

Communicative Bilingual Approach in a Thai School

Goragot Butnian¹ Asst. Prof. Suwaree Yordchim²

^{1, 2}Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University

E-mail address: goragot@gmail.com

Abstract

The objectives of this study were (1) to develop the curriculum by using the Communicative Bilingual Approach; (2) to compare the academic achievement of students in the first and the fourth grades by implementation on the communicative bilingual approach before and after the experiments; (1) 52 sets of weekly conversation cards, (2) 12 sets of vocabulary assignments: seven sets for using at home and five sets for using at school, and (3) eight sets of daily activities. A quasi-experimental research with one group Pretest-Posttest design was employed to collect data and administered to nine teachers: five teachers in the first grade and four teachers in the fourth grade and 191 students: 102 students in the first grade and 89 students in the fourth grade at Suppawit School in the district of Wangnamyen, Sakaeo province, over one academic year (2013). The instruments used to collect data in this research included 52 sets of oral tests analyzed by percentage, mean value, E1/E2 efficiency index, Z-test dependent and content analysis.

The results from this experimental study revealed that (1) The designed and developed curriculum by using the Communicative Bilingual Approach in Thai school; 52 sets of weekly conversation cards, 12 sets of vocabulary: seven sets for using at home and five sets for using at school, and eight sets of activities met the standard of 80/80. (2) The research found that the mean values of the first and the fourth grade students' academic achievement after the experiments was higher than before experiments significantly at 0.05.

Keywords: communicative bilingual approach, communicative bilingual skills, bilingualism, code switching

Introduction

Communicative Bilingual approach as a means of teaching and learning the English language in Thailand has continued to flourish

throughout the country, especially in schools where English Programs are offered. This could be attributed to the Thailand Education Reform implemented between 1996 and 2007 that

emphasized teacher development through offering teachers continuous education with some form of training such as attending seminars, workshops, or conferences every two years (Wiryachitra, 2002). Preparation for the Asean Economic Community (AEC) that should take effect in 2016 also brought about the fast tracking of the English communication skills improvement among Thai people that should be seen starting in schools from teachers to students and to the community at large.

This research is anchored on Constructivist Theory of Education pioneered by Jean Piaget. This theory holds that individual perceptions are derived from the way each individual perceives, understands and interprets the world, depending on the culture from which he or she originates (Coleman, 1996). Constructivism is a view of learning based on the belief that knowledge is constructed by learners through an active, mental process of development where the teacher's role is the facilitator of this process (Gray, n.d.). As influenced by the communicative bilingual approach, students are expected to develop their English language skills by using Thai as a base language to communicate and participate in the activities using the curriculum and instructional media independently prepared by the English Program in Suppawit School. The teachers help the students realize that using both English and Thai not only in the classroom but also outside or in the community can benefit them greatly in their daily lives.

Communicative language teaching aims broadly to apply the theoretical perspective of the Communicative Approach by making communicative competence the goal of language teaching. To do this, the acknowledgment of language and communication must be interdependent. The uses of authentic materials are considered desirable in terms of giving students an opportunity to develop strategies for understanding language as it is used (Larsen-Freeman, 2007). Communicative approach is widely used in situational language teaching. It does not emphasize on grammar and vocabulary but it looks at what people want to communicate when they ask questions, making a suggestion or making an order (Littlewood, 2007). An important aspect of language learning is communicative competence. Savignon (1991) claims that it is the ability of language learners to interact with other speakers, to make meaning as a distinct from their ability to perform on discrete-point tests of grammatical knowledge. To be communicatively competent, a person has to acquire knowledge and ability in using language concerning formality, feasibility, appropriateness and performance (Hymes, 1972).

Savignon (1972) takes an interactive view of language learning. She describes communicative competence as the ability of language learners to interact with other speakers, to make meaning. She argues that the ability to convey meaning is to successfully combine knowledge of linguistic and sociolinguistic rules in communicative interaction.

Similarly to Canale and Swaine (1980), she states that “communicative competence requires not only grammatical, but discourse, socio linguistic and strategic competence” (Savignon, 1990).

Savignon (1983) calls it language analysis where language rules are presented in semantic and sociolinguistic contexts. In recent years, the weak version that also incorporates elements of structural practice and grammar teaching into their classes has become more or less accepted practice because it successfully synthesizes both grammatical knowledge and communicative principles.

Savignon (1990) suggests that task-based programs and content-based programs with the use of role-plays, games, and other communicative activities are ideally appropriate to the attainment of communicative competence. This is enhanced through participating in communicative tasks and activities because they give learners opportunities for language use, interpretation, expression and negotiation of meaning in a non-threatening atmosphere, which helps language acquisition. Long and Crookes (1992) define a task as functions such as “ painting a fence, dressing a child, filling out a form, buying a pair of shoes, making an airline reservation...In other words, a task is meant to be the hundred and one things people do in everyday life at work, at play, and in between. Tasks are the things people will tell you they do if you ask them and they are not applied linguists”. Long and Crookes' definition is suitable for

beginning levels of Thai learners because it emphasizes the authentic day-to-day activities when people use language. In this sense, pedagogic tasks for beginning level in Thailand, such as grades 5 and 6, should include authentic everyday activities such as doing things around the home, school, and community, shopping, traveling, running errands, leisure time and hobbies. These activities can deal with people and their immediate environment such as self, friends, families, others, home, everyday tasks, and chores, food, and eating, parts of the body, health, illness, hobbies and so on.

It is important that in language classrooms, teachers recognize that learners are in the process of their development. They have the capacity and potential to develop their English proficiency if teachers provide them a learning atmosphere, which is suitable for language acquisition. Second language learners always experience anxiety and loss of self-esteem when they are not able to communicate adequately in a second language (Schumann, 1975). Therefore, teachers should provide a learning environment where learners are confident to use the second language, and feel encouraged rather than inhibited to express themselves in the second language. Learners should feel that they have teachers as their supporters in their Zone of Proximal Development. Verbal rewards and other supportive expression and gestures such as smiling should be given to

learners frequently. Class environment should be relaxed, not tense.

In bilingual communities, a common verbal strategy is code switching. This is the habit of alternating two languages during a conversation. Code switching has been broadly defined as alternating between two or more linguistic varieties or codes within the same conversation (Gumperz, 1982).

In order to provide more opportunities for purposeful English use, the routine instruction and communication in classes should be in English; therefore, immediate needs for using English exist. However, when teachers and students share the same native language as in Thailand, covering the material in English is considered more cumbersome than in the native language. The beginning learners in a second language definitely do not speak or understand the second language. Therefore, code mixing and code switching are normal phenomena in English classrooms in monolingual situations. However, as learners are moving along their zone of proximal development, the distance between learners' actual development level, representing what learners can do, and the potential development level, representing what learners should be able to do in the future (Vygotsky, 1978). The amount of code mixing and code switching should be reduced.

As Zentella (1982) pointed out, both monolinguals and bilinguals have linguistic

repertoires with a variety of styles that fulfill many different functions. Monolinguals may select from different styles in the same language, while bilinguals select between different styles and two different languages. A form of monolingual code switching for example, could be a mother who tells her husband, "We have to go now," and then to her baby; "We go bye, bye." This would constitute a switch from the formal adult talk when talking to her husband, to a form of baby talk when talking to her baby. Another example would be a speaker who controls more than one dialect within one language and who can use both, depending on the speakers, an African – American person who speaks Standard English at work and Ebonics with his friends and family in his free time. As such, the term "code switching" has been applied to both monolingual and bilingual speakers. For the purposes of this literature review, code switching refers only to the switching between two languages.

Numerous English Program studies on bilingualism and bilingual language use (Cummins, 1980, 1984a, and 1984b; McClure, 1981, and Zentella, 1982) reflect the growing interest among educational researchers in addressing critical issues that affect bilingual children in US classrooms. The communication strategies of Bilingual children affect not only how these children negotiate their participation in the teaching and learning processes, but this also has an impact on the general culture of the classroom. Within the classroom teachers as

well as other non-bilingual students often have to change their own communication strategies to accommodate these students (Macias, 1999).

Research Objectives

The objectives of this study were (1) to develop the curriculum and instructional media by using the Communicative Bilingual Approach; (2) to study the academic achievement of students in first and fourth grades by implementation of the communicative bilingual approach.

Research Methodology

This quasi-experimental research focused to determine whether the communicative bilingual approach has the intended effect on the participants to the study. Three sets of teaching-learning materials were used to evaluate the effectiveness of the communicative bilingual approach, namely: 52 sets of oral tests. For clarity of the evaluation, direct observation, recorded interactions, stimulated recall, and interview were employed. This research was conducted at Suppawit School in Wangnamyen Sub-district, Sakaeo Province. There were nine teachers, 191 students or a breakdown of 102 students in the first grade and 89 students in the fourth grade and 30 parents participated in this study. Data collection

techniques were used in this study were: 1) Observation. This technique allowed the researcher to focus on how learner-centered approach was actually implemented in the classroom. 2) Analysis of documented materials was the most important resource to understand what had happened before and after data collection. Documents were produced contemporaneously with what happened, and thus they were highly reliable. Materials used for analysis included the 52 sets of weekly conversation cards, 12 sets of vocabulary comprising of seven sets for using at home and five sets for using at school and eight sets of activities. Qualitative data from the observations, interviews, and recorded interactions were analyzed using percentage, mean value, E1/E2 efficiency index, Z-test dependent and content analysis.

Findings of the study

1. Curriculum by using the Communicative Bilingual Approach

The curriculum by using the Communicative Bilingual Approach was comprised of 52 sets with 52 topics, each topic was implemented in class every week as in Table 1.

วารสารรัชต์ภาคย์ ปีที่ 10 ฉบับที่ 20 กรกฎาคม – ธันวาคม 2559
ได้รับการคัดเลือกเข้าสู่ฐานข้อมูล TCI วารสารกลุ่มที่ 2 (มนุษยศาสตร์และสังคมศาสตร์)

Table 1

Topics of 52 weekly conversation sets

Topic	Topics	Topic	Topics
1	Greeting	27	Colors of the Days
2	Personal Information	28	Body
3	Family	29	Sense
4	Subject	30	Favorite
5	Health	31	Book Bag
6	Holiday	32	Time
7	New Year	33	Location
8	Children Day	34	Vacation
9	Your Friend	35	Remember me
10	Eating	36	Buy
11	Club	37	Pet
12	Sport	38	Free time
13	Vacation	39	Planning a Trip
14	Transport	40	Hobbies
15	Social Network	41	The First Time
16	Computer	42	Coffee or Tea
17	Foreigner	43	Traveled Abroad
18	Teavel	44	Shopping
19	At Night	45	The Weekend
20	Birthday	46	The Olympics
21	Buying Food	47	Library
22	Canteen	48	Class Attendance
23	Lunch Time	49	Office

Table 1

Topics of 52 weekly conversation sets

Topic	Topics	Topic	Topics
24	Nursing Room	50	Movie
25	Scout	51	Music
26	Parent Birthday	52	Toy



Figure 1 An Example of Vocabulary Cards: Shopping

2. Vocabulary by using the Communicative Bilingual Approach

There were 12 sets of vocabulary comprised of five sets for using at home and seven sets for using at school as in Table 2.

วารสารรัชต์ภาคย์ ปีที่ 10 ฉบับที่ 20 กรกฎาคม – ธันวาคม 2559
ได้รับการคัดเลือกเข้าสู่ฐานข้อมูล TCI วารสารกลุ่มที่ 2 (มนุษยศาสตร์และสังคมศาสตร์)

Table 2

Topics of Vocabulary: at home & at school

Topic	At HOME	Topic	At SCHOOL
1	Bedroom	1	First Aid
2	Dining Room	2	Canteen
3	Garage	3	On the Bus
4	Living Room	4	Classroom
5	Washroom	5	Toilet
		6	Library
		7	Office

At HOME in the **BEDROOM**

words	reading	Meaning	words	reading	Meaning
bed	เบ็ด	 เตียงนอน	alarm clock	อะลาม คล็อก	 นาฬิกาปลุก
pillow	พิลโลว์	 หมอน	lamp	แลมป์	 โคมไฟ
blanket	แบล็งเก็ท	 ผ้าห่ม	comb	โคม	 หวี
mirror	เมียร์เรอร์	 กระจกเงา	clothe	โคลท์	 เสื้อผ้า
hook	ฮุก	 ขอแขวนเสื้อ	lipstick	ลิปสติค	 ลิปสติค
hanger	แฮ็งเกอ์	 ไม้แขวนเสื้อ	powder	พาวเดอร์	 แป้ง

Figure 2 An Example of Vocabulary at home : In the Bedroom

วารสารรัชต์ภาคย์ ปีที่ 10 ฉบับที่ 20 กรกฎาคม – ธันวาคม 2559
ได้รับการคัดเลือกเข้าสู่ฐานข้อมูล TCI วารสารกลุ่มที่ 2 (มนุษยศาสตร์และสังคมศาสตร์)

3. Activities by using the Communicative Bilingual Approach

There were eight sets of activities developed for the Communicative Bilingual curriculum as shown in Table 3.

Table 3

Topics of eight sets of daily activities

Topic	Activities	Topic	Activities
1	Question Pill	5	Easy Reading / Short Story
2	Egg	6	Riddles / Picture Talk
3	Math / Color / Shape	7	Spelling Pill
4	Newspaper / Brochure cut-out	8	CD Clock



Figure 3 Examples of Students' Activities

4. Students' learning achievement .05 by the post-test results are higher than the pre-test one ($\bar{X} = 261.6372$, and $\bar{X} = 239.5196$), as in Table 4.

4.1 The 102 students in the first grades were able to improve themselves in terms of their English skills. The research found that the students' learning progress increased significantly different at

Table 4

Compare learning achievement in studying curriculum through communicative bilingual approach of the first graders

Period	Mean	S.D.	Z	P. Value
Pre-test	239.5196	40.2848	-70.7981	.000
Post-test	261.6372	33.6260		

4.2 The 98 students in the forth grades were able to improve themselves in terms of their English skills. The research found that the students' learning progress increased significantly different at

.05 by the post-test results are higher than the pre-test one ($\bar{X} = 266.6292$, and $\bar{X} = 237.5730$) as in Table 5.

Table 5

Compare learning achievement in studying curriculum through communicative bilingual approach of the forth graders

Period	Mean	S.D.	Z	P. Value
Pre-test	237.5730	36.6838	-86.8032	.000
Post-test	266.6292	30.4038		

Conclusion and Recommendations

The results of this study help to recognize the communicative bilingual approach's effectiveness in teaching and learning English in a Thai school. The use of conversation and vocabulary cards for home, school and daily activities have facilitated the good grasp of communicating in different situations given that the students used Thai as their base language and English, the target language. Further, the communicative bilingual approach allowed the students to switch from Thai to English and vice-versa to express themselves understandably in and outside the classroom.

It should be maintained that this study used “communicative bilingual” approach in that there were not many research on this subject as far as the researcher exhausted the available prints and online resources dealing with the same. According to Anugakul (2016) said that students agreed with dependent, collaborative, participant and independent learning styles at a high level while they agreed with competitive and avoidant learning styles at a moderate level. It is recommended that further studies be pursued to have a more meaningful and robust exposé on communicative bilingual approach.

เอกสารอ้างอิง

- Anugakul. G., Wongsothorn. A., Yordchim. S., & Person K. (2016). Learning Styles of Students at Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University. *Research and Development Journal Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University*, 8(1)(Suppl.)
- Canale, M. and Swain, M. (1980). *Theoretical bases of communicative approaches to second language teaching and testing*. Applied linguistics.
- Coleman, H. (1996). *Shadow puppets and language lessons: interpreting classroom behavior in its cultural context*. In H. Coleman (Ed.), *Society and the Language Classroom*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Cummins, J. (1980). Psychological assessment of immigrant children: Logic or intuition? *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*, 1, 97–111.
- Cummins, J. (1981b). Age on arrival and immigrant second language learning in Canada: A reassessment. *Applied Linguistics*, 1, 132–149.

- Cummins, J. (1984). *Bilingualism and special education: Issues in assessment and pedagogy*. Clevedon, UK: Multilingual Matters.
- Gumperz, J., J. (1982). *Language and social identity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Hymes, D. H. (1972). *On communicative competence*. In Pride, J. B., & Holmes, J. (Eds.), *Sociolinguistics*, 269–293. Baltimore, USA: Penguin Education, Penguin Books Ltd.
- Larsen–Freeman, D. (2007). *Techniques and principles in language teaching*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Littlewood, W. T. (2007). *Communicative language teaching* (27th ed.). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Long, M.H., & Crookes, G. (1992). *Three approaches to task-based syllabus design*. *TESOL Quarterly* 26/1, 27–56. DOI : 10.2307/3587368
- Macias, R. F., et al. (n.d.). *Summary report of the survey of the states' limited English proficient students and available educational programs and services, 1996–1997*. Washington, DC: National Clearinghouse for Bilingual Education.
- Savignon, S. J. (1972). *Communicative competence: An experiment in foreign language teaching*. Philadelphia: The Centre for Curriculum Development, Inc.
- Savignon, S. J. (1983). *Communicative competence: Theory and classroom practice. Texts and contexts in second language learning*. Massachusetts: Addison–Wesley Publishing Company.
- Savignon, S. J. (1990). *Communicative language teaching: Definitions and directions*. In J. E. Alatis (Ed.), *Georgetown University Round Table on Language and Linguistics* (pp. 207–217). Washington, D. C.: Georgetown University Press.
- Savignon, S. J. (1991). *Communicative language teaching: State of the art* *TESOL Quarterly*. Schumann, J. (1975) *Affective factors and the problem of age in second language acquisition*. *Language Learning*.
- Schumann, J. H. (1975). *Affective factors and the problem of age in second language acquisition*. *Language Learning*, 25(2), 209–235.
- Widdowson, H.G. (1987). *Teaching language as communication*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Wiriyachitra, A. (2002). *English language teaching and learning in Thailand in this decade*. *Thai TESOL Focus*.

วารสารรัชต์ภาคย์ ปีที่ 10 ฉบับที่ 20 กรกฎาคม – ธันวาคม 2559
ได้รับการคัดเลือกเข้าสู่ฐานข้อมูล TCI วารสารกลุ่มที่ 2 (มนุษยศาสตร์และสังคมศาสตร์)

Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). *Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Zentella, A. (1982). *Code-switching and interactions among Puerto Rican children*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Zentella, A. C. (1997). *Growing up bilingual*. Malden, MA: Blackwell.



Name: Mr. Goragot Butnian

Address: 52 Moo 9 Wangnamyen Sakaeo 27210 Thailand

Education: Master of Education Management Bangkok Thonburi University

Work: Director of Foreign Office, Saimit School Group
School Director, Suppawit School