

A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF PRIMARY THREE STUDENTS' ORAL INTERACTION ACHIEVEMENT LEARNING THROUGH COMMUNICATION GAMES AND ROLE PLAY AT BURAPA ENGLISH PROGRAMME SCHOOL OF THAILAND

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Abstract: This study focuses on primary 3 students' oral interaction achievement at Burapa English Programme School of Thailand (BEST). Forty students participated in this study. The study used a two experimental group design where the sample was divided in two groups. Group A students learning through communication games and role play as a teaching approach, while group B students learning through role play and communication game as another teaching approach. The purpose of this study is to investigate if there is a significant difference of learning English through two different approaches. First approach is learning English through communication games and role play and the second approach is learning English through role play and communication games. The quantitative data acquired from the experimental groups gave the conclusion that, there was a significant difference in the students' oral interaction achievement. The study concludes with recommendation for practice for teachers; they can implement different ways in teaching English as a foreign language for students to build up confidence in their English verbal skills. The study also gives recommendation for further research.

Keywords: Communication Games, Role Play, Students' Oral Interaction Achievement, Communicative Teaching Approach.

Introduction

Learning as a process involves training as well as education (Jensen, 2001). In this learning process, training and education goes hand-in-hand throughout the natural development (Garavan, Heraty, & Barnicle, 1999; Sloman, 2005). According to Garavan (1997), training can be allied with 'learning by doing' whereas education is 'learning by thinking'; development involves learning, thinking, doing and feeling. Plato and Aristotle may agree that facts and skills are integral part of the education process whereby habits and reason are equally significant in cultivating development.

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According to Aristotle, he stated that “For the things we have to learn before we can do them, we learn by doing them, we become just by doing just acts, temperate by doing temperate ones, brave by doing brave ones.” (Aristotle, 1999, p.21). Though, on the other hand, Socrates believed in the pursuit of answers through questions. He emphasized on his listeners to generate their own ideas through asking questions.

One of the first learning steps that a child will undertake is learning language. Language allows the child to communicate, build relations and enable the child to understand the world around them. Linguistics skills are picked up from interaction and the more interaction, the more words and communication techniques are available for the child to learn and understand. Huttenlocher (1998) noted that not only through communications that children are able to pick up linguistics skills but interaction with adults shall also add more advanced vocabulary and skills. At this stage, language learning is more about communicating rather than how to correctly pronounce or utter words.

The Educator must also give emphasis on learning style and strategy in order to help with the children’s development in language learning. Learning styles such as auditory or visual, global or analytic varies from child to child and the educator may implement varying teaching style to bring about greater development in the child’s language development. English is one of the main language skill required for communication in today’s world; therefore, it is important for students to learn the language and enjoy it. Students today are growing up in a society where English is used often. This study concentrates on social and communicative learning strategy and its effectiveness for children in primary three in studying English as a foreign language. Social and communicative strategies help the learner work with others and understand the target culture as well as the language. Moving away from direct instruction and memorization, other teaching methodologies such as communication games and role play have been introduced and are now being used in the classroom. Therefore, this researcher feels that with the help of using communicative games and role play, the social learning strategy can enable the students to develop English as a foreign language and allow them to communicate in real-life situations without fear. This would allow them to freely express their experiences and ideas.

Objectives

This study sought to address five research objectives as follows.

1. To identify students’ oral interaction achievement of group A students.
 - a. To identify students’ oral interaction achievement learning through communication games of group A students.
 - b. To identify students’ oral interaction achievement learning through role play of group A students.
2. To identify students’ oral interaction achievement of group B students.
 - a. To identify students’ oral interaction achievement learning through role play of group B students.
 - b. To identify students’ oral interaction achievement learning through communication games of group B students.
3. To compare students’ oral interaction achievement learning through communication games between group A and group B.

4. To compare students' oral interaction achievement learning through Role play between group A and group B.
5. To compare students' oral interaction achievement between group A and group B.

Literature Review

Five main theories with previous studies conducted were of support to this research: Experiential Learning Theory, Constructivist Theory, Theory of Language Learning, Play Theories and Importance of Play and Communicative Teaching Approach.

Experiential Learning Theory

Experiential Learning Theory by Rogers referred to an approach of learning, where a person interacts with its surroundings, including the people, animal and situation involved. It is learning by doing and may take place during a short period of time, such as during a regular scheduled class. It promoted personal study of feelings and behaviors in an educational format. It addresses the needs and wants of the learner. The highest levels of significant learning included personal involvement at both the affective and cognitive levels, learning is self-initiated and pervasive that they could change attitudes, behavior, and in some cases, even the personality of the learner. Roger's principles of experiential learning are:

1. Significant learning takes place when the subject matter is relevant to the personal interest of the student.
2. Learning which is threatening to the self is more easily assimilated when external threats are at a minimum.
3. Learning proceeds faster when the threat to the self is low.

Self-initiated learning is long-lasting and insidious (McNeil, 1990).

Constructivist Theory

Constructivist Theory by Bruner, influenced by Piaget's research on child development, Bruner proposed a cognitive development theory that emphasizes the students' active role in the learning process (Bruner, 1978). In other words, Bruner initiated curriculum change based on the notion that learning is an active, social process in which students' construct new ideas or concepts based on their current knowledge. Bruner identifies four significant aspects of effective teaching and learning: (1) attitude towards learning, (2) Knowledge presented in a way that accommodates the students' learning ability, (3) Material presented in effective sequences and (4) Carefully considered and paced rewards and punishments. Bruner held that knowledge instruction should progress from simple concepts to formulating new propositions and the manipulation of information (Bruner, 1960).

Theory of Language Learning

Theory of Language Learning by Richards and Rodgers provided the different methods and approaches on how to teach language, there was a move away from methods that focus on writing and reading to methods that stronger concentrated on the skills like communication. One of the methods that Richards and Rodgers introduced was the Competency-Based Language Teaching (CBLT). In CBLT the

focus is on the “outcomes or outputs of learning”. The major basis of CBLT is the ‘functional and interactional perspective on the nature of language which means that language learning always needs to be connected to the social context it is used in’ (Richards & Rodgers, 2001, p. 143). Therefore, language is seen as a medium of interaction and communication between people who want to achieve specific goals and purposes. This especially applies to situations in which the learner has to fulfill a particular role with language skills which can be predicted or determined for the relevant context. In connection to this Competency-Based Language Teaching shares the behaviorist view of learning that “certain life encounters call for certain kinds of language” (Richards & Rodgers, 2001, p.143). Another key aspect of both language and learning theory is the so called “mosaic approach to language learning” (Richards & Rodgers, 2001, p.143), which assumes that language can be divided into appropriate parts and subparts. Communicative competence is then constructed from these subparts put together in the correct order. All these aspects together showed that CBLT is similar to Communicative Language Teaching (Richards & Rodgers, 2001, p.143).

Communicative Teaching Approach

According to Shine and Phil (2011), Wilkins proposed the communicative teaching approach which stated that for children to acquire a foreign language, they need to get opportunities to use the language in a meaningful and appropriate way by engaging in communication task, role-plays, debates, small group discussion, and guided dialogues. The communicative approach emphasizes the ability to communicate the message in terms of its meaning, instead of concentrating exclusively on grammatical perfection or phonetics. Therefore, the understanding of the foreign language is evaluated in terms of how much the learners have developed their communicative abilities and competencies. In essence, it considers using the language to be just as important as actually learning the language. The Communicative Teaching method has various characteristics that distinguish it from previous methods:

- Understanding occurs through active student interaction in the foreign language.
- Teaching occurs by using authentic English texts.
- Students not only learn the foreign language but they also learn strategies for understanding.
- Importance is given to learners’ personal experiences and situations, which are considered as an invaluable contribution to the content of the lessons.
- Using the new language in unrehearsed contexts creates learning opportunities outside the classroom (Shine & Phil, 2011).

Teaching elementary subjects, reminds that the purpose of language is to enable students to accomplish task and communicate ideas in a social context. Inspired by Wilkins, Hymes, argued that in The Communicative Teaching Approach, language should also consist of communicative competence where there is proper usage of grammar and it should be used appropriately whenever possible (Kearsley, 2015). While Halliday briefed that language functions include an interactional function

wherein it was suggested that language should be used to create interactions with others and that language means expressing personal feelings and meanings. Halliday went further by explaining that the imaginative function of language is to use language to create a world of imagination where learners learn to conceptualize things and events around them (Halliday, 1993).

Swan states that in the Communicative Teaching Approach, there is a need to move away from learning through grammar rules and structures in a set of formal systems which involve more teacher-talk but to have a practice which comes in various teaching and learning strategies such as role-playing, information-gap activities, simulations, games and others (Swan, 1985). The researcher believed Swan has made a good point here because children get bored with rules and structures. They tend to do something that they could use more of their motor skills were they learn new things through discovery, using their imagination and creativity.

These theories played a very important part in this study as it helped deepen the understanding of teaching methods which in turn helped in answering some of the research questions of this study. Previous studies conducted related to communicative teaching and collaborative learning was also analyzed to further apprehend these theories.

Conceptual Framework

The purpose of this research was to investigate whether using communication games and role play on a group of students had better outcomes than using role play and communication games on another group of students. This study was conducted on two Primary 3 classes of the English subject over the academic year of 2015 – 2016. The design of this study was two experimental groups of students who learn English through two different approaches, which were as follows:

Group A: A group of students who study by learning through communication games for one month and followed with role play for another month during the experimental period.

Group B: A group of students who study by learning through role play for one month and followed with communication game for another month during the experimental period.

The researcher was eager to understand how the two approaches; communication games and role play would affect students' oral interaction skills. The sequence of the approach was a random decision of which approach would be done first. Both of the groups studied the exact same content during the eight weeks of instruction, and the achievement of students oral interaction were compared by running a t-test for significant differences. The conceptual framework for this study is shown below in Figure 1.

(See Figure 1 on the next page)

Procedures

Participants

The population of this study was the primary 3 students who are in BEST in Pattaya city, Chonburi province, Thailand. The sample of this research was two of the three

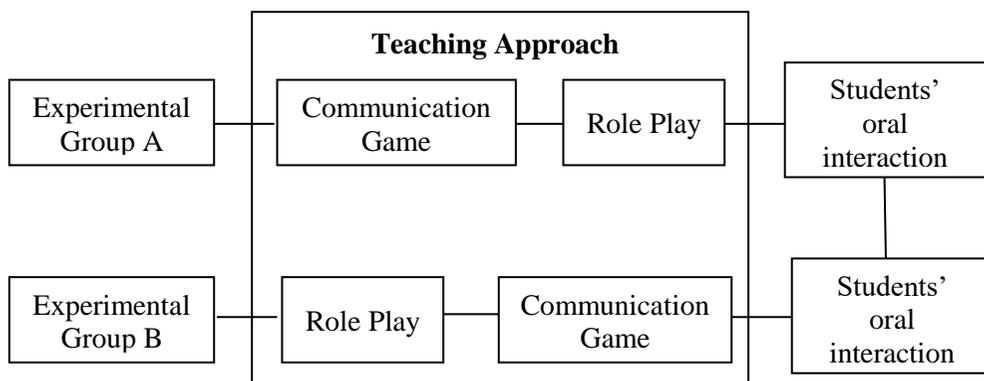


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework of The Study

primary 3 classes of BEST; which consists of 20 students in each class. The selection of the two classes was done by analyzing the final scores of the primary 3 students for their previous school year.

Instrumentation

This was a quantitative research study, which utilized both Descriptive Statistics and Independent Samples t-test. The instrument used for this research was modified by the instructor to fit the needs of the research. The instrument was an assessment report which is used by BEST teachers in every subject. This instrument is also used as a progress card which is sent back home to the parents as a record of the child's improvement over the year. For validity of the scoring, the researcher assessed the students individually, however during the assessment there was another language teacher present to examine the scoring procedure. It consisted of four sections: students' understanding and respond to routine activities, level of participation, students' understanding of the topics taught and students' core communication skills in learning English through communication games and role play. The questions under the four sections of the research instrument were used to record progress of the students. These questions are formulated according to what the students know according to the language targets based on the syllabus. In measuring the students' oral interaction, the holistic scale was used. For more accurate findings, students' oral participation was measured using a scale, where 3 is for those who participated and understands and responds most of the time, 2 for those who participated but did not respond, 1 for those who participated but didn't understand and 0 for those who did not participate and don't understand at all. It was explained to students that the purpose of these activities conducted in class was to help develop more effective ways to teach a foreign language to EFL students.

The length of the experiment was eight weeks, during which the instructor taught both groups A and B simultaneously. Each week, both groups of students have four English lessons of 50 minutes each. The material taught during the instruction was the same for both groups A and group B. Both groups were evaluated similarly, using

the same research instrument. The only difference was the order of the approach. The students in group A learned through communication games approach for four weeks and follow with role play for another four weeks. Whereas the students in group B learned through role play approach for four weeks and follow with communication games for another four weeks, during the experimental period. At the end of the experimental process both groups were assessed on their verbal skills on the activities that took place. The assessment was conducted during the experimental period and after the experimental period. The first assessment was conducted after four weeks of the experimental period. The second assessment was conducted after the whole experimental period i.e. after eight weeks. The same research instrument was used to assess the student at both times. The researcher collected the data herself. The experimental period was carried out from June 22nd 2015 to August 24th 2015. The details of the dates of the assessment are shown in table 1.

Table 1: Date of the Experimental Period and Assessments

Group	Teaching Approach	Duration	Assessment
Group A	Communication Game	June 22 nd to July 17 th 2015	July 20 th 2015
	Role Play	July 27 th to August 21 st 2015	August 24 th 2015
Group B	Role Play	June 22 nd to July 17 th 2015	July 20 th 2015
	Communication Game	July 27 th to August 21 st 2015	August 24 th 2015

Upon tabulating the results of the scores collected, the researcher computed and compared the oral interaction achievement scores of the two groups. The researcher used descriptive statistics to identify students' oral interaction achievements and used Independent Samples t-test because the researcher wanted to compare the difference in students' oral interaction achievement between two independent groups at the level of significance of 0.05.

Findings

The main findings of this study were:

- The first research objective was to identify the students' oral interaction achievement of group A students. Table 2 shows the results of Mean and Standard Deviation of Scores for group A Students' Oral Interaction Achievement.

Table 2: Mean and Standard Deviation of Scores for Students Oral Interaction Achievement (Group A)

Group	Teaching Approach	Mean	S.D.
A	Communication Games	88.80	10.59
	Role Play	93.60	6.04
	Total	91.20	7.85

- The second research objective was to identify the students' oral interaction achievement of group B students. Table 3 shows the results of Mean and

Standard Deviation of Scores for group A Students' Oral Interaction Achievement.

Table 3: Mean and Standard Deviation of Scores for Students Oral Interaction Achievement (Group B)

Group	Teaching Approach	Mean	S.D.
B	Role Play	67.40	4.00
	Communication Games	69.90	6.94
Total		68.65	3.39

- The third research objective was to compare students' oral interaction achievement learning through communication games between group A and group B. Table 4 shows the results of an Independent Samples t-test comparing the students' Oral Interaction Achievement between both groups.

Table 4: Independent Samples t-test of Group A and Group B Students' Oral Interaction Achievement Learning through Communication Games

Group	Mean	S.D.	t value	Sig (2-tailed)
A	88.80	10.59	6.67	0.00
B	69.90	6.94		

- The fourth research objective was to compare students' oral interaction achievement learning through role play between group A and group B. Table 5 shows the results of an Independent Samples t-test comparing the students' Oral Interaction Achievement between both groups.

Table 5: Independent Samples t-test of Group A and Group B Students' Oral Interaction Achievement Learning through Role Play

Group	Mean	S.D.	t value	Sig (2-tailed)
A	93.60	6.04	16.17	0.00
B	67.40	4.00		

- The fifth research question was to compare students' oral interaction achievement between group A and group B. Table 6 shows the results of an Independent Samples t-test comparing the students' Oral Interaction Achievement between both groups.

Table 6: Independent Samples t-test of Group A and Group B Students' Oral Interaction Achievement

Group	Mean	S.D.	t value	Sig (2-tailed)
A	91.20	7.85	11.79	0.00
B	68.65	3.39		

Discussion

An opening interesting finding is that students from both groups oral interaction had improved as observed by the researcher; which indicates that communicative teaching method was beneficial for students.

- As seen in table 2, the students' scores were calculated and the mean score for students who learned through communication games was 88.80 with a standard deviation of 10.59; the mean score for students who learned through role play were 93.60 with a standard deviation of 6.04. The mean score for Group A students was 91.20 with a standard deviation of 7.85. The findings showed that role play is an effective tool in promoting language development because students can converse in an informal setting without any convictions and restrictions as supported by Kellough and Roberts (2002), they mentioned that role play provide interaction with peers. It can therefore be accepted that role play indeed does have a positive effect on students' oral interaction since it's a teaching method where teachers are there to facilitate the activity (Norton, 1993).
- As seen in table 3, the students' scores were calculated and the mean score for students who learned through communication games was 69.90 with a standard deviation of 6.67; the mean score for students who learned through role play were 67.40 with a standard deviation of 4.00. The mean score for Group B students was 68.65 with a standard deviation of 3.39. The findings showed that games let players interact with each other. This statement conforms to the results as supported by Lewis and Bedson (1999). With communication games as instrument of activities where students learn to communicate with each other because they had to fill in missing information which encouraged the students to socialize and get into real conversation around a language context. Consequently, the results of this study conforms to the national survey done by The Adult Migrant Education Program (Nunan, 1988) which shows that 40% of teachers find language games effective with students and because they are communicative and they depict real life questions and situations.
- Following the results table 4 showed that there was a significant difference of students' oral interaction achievement between group A and group B when learning through communication games at the significance level of 0.05. The findings showed that, the principle of Communicative Teaching Approach will remain as true and correct for it presents a factual statement that using authentic materials, picture prompts and cue cards stimulate students' motivation and encourage interaction among them. It also suggests that a language learner needs to understand and express.
- Table 5 showed that there was a significant difference of students' oral interaction achievement between group A and group B students when learning through role play at the significance level of 0.05. The finding showed that, role play made students interact with each other as supported by the classroom research of Snell (1999), he noted that role play made students interact with each other and concluded that indeed, role play improves

students' oral interaction because it gives students a chance to express. This maybe the reason why it is stated in Constructivist Theory that play develops social and communicative skills.

- Lastly, in table 6, it showed that there is a significant difference of students' oral interaction achievement between group A and group B students at the significance level of 0.05. The findings showed that students gained valuable experience in their social interaction. These methods of instruction should be encouraged as they are effective, and are not affected by Thai culture as supported by Bulut (2010). On the other hand, the finding also showed that Bruner (1986) was right when he implied that instruction should be designed to facilitate discovery or fill in gaps where students have to go beyond the information given to them. During the experimental period, the researcher noticed that students were challenged to find missing clues on activities given and actually approached each other asking and sharing information. The finding also suggests that communicative teaching approach can be implemented in teaching EFL students. This is in contradiction to studies conducted in Thailand that came to pessimistic conclusions stating that Thai students were passive, not questioning their teachers, and not prepared to work in groups, and eventually will make them not ready to study collaboratively (Deveney, 2005; Phuong-Mai et al., 2005; Zakaria & Iksan, 2007).

Conclusion

Students who studied through communication game and role play obtained a higher achievement score as compared to students who studied through role play and communication game. This shows that the first teaching approach was different from the second teaching approach. The researcher observed that the results were as expected and that students who learned through communication games before role play performed better than students who learning through role play before. The researcher had observed the students and noticed that students were able to understand the content that was taught to them better with the first approach which was learning through communication games and then followed with role play. This was because students were able to gain knowledge on the vocabularies and respond to it according to the game structure. It was difficult for students to grasp the topics and vocabularies when they were learning through role play before understanding the content through communication games.

Recommendations

Recommendation for practice

This study has provided BEST teachers with a clearer understanding of the use of communication games and role play in teaching English to EFL students is effective. This study gives teachers a better understanding of how effective are these methods when used at different times of instruction. In the traditional teaching style, various activities have not been reflected. Therefore, the researcher believes that it is important to investigate teaching methods on primary students. Also, in language

learning, since both knowledge of the target language and skills for communication have been taught and learned, incorporating different types of activities which support specific knowledge and skill development is essential. The findings of this study can be used for students at the same grade level for other subjects like Thai language learning for foreign students. Teachers of other subjects should be vigilant if they want to implement communicative learning for students in Thailand as this study underlined that a lot of preparation is needed before the instruction takes place.

The findings of this study could also be used as feedback for the needed enrichment of curricular content and methods of language teaching for foreign language learners. The researcher recommends reading the research done by Nuntrakune and Park as they have prepared scaffolding techniques for teachers teaching Thai students in Thailand and integrated Thai culture values in collaborative learning.

Recommendation for Future Research

This study could be replicated with a larger sample size at other schools teaching English in Thailand or other countries as well on a different grade level. In order to gain more precise information on which method of teaching is more effective, then a longer time period for the research and a larger group of students should participate in the future research.

For future research the researcher recommends to separate the two teaching activities to be able to see the effectiveness of each type of activity on students' oral interaction. The researcher also recommends focusing on the effectiveness of other communication approaches like quiz bees, white board games, card games, team competition and puzzles. The researcher also recommends future researcher to change the sequence of the teaching approach that was carried out in this study, to see the effectiveness of the approach and whether there is a significant effect.

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