EU countries and in many parts of the world, to the point of equating inability in the use of English to disability. A better knowledge of European modern languages will facilitate communication and interaction among Europeans and will promote mobility and mutual understanding.

The EU has already taken some action regarding the second/foreign language teaching and learning within the member states, and in a White Paper published in 1995 (Teaching and learning: towards the learning society) it was stated as a general objective that everyone, irrespective of his/her academic training should gain proficiency in two languages apart from their mother tongue, so that they can communicate in those languages. It supports that "Proficiency in languages helps to build up the feeling of being European with all its cultural wealth and diversity and of understanding between the citizens of Europe" (White paper, 1995 : 47).

What makes speaking a foreign language such a challenge is the number of skills that are required and which must be engaged simultaneously. To speak in a foreign language, learners must master the sound system of the language, have almost instant access to appropriate vocabulary and be able to put words together intelligibly with little hesitation. Language learners must also focus on

understanding what is being said to them and be able to respond to the other person appropriately. Speaking has the added challenge of being done in real-time. Therefore, learners' abilities and skills in oral production also include being able to plan, process, and produce the target language within a reasonable amount of time. For that reason, the structure of speech is considerably different from that of the written language, where users have time to plan, edit, and correct what they produce (Luoma, 2004).

OBJECTIVES

This research had 2 main objectives as follows:

1. To develop an activity based on the critical thinking approach for the 2nd year English major students to achieve the efficiency criteria of 75/75.

2. To compare the achievement scores of the pre–communication skill with the post–communication skill after using the developed activity.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Before English teachers adopt interventions to foster their students' critical and creative thinking, it is important that they bear in mind that a friendly, supportive and non-threatening classroom atmosphere can have a positive impact on students' motivation and language performance and that a "positive climate for learning has been identified by many educationalists as a critical factor in effective learning" (Little, 1997, p. 119). The rest of this section presents some practical recommendations that English teacher can employ, after taking into account their students' need, language proficiency, the course book, and the curriculum. Paul (1992) suggested that teachers should use cooperative learning as often as they can, speak less so that students have more time to think, think aloud in front of the students, use appropriate questions that probe various dimensions of their thinking, use concrete examples to illustrate abstract concepts, and generally design all activities so that students "must think their way through them" (Paul, 1992, p. 20). Teachers can foster critical thinking by stimulating active learning, since it can lead to effective and lasting education, by encouraging well supported conclusions, and by building from students" experiences (Chaffe, 1992).

Ennis (1985) proposed the following guidelines that teachers should adopt in order to promote their students' critical thinking skills. He argued that educators should be aware of the cognitive and mental processes that constitute critical thinking. They should

also be familiar with the tasks, skills, and situations to which these processes are applied, and use a range of classroom activities that promote these processes. Furthermore, he provided a framework for such instruction. He divides critical thinking into four components, each consisting of several specific skills, which, as he argues, can be taught to students (Ennis, 1985, p. 44-48). These are: a) defining and clarifying; b) asking appropriate questions to clarify or challenge; c) judging the credibility of a source; and d) solving problems and drawing conclusions In addition, teachers can support the development of critical thinking by asking students many questions which require students not only to seek or retrieve information, but also to analyze, logically process, apply, and evaluate it. Teachers also need to organize and implement teaching activities and tasks, a basic element of which is to involve students in supporting their answers, arguments or conclusions. In addition, supplementary materials beyond the workbook and the course book are necessary so as to cater for their students' specific needs, preferences, language ability and to take into account their own teaching situation (e.g. equipment, curricula, classroom size, etc.).
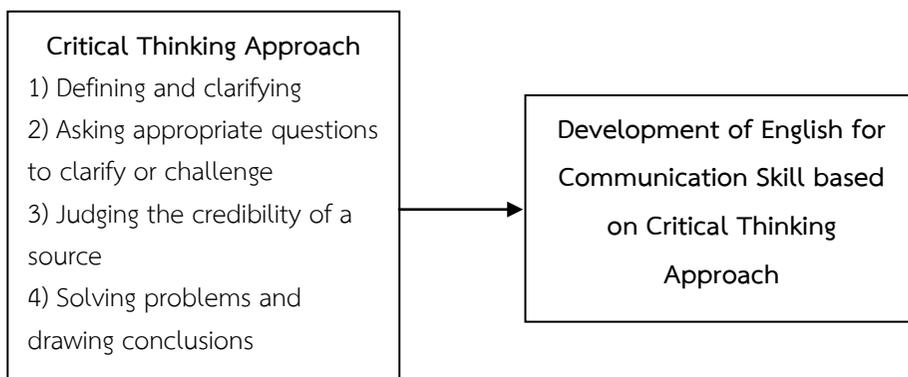
Figure 1 Conceptual Framework of this study

This research aimed to develop and evaluate the activities of English for communication skill, using the critical thinking approach for the 2nd year English major students. Researcher defined the concept of a research based approach to teach English for communication.

METHODS

This research was for the development and efficiency of activities practice English for communication skill based on the critical thinking approach for the 2nd year English instruction major students, the researcher determined how to do the research.

1. Population

2. The instrument used in the research.

3. The process of creating tools and inspection equipment.

4. Data Collection

5. Data Analysis

6. The statistics used in research.

The sampling group consisted of 54 the 2nd year English major students studying in Sakon Nakhon Rajabhat University, Sakon Nakhon, Thailand, the 1st Semester, academic year 2015, selected by purposive random sampling. The tools used in this research were two types.

1. English for communication activities based on the critical thinking approach.

2. Test the skills of English for communication.

Data Collection.

The researcher gathered data from the following.

1. Pre-tests of the skills of English for communication.

2. Activities conducted experiments using English for communication based on the critical thinking approach.

3. Post-test of the skills of English for communication with the same as pre-test.

Analysis.

1. Analyze of the performance of activities in English for communication, as the role of the 75/75 interchange.

2. Compare before and after the experiment of the ability of English for communication skill of students by t test (t-test Dependent Samples).

RESULTS

Section 1 of Data Analysis for the action of communication in English based on the active learning approach for the second-year English major students 75/75 basis.

Table 1 Mean, standard deviation, and the percentage of scores from the test. Annual Plan at 1-7 after using the activities of English for communication based on the critical thinking approach

Activities	score			
	Total	$\bar{x}$	S.D.	%
Activity 1	10	8.85	0.81	88.50
Activity 2	10	9.05	0.61	90.50
Activity 3	10	8.80	0.52	88.00
Activity 4	10	8.40	0.82	84.00
Activity 5	10	8.40	0.68	84.50
Activity 6	10	8.60	0.59	86.00
Activity 7	10	8.50	0.76	85.00
total	70	8.66	0.67	86.20

Table 1 shows that the average score of action of English for communication based on the critical thinking approach, each with more than 80 percent of all plans, the average of the 7 plans values was 8.66 and an average of the percentage was 86.20.

Table 2 Results of analysis of English for communication activities based on the critical thinking approach.

the efficiency criteria E_1/E_2		result
E_1	E_2	the efficiency criteria was higher 75/75 than the set
86.36	84.00	

Table 2. The efficiency criteria of the activity based on the critical thinking approach were 86.36/84.00 which were higher than the set criteria of 75/75.

Section 2 the skill of English for communication

Table 3 the pretest-posttest average score of English for communication skills

Range	N	Total	$\bar{x}$	S.D.	t
pretest	54	40	24.54	2.53	**16.09
posttest	54	40	31.96	1.59	

Level of significance .01 (.01 df34 = 2.457)

Table 3 The posttest average score of English for communication skills of the students after using the development activity was higher than the pretest score at the .01 level of significance.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The integration of critical thinking with the four macro skills, which is "an important step in students' development, not only as English language learners, but as scholars in whatever field they choose to pursue" (Kagnarith et al, 2007, p. 7)

The teaching and learning activities using the English for communication skills based on critical thinking approach is an effective way to practice the English for communication skill, and the strategy helps students practice English for communication more effectively. Especially, helping students recognize the importance of English listening, speak, reading, and writing. You can also use the technique of English for communication skill, in order to check their understanding both in and outside the classroom. In addition, the development of English for communication achievement effects to the student's interest in learning English.

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