

PalArch's Journal of Archaeology of Egypt / Egyptology

EMPIRICAL STUDY ON ENGLISH PRIMARY TEACHERS AND ACTIVE LEARNING CLASSROOM PRACTICES IN THAILAND

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Nippita Kulachit, Prasart Nuangchalerm. Empirical Study On English Primary Teachers And Active Learning Classroom Practices In Thailand-- Palarch's Journal Of Archaeology Of Egypt/Egyptology 18(4), 2929-2942. ISSN 1567-214x

Keywords: Active Learning, Active Participation, Active Teacher, Language Teaching

ABSTRACT

This empirical study aimed to study English primary teachers and active learning classroom practices in Thailand. Data was collected through interviewing boot camp teachers and non-boot camp teachers. Questionnaires were employed to collect teachers' perceptions about concepts in active learning and active learning needs in classrooms. Data was analyzed by content analysis for qualitative study, and descriptive statistics were used for describing students' perceptions and active learning needs in classrooms. Primary English teachers have both similar and different concepts of active learning. Active learning is a term describing when teachers do instructional design allowing students to participate in learning activities. Teachers play significant roles in preparing learning materials and learning media, equipment, games, music, worksheets, and so on that allow students to focus on lessons through active participation. This empirical study indicates that teachers need to improve active learning in their classrooms at high levels of practice.

INTRODUCTION

In an era when the world is united without borders, communication is a source of power to exchange information and global news. Language needs have expanded rapidly due to various kinds of methods and tools. This affects changes in various aspects of life, such as the economy, society, politics, and learning environments. This is a huge challenge for today and causes teachers and students to develop communication skills (Sutiyatno, 2018). Students keep up with the changes and are ready to cope with the world in an age where everyone needs to meet. It is undeniable that English is more important to everyone. English is an international mediation tool used to communicate,

understand the culture of different countries, and improve necessary learning skills (Sharifian, 2017; Poedjiastutie et.al., 2018).

Teachers must be sensitive to these attributes in order for learners to have such knowledge, skills, and attributes. English can be used to solve problems of speaking, communicating, and receiving information because it is the need for modern society (Prince, 2004). Students must learn English to develop an ability to communicate what they want or to be able to express themselves to others. For a number of reasons, Thai students have a negative attitude toward learning English. They have less motivation, do not dare to speak, and do not dare to express their thoughts (Inphoo & Nomnian, 2019; Sripokangkul et.al., 2019). They also have less interaction in the learning management process with other learners in the room. Additionally, most teachers are attached to the methods of lecture learning as well as one-way communication (Akkakosn, 2016).

It was not possible to reflect the tangible and clear teaching process that could affect teaching performance and improve the quality of education. The implementation of the guidelines promotes the production and quality of teachers. English teachers who undergo training under a regional English teacher development program have not adopted English teaching techniques in accordance with the guidelines. Therefore, training is used to teach in the same way, not focus on communication skills, which results in teachers not developing processes or techniques. As a result, students lack the opportunity to develop or practice their English language skills for communication.

Teachers must create or develop effective learning management processes. By encouraging students to develop their abilities to speak English effectively, students can succeed in English communication. The researchers found that active learning provides students with an opportunity to play a role in the learning management process. This encourages learners to apply their original knowledge and experiences and connect new knowledge from mutual learning interaction to create their own knowledge (Bean, 2011). Active learning is a method of learning management and a variety of learning management techniques. Teachers can motivate and encourage learners to participate in the creation of and search for knowledge (Streveler & Menekse, 2017). Students rely on a learning management process that focuses on creating participation in learning activities and promoting learning together as a group in the classroom.

Active learning allows students to be not only involved in listening or one-way communication but to also have a chance to interact with their teacher and peers through thinking. It helps teachers to transmit information into students so that teaching is more about the development of necessary learning skills. The classroom activities include reading, speaking, drawing, writing, discussing, brainstorming, summarizing, and presenting (Bonwell & Eison, 1991; McKeachie & Svinicki, 2006; Markant et.al., 2016). With primary English teachers, the students can improve their English learning effectively. This study aimed to study the perspectives of primary English teachers toward active learning. It will be useful for teachers and educators to prepare course

or teaching strategies to develop instructional skills and also help students to succeed in learning English.

From the above, the current situation in an era of boundless world, English is increasingly important to everyone, but most primary school teachers' learning arrangements cannot reflect the effects of teaching efficiency and improving the quality of education. Researchers as supervisors are responsible for introducing And assist teachers to provide effective teaching and learning for students. Interested in empirical education in elementary school English teachers, and active learning classroom practices. To be used as information in developing curriculum of Active Learning promotion for elementary English teachers.

METHODS

The study employed qualitative reports for conducting research. Document analysis and empirical study are important techniques in research methodology. Study of academic documents, textbooks, and research are relevant to active learning. It is designed for generating ideas through conducting interviews and constructing questionnaires. The tools used in this study are documented research records. Relevant information was collected and analyzed. Then, information was studied to research objectively. The practical conditions of and the perspectives of primary English teachers toward active learning are provided in more details in the following text.

Participants

Participants for generating ideas and concepts about active learning for primary English teachers consisted of 2 groups. Group 1 consisted of 12 primary English teachers who were part of a specific selection from representatives of English teachers. Group 2 consisted of 8 English teachers who were good at English language teaching management; they were also English language teachers who graduated with a master's degree in English Language Teaching and were willing to participate in the research. Group 2 is referred to as "boot camp teachers." These groups expressed what active learning should be and should have in a classroom, and qualitative data was collected through focus group discussion.

Additionally, participants who answered the questionnaire were the primary English teachers and have been teaching in Thailand's Kalasin Province. The demographic information of respondents is described in Table 1.

Table 1. Demographic of respondents (n = 158)

Information		Number	Percentage
Gender	Male	31	19.62
	Female	137	80.38
Educational level	Bachelor	119	75.32
	Master	39	24.68
Majoring	English	66	41.77

	Non-English	92	58.23
Ages	20-35 yrs.	61	38.61
	36-45 yrs.	38	24.05
	More than 46 yrs.	59	37.34
Teaching experiences	1-5 yrs.	45	28.48
	6-10 yrs.	37	23.42
	11-15 yrs.	21	13.29
	More than 16 yrs.	55	34.81

The respondents are 80.38% female and 19.62% male, respectively. They mostly graduated with bachelor's degree, with 75.32% possessing bachelor's degrees and 24.68% with master's degrees. Non-English majors represent 58.23%. They have wide age ranges: 38.61% are 20-35 years old and 37.34% are more than 46 years old. Teachers with teaching experience of more than 16 years represent 34.81% of participants, 6-10 years represents 23.42%, and 11-15 years represents 13.29%.

Research Tools

The research tool for focus group in this study was a semi-structured interview on active learning management covering current conditions, problems, classroom management, and teaching strategies. A semi-structured interview was created, then it was validated by 5 educational experts to assess its appropriateness.

For the questionnaires for collecting data from primary teachers about active learning, researchers used questionnaires on active learning management covering the current conditions and their needs in active learning. The questionnaire was validated by 5 educational experts to assess its appropriateness.

Data collection and analysis

The researchers collected data during the conversation by taking notes and describing primary teachers' reactions to active learning based on their perspectives. The data was analyzed and checked for integrity. Qualitative data was summarized into results to be used as an illustration of the development of active learning management for primary English teachers. The statistics used were descriptive statistics for qualitative data. Percentage, mean, and standard deviation are used for data analysis. The findings were analyzed based on the five-point Likert scale ranging from 5 to 1 (highest, high, moderate, low, and lowest). The average scores were interpreted using the interpretation below.

<u>Score Ranges</u>	<u>Interpretations</u>
4.51-5.00	Highest
3.51-4.50	High
2.51-3.50	Moderate
1.51-2.50	Low

1.00-1.50	Lowest
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RESULTS

A group of primary English teachers shared their both similar and different ideas and concepts toward active learning through a focus group. The main findings can be shown in Table 2. It can be concluded that teachers have ideas and concepts towards active learning in terms of teachers doing instructional design to allow students to participate in learning activities. In addition, teachers prepare lesson plans by analyzing core curriculum, standard indicators, outlines, and learning units and by creating active learning lesson plans for helping students as well as meeting the goals of the core curriculum. Students individually learning to know the basics as well as group learning are vital activities to do in active learning classrooms. Moreover, teachers have skills in defining content, vocabulary, language function, and grammar to create lesson plans. They can also create and design lesson plans by assigning learning activities to students' interest and the classroom contexts. Additionally, they should prepare equipment – such as learning medias, games, music, songs, and worksheets – to support students' learning in active learning classrooms and therefore allow students to focus on lessons by actively participating.

Table 2 Summarizing ideas and concepts of primary teachers towards active learning

Main Topic	Primary English Teachers	Boot Camp Teachers
Instructional designs for learners to participate in learning activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DLTV (Digital Learning TV) • write a lesson plan according to its purpose • define activities that correspond to the content, teaching, media preparation, teaching equipment, and evaluation instruments • lesson plans/DLTV plans to prepare materials and teaching equipment in accordance with the content and activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • rethink curriculum standard • analyze students individually to know the basic abilities of the learner and the activities they like • define content, vocabulary, function, and grammatical skills that must be taught to students • design a lesson plan by assigning learning activities • select activities that are appropriate for learning • allow students to do different levels of learning participation • choose meaningful activities that allow learners to achieve their learning • allow students to practice their learning • prepare media, games, music, worksheets, knowledge cards corresponding to the lesson
Main topic	Primary English teachers	Boot Camp teachers

Integration between content and learning activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • select activities in order to make students learn happily • select activities relevant to the students' interests • focus on learning which students can practice their skills • organize group activities to help students learn together • organize events using a variety of activities • manage the activities for the students using technology in the classroom, such as by searching on the internet • organize activities for students to summarize what they have learned • manage learning through configuration tutorials, 3P, TPR, think-pair-share, and role play • pair familiar activities with students' needs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • organize curriculum standards and lessons materials to be taught and carefully design unit plan • YouTube and other media/ resources are joined • select activities that are appropriate for the content • design activities suitable to age of the students • focus on learning where students can practice their skills • organize a variety of activities to practice real experiences and take action • organize an event for the students to summarize what they have learned
Assessments in active learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • evaluate in a variety of ways – both individually and as a group – using work cards, quizzes, portfolios, observation, interviews, and presentations • teachers and classmates evaluate learning achievements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • evaluate by a variety of tools and methods • determine the duration and method of assessment

From Table 2, the conclusion of the ideas and concepts of primary teachers towards active learning is that contents and activities can be integrated and that teachers must recall core curriculum and necessary theoretical ideas in an active classroom. The activities in active learning classrooms should be suitable to improve the students' learning skills for vocabulary, grammar, and language functions. Active learning is active classrooms, active students, and active teachers who prepare the activities for the productive classrooms. Active assessment, which emerged from authentic assessment, is designed by teachers. The interviewing data concluded that the teachers needed to create active learning activities but that they could not conduct them because they fixed their mindsets to teach in classes based on traditional methods of

teaching and strategies. In fact, active learning can be designed and implemented in different levels for different school contexts. Teachers should begin by being clear about using active learning for students in the classrooms.

Both groups of participants mentioned the topics of active learning and classroom managements a little bit. Mostly, they mentioned using various media, think-pair-share, project-based learning, 3P, and Total Physical Response (TPR) in the classrooms. Moreover, they stated the activities they used in classes; for example, role play, mind maps, song and rhythm, story-telling, word games, and learning through internet access. The empirical reports from surveying indicated that teachers do active learning in their classroom at high levels of practices. Also, the general conditions of active learning seem to be varied in different items.

Table 3 Active learning management conditions (n = 158)

Item	\bar{x}	SD	Interpretation
1. studies foreign language learning area	3.46	0.75	Moderate
2. analyzes standards and indicators of foreign language learning area	3.55	0.73	High
3. analyzes curriculum in order to do lesson planning	3.60	0.77	High
4. designs lesson plans, objectives, content, activities, media, measurements, and evaluation tools	3.66	0.81	High
5. writes lesson plans to organize learning activities	3.49	0.69	Moderate
6. facilitates learning management based on active participation	3.98	0.78	High
7. organizes events or challenging situations and promotes and develops thinking skills to a wide range of advanced thinking	3.29	0.65	Moderate
8. allows students to participate in reading, speaking, listening, thinking, writing, and discussing together	3.89	0.81	High
9. provides students with the opportunity to learn together	3.91	0.73	High
10. encourages students to participate in self-awareness	3.44	0.59	Moderate
11. encourages students to interact with competency	3.96	0.75	High

12. measures students' learning achievement	3.66	0.79	High
13. uses a wide range of measurement and evaluation tools	3.26	0.64	Moderate
14. employs active learning in classroom	3.53	0.75	High
Average	3.80	0.82	High

Tables 3 shows active learning management conditions. English teachers expressed their opinions toward active learning at high levels. Something to be most considered from the list is that the 3 highest average number of items are that the teacher facilitates learning management based on active participation ($\bar{x} = 3.98$, $SD = 0.78$), the teacher encourages students to interact with competency ($\bar{x} = 3.96$ $SD = 0.75$), and the teacher provides students with the opportunity to learn together ($\bar{x} = 3.91$, $SD = 0.73$), respectively. However, teachers need to improve their learning management in active classrooms. The results indicated that they express feeling an expectation for active learning management in the classroom. Teachers' needs in active learning classrooms can be shown in Table 4.

Table 4. Teachers' needs in active learning classrooms (n = 158)

Item	\bar{x}	SD	Interpret
1. develop active learning management	4.23	0.85	High
2. have training; advisors to reflect on classroom management	3.91	0.83	High
3. have training; advisors to reflect on online classroom management	4.03	0.86	High
4. have training; advisors to reflect on both online and face-to-face classroom management	4.03	0.87	High
5. have active knowledge in learning management	4.16	0.86	High
6. have analytical curriculum	3.96	0.88	High
7. have basic English knowledge	4.15	0.93	High
8. have English teaching methods based on active learning management guidelines	4.05	0.93	High
9. design active learning management plan	4.08	0.98	High
10. need to be trained how to create teaching materials	3.97	0.90	High
11. need to practice active learning management	4.06	0.88	High
12. need to be trained on creating measurement and evaluation tools that conform to the indicators	4.01	0.86	High
Average	3.82	0.80	High

Table 4 shows English teachers expressing their needs about active learning management in high levels. Something to be most considered from the list is that the 3 highest average number of items is that they need to develop active learning management ($\bar{x} = 4.23$, $SD = 0.85$), they need to have an active knowledge in learning management ($\bar{x} = 4.16$, $SD = 0.86$), and they need basic English knowledge ($\bar{x} = 4.15$, $SD = 0.93$).

The teachers had additional comments and useful suggestions that may help educators to create active classrooms as good as they should be. Training should be provided by the participants to participate in the activities. There should be basic English training for teachers who do not graduate as English majors. The training might include the production of medias, teaching strategies, and other techniques to scaffold students in various kinds of methods. Also, training should be organized by measuring the participants' knowledge first and then group them according to their level of knowledge.

DISCUSSION

The empirical study reported that primary English teachers had ideas about active learning and that teachers conducted instructional design to allow students to participate in learning activities. In addition, teachers help students think and learn from what they do. Students can learn content and social surroundings through peer activities and teachers facilitating management (Sumadi & Sulthon, 2017; Parmin et.al., 2019; Demirci & Akcaalan, 2020). The heart of active learning is not only teaching strategies or techniques to scaffold students in the lesson but also the teacher's role in preparing the lesson plan and putting classroom responsibilities in decentralization of learning for all students (Markamah et.al., 2019). Though curriculum standards may indicate what students should know and should do, they are less individually aimed toward success in real life situations.

English teachers must have the necessary learning skills in defining content, vocabulary, function, grammar, and so on to enable students' success in effective communication. Communication skills do not need only content-based instruction; the lesson plan should allow students to learn in participatory communication through various kinds of methods and situations (Khamkhien, 2010; Novianti, 2016; Newton et.al., 2018). Teachers can introduce active learning with different definitions; for example, active, interactive, cognitive, engaging, emotionally involving, individualized, and independent learning (Kamegai & Croker 2017; Croker & Kamegai, 2018). The ideas and concepts of primary teachers toward active learning can be categorized into 3 domains: lesson design, classroom management, and assessment. These three domains can be discussed in terms of the perspectives that seem to be similar and different between the two surveyed groups of primary English teachers.

Boot camp teachers are trained in professional English and communicative skills. They have lesson designs not only found in curriculum framework but also made using a variety of techniques and strategies that were reported throughout the interviewing. Communication skills and lesson designs tend to be creative, productive, and effective. They prepare learning materials,

learning media, equipment, games, music, worksheets, and more that allow students to focus on lessons by active participation more than in lessons by general primary English teachers. Teachers employ technology, pedagogy, and content that is for suitable learning contexts (Drajati et.al., 2018; Wang & Dostál, 2018; Nuangchalerm, 2020). Non-boot camp teachers play their roles in teaching and learning with DLTV or traditional lesson plans by helping students learn English through teacher guidelines or manuals in their English classrooms.

Teachers are key in classroom management. Professional teachers can help students learn more, allow students to construct meaningful learning, and lead them in a democratic classroom. Boot camp teachers can design curriculum and instruction by planning around individual differences and defining content, vocabulary, functions, and grammatical skills that must be taught to students. They also design lesson plans by assigning learning activities to meet student requirements, select suitable activities that are appropriate for learning, and allow students to do different levels of learning participation. They can prepare media, games, music, worksheets, and knowledge cards corresponding to the lessons as well (Zhen, 2016).

For the integration of content and learning activities, boot camp teachers employ technology and other learning materials from social media and internet resources to engage students in active learning. On the other hands, general primary English teachers select activities that make students learn with happiness based on different contexts (Sifakis, 2019). Students have to pay attention in practical lessons in reading, speaking, writing, and listening. Teachers allow students to do worksheets and share their learning skills together, which means active learning is invited into English classrooms by chance (Dogancay-Aktuna & Hardman, 2018). Teaching strategies and techniques seem to be face-to-face or student-interacted learning is implemented. Boot camp teachers employ a variety of methods and strategies of active classrooms. Students have to practice more communication skills and learning through active participation with authentic materials. The concepts of active learning may not be differentiated, but the methods and processes are quite distinct.

In assessments in active learning classrooms, boot camp teachers express their concepts in terms of authentic assessment that evaluate students' achievements though a variety of tools and methods. While general primary English teachers evaluate in a variety of ways – both individually and in groups and by using work cards, quizzes, portfolios, observation, interviews, and presentations – that seem to be traditional, they cover learning behaviors in the lessons. The qualitative data was generalized into questionnaires between conditions and needs for setting active learning classrooms. English teachers express their opinion toward active learning at high levels, and some items indicated they sometimes do active learning; for example, studying foreign language learning areas, writing lesson plans to organize learning activities, organizing events or challenging situations, promoting and developing thinking skills for a wide range of advanced thinking, encouraging students to participate in learning

and self-awareness, and using a wide range of measurement and evaluation tools.

Yusuk (2020) studied EFL schoolteachers' perceptions and practices on the implementation of active learning in schools and found that most of the teachers had a positive perception on active learning. Teachers involved in active learning management viewed it positively. They are ready to invite active learning into their classrooms as it can make the learning experience help students in active participation and self-confidence as well. That is concurrent with the point of this empirical report on active learning. Teachers need to make their classrooms alive with participation. Educators should improve teachers who do active learning, active instruction, and active assessments so that they are active teachers who can design and develop classroom for 21st century learning. Active learning demonstrates a positive impact toward students' learning outcomes. Active learning can enhance content knowledge and higher-order thinking, promote motivational learning, develop communicative and interpersonal skills, promote learning through collaboration and interaction with other students, and develop students' self-esteem.

CONCLUSION

Primary English teachers have both similar and different concepts of active learning. Active learning is a concept of teachers doing instructional designs allowing students to participate in learning activities. Teachers play significant roles in preparing learning materials, learning media, equipment, games, music, worksheets, and more that allow students to focus on lessons through active participation. This empirical study indicates that teachers do and need to improve active learning in their classrooms at high levels of practice. Active learning should be brought into English classrooms by teachers and students in collaboration.

Research Grant

This Research was financially supported by Mahasarakham University (Gant Year 2021)

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