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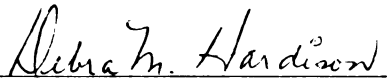
CHANGES IN TEACHING ENGLISH
AFTER THE EDUCATIONAL REFORM IN THAILAND

presented by

Lakhana Prapaisit

has been accepted towards fulfillment
of the requirements for

Ph.D. degree in English


Major professor

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**CHANGES IN TEACHING ENGLISH AFTER THE EDUCATIONAL REFORM
IN THAILAND**

**By
Lakhana Prapaisit**

A DISSERTATION

**Submitted to
Michigan State University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of**

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Department of English

2003

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ABSTRACT

CHANGES IN TEACHING ENGLISH AFTER THE EDUCATIONAL REFORM IN THAILAND

By

Lakhana Prapaisit

Learning reform has been proposed in Thailand as it is clearly specified in the national educational act of 1999 that the learning and teaching of all subjects at all levels shall be based on a learner-centered approach. A learner-center approach is new to Thai learners, teachers and educators who have been familiar to rote learning, and memorization. Therefore, it is important to investigate how a learner-centered approach has been defined and implemented in the classrooms teaching English.

This study used four different methods: document analysis, observations, interviews and stimulated recalls to triangulate the result of the study. The findings of the three research questions are following:

It was found that policy makers, policy distributors, supervisors and teachers had similar definitions of a learner-centered approach. All mentioned that the goal of teaching and learning was to develop learners to their optimal level. Learning and teaching activities were designed to meet learner's needs and interests. However, they all had different concepts of a learner-centered approach in terms of the implementation of a learner-centered approach in the classroom. The policy makers emphasized five major roles teachers should take in order to meet learners' differences. On the other hand, the

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Ministry of Education had its own interpretation of a learner-centered approach. In this interpretation, teachers' roles were decreased and learners' roles were increased. All supervisors and teachers received knowledge through policy distributors.

How did these three teachers actually teach English in their classrooms? Based on classroom interaction patterns in the three classrooms, it was found that none of the three teachers used group work or pair work, which is the most important feature of communicative language teaching. The three teachers were highly teacher centered, especially Teacher A who used 99 % of her class time in whole class activity. Teacher B and C are less teacher centered because of the effort of decreasing whole class activities, and the use of activities such as Total Physical Response, and singing. However, they were trained to use only drill activities not communicative activities; as a result, there were no communicative activities or communicative tasks.

The use of target language in these three classes was not high. None of them used English more than 50%. The avoidance of using the target language was due to teachers' low English proficiency, teachers' lack of confidence, and learners' low proficiency.

These teachers reported these problems in implementation of a learner-centered approach: standard of teacher education, knowledge of a learner-centered approach provided, lack of training for teachers, supervisor qualifications, amount of administrative support, proficiency of learners. These teachers specified their personal problems such as heavy teaching load, low qualification and unsupportive working environment.

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To accomplish the goal of getting a doctoral degree, one needs tremendous help, support, and love from many people in one's life. I have been very fortunate to be able to get all needed from many wonderful people in my life.

Thanks first go to the Ministry of University Affairs of Thailand and Prince of Songkla University for their support. Without them, this research would not have taken place.

Thanks particularly to my academic advisor, Dr. Debra Hardison, and the committee members, Dr. Charlene Polio, Dr. Geneva Smitherman, and Dr. Douglas Campbell who have guided this research with their knowledge, wisdom and insight. Thank you very much.

Many thanks to my supportive and loving family who has taken good care of our father so that I can continue my education. To Arthur & Cheryl Walker, for being the most wonderful host family that one could have. Thank you all.

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Finally, thanks to the teachers of English and supervisors of English teachers who offered their time to participate in this study. Thanks to all.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES	viii--ix
LIST OF FIGURES.....	x
CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION	1
1.1. Significance of the Study	1
1.2. Reform in Learning and Teaching English	2
1.2. Research Questions	8
1.3. Working Definition of a Learner-Centered Approach	9
CHAPTER 2 REVIEW OF LITERATURE	11
2.1. English Teaching and the Changes in Thailand	11
2.2. The English Curriculum	14
2.3. Teacher Education in Thailand	22
2.4. The Status of English	28
2.5. Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)	29
2.6. Challenges for Teachers in the Implementation of CLT	36
2.7. A Learner Centered Approach	45
CHAPTER 3 METHODOLOGY	52
3.1. Thai Administrative System	52
3.2. Participants	55
3.2.1. Background of Participants	55
3.2.2. Details of Participants	63
3.3. Data Collection Techniques	67
3.4. Procedure	71
3.5. Data Analysis	74
3.6. Units of Analysis for Observation	76
CHAPTER 4 FINDINGS OF DOCUMENT ANALYSIS	80
4.1. Findings of Document One	82
4.2. Findings of a Half hour Lecture on a Learner-Centered Approach	85

4.3. Findings of a One-Day Conference of a Learner-Centered Approach	88
4.4. Findings of the Publication by the Curriculum and Instruction Development Department, the Ministry of Education	90
 CHAPTER 5 OBSERVATIONS AND STIMULATED RECALL OF THREE TEACHERS	 92
5.1. Findings of Observations and Stimulated recall of Teacher A	92
5.1.1. Teacher A's Observation 1	93
5.1.2. Teacher A's Observation 2	96
5.1.3. Teacher A's Observation 3	98
5.1.4. Summary of Teacher A's Observations	98
5.2. Findings of Observations and Stimulated recall of Teacher B	100
5.2.1. Teacher B's Observation 1	101
5.2.2. Teacher B's Observation 2	105
5.2.3. Teacher B's Observation 3	108
5.2.4. Summary of Teacher B's Observations	112
5.3. Findings of Observations and Stimulated recall of Teacher C	112
5.3.1. Teacher C's Observation 1	113
5.3.2. Teacher C's Observation 2	114
5.3.3. Teacher C's Observation 3	115
5.3.4. Summary of Teacher C's Observations	118
 CHAPTER 6 INTERVIEWS WITH TEACHERS AND SUPERVISORS	 119
6.1. Interviews with Three Teachers	119
6.1.1. Findings from an Interview with Teacher A	119
6.1.2. Findings from an Interview with Teacher B	124
6.1.3. Findings from an Interview with Teacher C	128
6.2. Interviews with Supervisors	130
6.2.1. Findings from an Interview with Supervisor 1	131
6.2.2. Findings from Interviews with Supervisor 3	133

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6.2.3. Findings from an Interview with Supervisor 4	137
6.2.4. Findings from an Interview with Supervisor 5	140
CHAPTER 7 FINDINGS OF RESEARCH QUESTION 1	143
CHAPTER 8 FINDINGS OF RESEARCH QUESTIONS 2 AND 3	162
8.1. Research Question 2	162
8.1.1. Participant Organization in Three Classes	163
8.1.1a Teacher A's class	165
8.1.1b Teacher B's class	171
8.1.1c Teacher C's class	176
8.1. 2. Target Language Use in the Classrooms of the Three Teachers	182
8.1.3. Summary of Findings of Research Question 2	187
8.2. Research Question 3	188
CHAPTER 9 DICUSSION AND PROPOSED PLANS	197
9.1. General Discussion	197
9.2. Proposed Plans for Improvement: Modifications of Master's Degree, Adjustment of Pre-Service Program and Entrance Examinations.	205
9.3. Conclusion	209
Appendices.....	210
Bibliography	216

LIST OF TABLES

Table 2.2. Details of the English Curriculum of 1996 for Introducing Self and Others	18-19
Table 3.1. Schedule for Getting Permission Before the Observations and Interviews with Teachers and Supervisors	211
Table 3.2. Teachers' Demographic Information	64
Table 3.3. The Observations of Each Teacher	70
Table 3.4. Schedule for Observation of Three Teachers and Interviews with Three Teachers and Five Supervisors	212-213
Table 3.5. Table of Data Collection and Analysis	75
Table 7.1: Definition of a Learner-Centered Approach by Agents	144
Table 7.2: The Implementation of Concepts of a Learner-Centered Approach by Policy Makers (ONEC) and Policy Distributors (MOE)	146
Table 7.3: Concepts of a Learner-Centered Approach Perceived by Supervisors and Teachers.	157
Table 8.1. Percentage of Observed Time for Different Participation Patterns of the Classes of the Three Teachers	163
Table 8.2. Activities used in the Three Classes	181

Table 8.3. Amount of Target Language (English) and Native Language (Thai) Used by Three Teachers	182
Table 8.4. Speech Acts Used by Three Teachers	184

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1.1. The Model of How a Learner-Centered Approach Is Communicated to Teachers	4
Figure 2.1. Time Frame for Teaching and Learning English and Educational Changes in Thailand.	12
Figure 4.1. Model of How a Learner-Centered Approach Is Communicated to Teachers.	81
Figure 4.2: “The Play-Book”, lesson plan from the Ministry of Education	87

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Chapter One

Introduction

This chapter is dedicated to the significance and background information of this research. This research was conducted to examine what teacher and teacher trainers think about a learner centered approach, how grade 5-6 English teachers actually teach English, and what problems they face when they apply a learner-centered approach. It first describes the significance of the study, then the reform in learning and teaching English in Thailand. It will describe the drive for education reform in the country, and the preparation of English teachers for the changes. Finally, it states the research questions.

1.1. Significance of the Study

Due to the dramatic changes in globalization, technology, communication, and telecommunication, including the forceful competition in trade, Thailand has realized the need to prepare its people to cope with the changes and the competition. To do so, the educational reform put in place as a national agenda the National Education Act of 1999. The guidelines of the act stipulated that the learning and teaching of all subjects at all levels shall be based on a learner-centered approach. The Ministry of Education is the major agent responsible for providing teachers and teacher supervisors who have been familiar with a teacher-centered approach with the knowledge and teaching skills for a learner-centered approach.

This study is designed to investigate how a learner-centered approach has been defined and implemented in the classrooms teaching English. The findings will be very

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valuable for the researcher, who also works as a teacher educator with the responsibility of providing learning program and training which is more relevant and effective in meeting English teachers' needs in Thailand. This information will also be valuable for authorities in the Ministry of Education of Thailand and in teacher-training institutions to make better decisions and give more support in terms of teacher training and workshops to in-service English teachers of grades 5-6. There is no doubt that Thai learners of English will benefit the most from the positive changes in classrooms. In addition, information about these teachers' problems and accomplishments might be useful to other teachers and researchers and contribute to a better understanding of how changes should be introduced and successfully implemented.

Throughout this dissertation, there are many quotes taken from Thai research or literature; the translation from Thai to English by the researcher will be presented in square brackets.

1.2 Reform in Learning and Teaching English

Globalization where everyone can reach anyone has resulted in interconnected, highly complex, and rapid changes in the economics, technology and culture of every country in the world. In the midst of these changes, English is an important medium of communication. Thailand has to cope with the demands of these complex changes, and expects education to help the country to cope with the changes. However, the educational system, which stresses the importance of memorization, cannot equip Thai people to cope with changes in society. When one looks particularly at English language teaching and learning in the country, Thai learners lack the ability to communicate in oral or written

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English after graduation from universities. These unsuccessful learners have led to the dissatisfaction with the teaching and learning of English. The Thai government has realized that the lack of active skills in using English has occasionally put Thailand regionally and internationally in an inferior position, both in politics and in economics (*The Economist*, 1998 p. 43- 44). There has been the realization that educational reform is a must in the country. Wasi (2000) explains that education through rote learning or focusing only on memorization will not enable Thai people to face and cope with problems, because focusing only on subject matter separates learning from the realities of life and the complexities of society. All agencies involving education worked closely to reform and successfully put in place the National Education Act of 1999. The Act focuses on two major agenda: learning reform, and administration and management reform.

Learning reform is the key to this educational reform. A teacher-centered approach is no longer the desirable approach to prepare Thai people for the new century. To ensure desirable characteristics of future learners, ["child-centered learning has been promoted by all educational agencies concerned"] (Office of the National Education Commission, Office of the Prime Minister, 2000, p. 104). Figure 1.1 shows the model of the knowledge of a learner-centered approach set by policy makers, and then distributed to teachers by the Ministry of Education.

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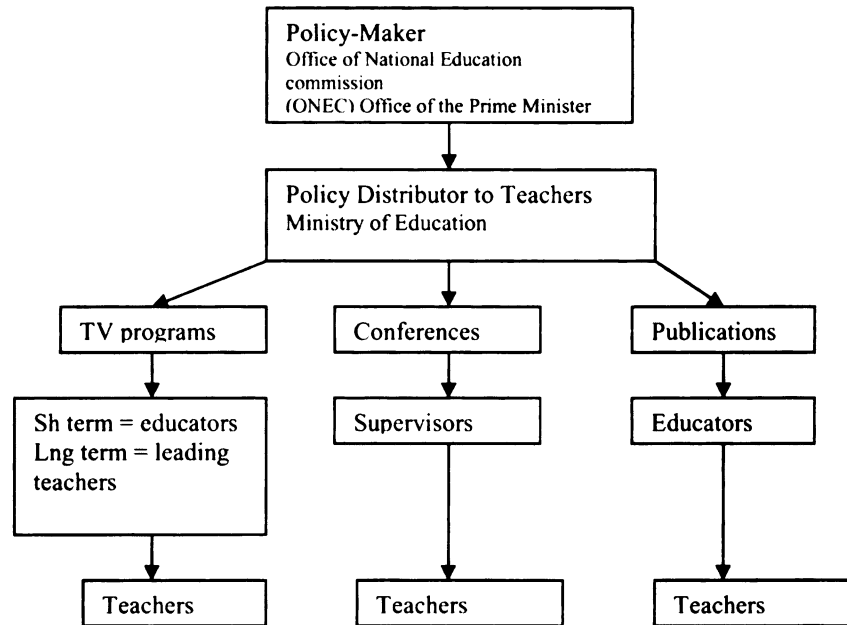
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Figure 1.1. The Model of How a Learner-Centered Approach Is Communicated to Teachers



(Sh. stands for short; Lng. for long)

The policy makers set the guiding principle of a learner-centered approach for all agents. The Ministry of Education has been responsible for delivering the knowledge of a learner-centered approach to teachers through three channels: 1) TV programs, 2) a one day conference, and 3) a publication. The TV programs consisted of two major components: The short-term program and the long term programs. The short term program was aired eight times during July17-September15, 2000, consisting of lectures on theoretical knowledge of the learning reform by eight different scholars from the Ministry of Education. One of the eight was particularly focused on how to teach based on a learner-centered approach. The long-term programs were examples of a learner-centered approach implemented in classrooms by teachers on different subjects. These long term programs were aired on different television channels many times a week.

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The second resource was a one-day conference on a learner-centered approach provided to teachers of all subjects by supervisors at the provincial primary education office. Finally, the third resource was a publication produced by educators from the Department of Curriculum and Instruction Development, the Ministry of Education.

In addition to the learning reform, since 1995 the Ministry of Education has encouraged the teaching of English as a foreign language starting from grade 1 (7 years of age), which had been previously launched and disregarded due to the unqualified English teachers.

Before the reform, English language had been taught starting from grade 5, mostly by teachers who had studied English as a minor or major in college. When teaching English starting from grade 1 was reinstated, the urgent need was to provide English training for in-service grade 1-4 teachers who did not have English knowledge, and had never taught English, and to improve their knowledge of English and their ability to understand and be able to use a learner-centered teaching approach.

So far, only grade 1-4 primary English teachers have been provided with the official training from either the Office of Provincial Primary Education or the Office of District Primary Education. English teachers of grades 5-6 have not had the official training, nor have English teachers in secondary schools. This is in contradiction to the written policy of the Ministry of Education, which specifically stated [“all teachers should have the opportunity to attend an in-service training program at least once every five years, ...and in-service curriculum orientation for grades 1 to 6 annually”] (Office of National Primary Education, Ministry of Education, 1997, p. 31-32). An explanation provided by the supervisors who are in charge of teacher training for English teachers is

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that [“there is no budget left for teacher training for grade 5-6 English teachers”.] (Nimnamo, L. March 23, 2001; Thammakhawan, K. April 2, 2001; Duangkhan, T. April 10, 2001; Kittiphumchai, Y. April 30, 2001, personal communication)

Although English teachers of grades 5-6 had not been provided with training sessions on a learner-centered approach, they were all required to watch the TV programs, through a distance-learning project, participate in a one-day conference on educational reform and the change of learning process from a teacher-centered approach to a learner-centered approach. According to the report from the Ministry of Education, the results of the conference, and the distance learning project through satellite, are satisfactory. Teachers are more confident to teach English, and have positive attitudes towards learning and teaching English (Piandsri, 1998).

The Office of National Primary Education realized that grade 5-6 English teachers had not been officially trained after the reform; as a result, in early 1999 all English teachers of grades 5-6 were required to take an English proficiency exam to see if they had enough knowledge to teach English. The content and level of the exam was of grade 12. The results of the English teachers in the capital area ranged from 35-96 correct out of 100 (Kittiphumchai, 2001). This result was considered satisfactory (General Education Department, Ministry of Education, 1997).

Similar to the result of teachers' English proficiency, a report to the Ministry of Education shows that approximately 74 percent of primary schools report having adopted learner centeredness (Worawan Na. Ayuthaya, 1996). Moreover, research in the area of teaching and learning English in the country shows that Thai teachers used a

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Communicative Language Teaching Approach in their classrooms a great deal (Srisunt, 1988; Buasomboon, 1983; Sudsawad, 1991; Panluck, 1992; Niyamapa, 1995).

On the other hand, the Department of Curriculum and Instruction Development conducted the national educational quality assessments at primary level (grade 6) on the following subjects: Thai language, English, Mathematics, Social studies, Work-Oriented Education, Physical Education, and Management. The standard exam was sent to each Provincial Primary Education Office (PPEO), then the committees appointed by each PPEO were in charge of the administration of the exam to grade 6 students in each school in their areas. The results of the exam showed 47.94 percent of all grade 6 students in the country could not pass the English test (General Education Department, Ministry of Education, 1997).

The report of this assessment is compatible with Rungnak (1985), Worachaitak (1984), and Tirapo (1983), who confirm that grade 6 pupils' English proficiency is poor, and the number of students who get low grades in English is higher and higher every year. This should be an indicator that the implementation of learner-centeredness is not as effective as reported by Worawan Na. Ayuthaya (1996).

Moreover, the research studies conducted by Srisunt (1988), Sudsawad (1991), Panluck (1982), Buasomboon (1983), Niyamapa (1995), and Worawan Na. Ayuthaya (1996), which report that English teachers have used communicative language teaching a lot, share one common characteristic. The research instruments used were either questionnaires or interviews. None of these researchers went to English classrooms and observed how the teachers actually taught in their classrooms.

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The present study was conducted to investigate how grade 5-6 English teachers actually teach English, and what teachers and teacher-trainers think about a learner-centered approach. Grades 5 and 6 were suitable for study because learners had already passed the preparatory level (grade 1-2) and literacy level (3-4); at grades 5-6, learners are supposed to be proficient in fundamental English such that they have enough vocabulary and basic grammar to communicate meaningfully.

1.3 Research Questions

The questions that motivated this study were:

1. What were the conceptions of a learner-centered approach by policy makers, teacher training personnel and grades 5-6 English teachers?
 - Were their conceptions of a learner-centered approach similar or different?
 - What were the similarities or differences?
2. To what degree did grades 5-6 English teachers actually implement a communicative language teaching approach in their classrooms?
 - What were the major characteristics of their teaching?
 - Was it communicative language teaching?
3. What facilitated or hindered teachers in using communicative language teaching?

There are many types of research methods, and each has different advantages and disadvantages. This study used four different methods of qualitative inquiry: document analysis, observations, interviews and stimulated recalls to triangulate the results.

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Document analysis was used to examine how the term “a learner-centered approach” has been defined by policy-makers and policy-distributors. It particularly focused on documentary material such as the National Educational Act, the English curriculum, research studies, reports, books, and video-tapes of short and long distance learning provided by the Ministry of Education. The observational technique made it possible to have first hand experience of what actually happened in the classrooms. Interviews and stimulated recall aimed to obtain teachers’ stories from their own unique situations in their own words and at their own pace. These teachers’ perspectives made an understanding of the situations clearer, and provided additional information through which they could voice their opinions.

1.4. Working Definition of a Learner-Centered Approach

The policy makers, the Office of National Education Commission, have provided a definition of a learner-centered approach with specific requirements of what teachers in general should and should not do in their teaching. On the other hand, the policy distributors have their own interpretations of the definition with different characteristics of teachers’ and learners’ roles. The concept of a learner-centered approach has been in a state of confusion. It is therefore important to provide the working definition of a learner-centered approach used in this study.

This study attempted to investigate how English teachers actually implemented a learner-centered approach in their classrooms; therefore, it used a definition of a learner-centered approach related to communicative language teaching (Nunan, 1985; Savignon, 1983).

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A learner-centered approach is an approach where learners' needs and interests are primary. Second language learners learn a second language in order to improve their communicative competence. In a learner-centered approach, learners' communicative competence is developed through communicative activities or tasks. In these activities or tasks, learners use English communicatively and meaningfully in pair-work or group-work. A learner-centered teacher uses English to communicate with learners in order to provide the most English exposure to them.

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Chapter Two

Review of Literature

This chapter is first devoted to an overview of English teaching and changes in the English curriculum. It will describe the first introduction of the teaching of English in Thailand from 1861 until the present. It illustrates the English curriculum and the adjustment of the English curriculum over time. However, the teaching and learning of English has been criticized heavily for its ineffectiveness in producing competent learners because only the written curriculum, not the teaching behaviors of English instructors had been changed to cope with social changes. Next, the chapter will describe teacher education in Thailand which is responsible for producing teachers of English for elementary and secondary schools. English teachers are expected to change although they have not been well prepared to do so during their pre-service education. The chapter also presents the status of English in Thailand where high prestige is given to people with the knowledge of English, followed by a summary review of the relevant literature of communicative language teaching and learner-centeredness. Overall, this chapter presents the recent position of communicative language teaching and learner-centeredness in the field of teaching and learning a second language.

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2.1 English Teaching and the Changes in Thailand

Figure 2.1 Time Frame of Teaching and Learning English and Educational Changes in Thailand.

1996 to present	Resume English teaching starting from grade 1 in schools that are ready in terms of English teachers
1978	English teaching reinstated beginning at grade 5
1977	Elimination of English teaching in elementary schools
1962	Primary education including English compulsory for all children
1960	English teaching starting from grade 1
1898	English teaching first started in public schools
1861	English teaching only for the royal family

The teaching of English in Thailand started during the reign of King Rama IV (during 1861-1869), who hired Anna H. Leonowens, an English teacher, and John H. Chandler, an American teacher, to teach the royal children. The purpose was to communicate with the imperial troops, maintain the independence of the country, and pursue higher education abroad with the Kings' Scholarship (Sawaswadee, 1991). The teaching method was the Direct Method or Natural Method where the native speakers used English as the medium of instruction because “[the teacher could not speak Thai language, the teacher used only English and the text books were all in English]” (Vachirayanwarorod, 1961). English education was available only to a small group of people, namely, the royal family.

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The first educational reform of Thailand took place in 1892 during the reign of King Rama V (Danaitamonute, 1999) when the Thai educational system was changed to conform with the western educational system in which the King had been educated. The traditional teaching, once performed only in temples and palaces, was moved to schools where teachers conducted the teaching. The Direct Method was still used in schools where native speakers taught. In 1898, English was first taught by Thai teachers in some schools, and the Grammar Translation Approach was first used as the way to deliver knowledge. The purpose of learning English was still to get higher education. However, speaking skills were sufficiently emphasized because of the small number of students in the classrooms (Sawaswadee, 1991). The educational system, once under the administration of the king, was transferred to the Ministry of Education. The skills focused on were translation from Thai to English and vice versa, reading, dictation, and essay writing. Kriangkraipetch (1983) wrote that according to the Act of Testing of English, learners were tested on the following skills: reading, writing, translating English into Thai and vice versa, grammar and mathematics. In higher levels, the following skills were added such as essay writing in English, describing things in English, and knowledge of literature, commerce and geography.

The second reform took place in 1974, when the first constitution was handed to the people of the country during the reign of King Rama VII. Scholars pleaded for the educational reform to be compatible with the political and social changes (Danaitamonute, 1999). The National Education Commission was then formed to take responsibility for the detailed policy of the reform. However, the written policy was barely implemented due to the instabilities in the political situation of the country. There

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was no change in English teaching in schools. The teaching of English was still under the influence of the Grammar Translation Approach. In 1952, the Aural-Oral Approach was used in some schools. Due to the small number of students in a class, it was possible for every student to practice the language more extensively in classrooms (Sawaswadee, 1991).

In 1962, in accordance with UNESCO's recommendation, the National Education Act was launched to have primary education compulsory for all children in the country. As a result, the number of pupils in each class in the primary level was high, as was the need for English teachers. Since then, students' achievement in English has been poor, especially in listening and speaking skills because of large classes and poorly qualified teachers (Sawaswadee, 1991).

2.2. The English Curriculum

In the English curriculum of 1960, English was considered a compulsory subject in primary education. The major characteristics of English teaching in primary education were: teacher centeredness, memorizing, passive learners (Sawaswadee, 1991). Learners' low proficiency in English was the crucial problem in implementing the English curriculum of 1960. As a result, English was no longer included in the primary education of 1977 (Phongthongchareon, 1977). However, English was still taught in higher levels; namely, secondary school level and university level. In 1978, media and parents who realized the importance of English disagreed with the elimination of English and protested to have English included in primary education, which led to the English curriculum of 1978, in which English was taught in the primary education of the country

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starting from grade 5 again (Bonyatirana, 1981; Pongthongchareon, 1982). In the curriculum of 1978, English classes were increased to 600 periods a year. One hour is 3 periods with 20 minutes for each period (Ministry of Education, 1997). The general purposes of teaching English were as follows (These purposes were translated from (Sawaswadee, 1991, p.57):

1. Learners have knowledge and basic skills of English.
2. Learners are exposed to language use.
3. Learners have the basic knowledge to seek further knowledge both inside and outside schools.
4. Learners have positive attitudes towards learning English, the international language.

The specific purposes of teaching English were that:

1. Learners have pronunciation skills of English.
2. Learners understand the relationship between the spelling and pronunciation.
3. Learners understand and are able to use English structure to listen, speak, read and write appropriate to their levels.
4. Learners understand the meaning and are able to use vocabularies appropriate to their levels.
5. Learners are able to use dictionaries (Sawaswadee, 1991, p.57).

What was new in the English curriculum of 1978? Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) was first introduced to the English curriculum of Thai education by the Ministry of Education (Office of the National Primary Education Commission, Ministry of Education, 1997). New materials provided for free to the students were English Is Fun

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Book I-IV and practice books written in Thai and English published by the Ministry of Education's printing house. Teachers were also provided with a teachers' manual written in Thai and English with details on how to teach English communicatively.

To what extent has CLT been implemented in the classrooms? Panluck (1982), Buasomboon (1983), Srisunt (1988), Sudsawat (1991), and Niyamapa (1995) who surveyed English teachers and principals report that English teachers used CLT in their classrooms a great deal. These researchers used only a self-report technique; none of them observed the actual English classrooms reported by those teachers and school principals.

CLT has been the written goal of teaching English for many years, but in reality, the Grammar Translation Approach has been widely practiced (Sawadwadee, 1991). Changes have existed only in the English curriculum. In the classrooms, some English teachers still teach the way they are familiar with; namely reading and translating (Naksuk, 1984; Namphet, 1986)

In 1996, in preparation for the education reform, the Ministry of Education launched a new policy to teach English starting from grade 1, and to use a learner-centered approach as the principle of teaching and learning all subjects including English. In this curriculum, grades 1-4 students learn English 80 hours a year, and grades 5-6 200 hours a year.

The English curriculum of 1996 for the primary education, which has been used for 6 years, was written in a very general fashion claiming that each school could apply it to suit its own specific learners. The purposes of teaching English with the new principle

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of teaching English for all primary education level (grades 1-6) are that learners will
(Translated from the Ministry of Education, 1996, p. 9):

1. Be able to communicate correctly and appropriately,
2. Have sufficient basic knowledge of English used in higher education or the workplace,
3. Be able to communicate in English in simple situations such as role-play or authentic situations,
4. Know and understand the English speaker's culture,
5. Pursue knowledge of English by reading additional English books, and
6. Have positive attitudes towards English.

There is not much change in terms of the purpose of teaching English in the English curriculum of 1996, because it is only a slightly revision of the 1978 version. The only addition is the use of the phrase "a learner-centered approach". The revised principles of learning and teaching English for primary education specified in the curriculum of 1996 are (Translated from the Ministry of Education, 1996, p. 13):

1. Use a learner-centered approach,
2. Provide a variety of authentic and communicative activities, and
3. Focus on listening and speaking skills at the preparatory level (G.1-2); listening, speaking, reading, writing and spelling skills at the literacy level (G.3-4); and communicating in four skills at the beginner fundamental level (G.5-6).

The activities suggested are games, role-plays and information transfer. The instructional media recommended are videotapes, tape cassettes, real materials, word-

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cards, sentence-cards, pictures and models. The content related to pupils' lives or environment, and communication in real life situations have been encouraged to create a positive learning environment among young learners (Ministry of Education, 1996).

The English curriculum of 1996 mentions what language functions learners of primary education should have after finishing the 6 years of learning English. These language functions for all levels of the primary education are: greetings, leave taking, introducing self and others, thanking, apologizing, interrupting politely and asking permission. All levels from grades 1-6 are expected to possess the same language functions. For example, introducing self and other is specified in the English curriculum of 1996 as the language functions for all levels of primary students. Table 2.2 shows the details of language structure and expression, and language activities recommended for introducing self and others for grades 1-6.

Table 2.2. Details of the English Curriculum of 1996 for Introducing Self and Others

Levels	Language structure and expression	Language activities recommended.
Grades 1-2	I am X I'm X A: Hello. I am A B: Hello. I am B This/ That is X My name is X	-Songs: "Can you tell me what your name is?" and "This is a chair" -Puppet -Pair-work
Grades 3-4	I am X	-Audio tapes

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	<p>I'm X</p> <p>A: Hello. I am A</p> <p>B: Hello. I am B</p> <p>This/ That is X</p> <p>My name is X</p>	<p>-Videos</p> <p>-Pictures</p> <p>-Masks</p> <p>-Song "Hello", Can you tell me what your name is?</p> <p>-Role-play</p> <p>-Read, and copy.</p>
Grades 5-6	<p>I am X</p> <p>I'm X</p> <p>A: Hello. I am A</p> <p>B: Hello. I am B</p> <p>This/ That is X</p> <p>My name is X</p>	<p>-Audio tapes</p> <p>-Videos</p> <p>-Pictures</p> <p>-Reading</p> <p>-Pair-work</p> <p>-Group-work</p> <p>-Total physical response activities.</p>

This curriculum contains a list of skills, structures and vocabularies for elementary learners. However, the English curriculum of 1996 is not so helpful for teachers who want to design courses and teaching materials because it doesn't specify clearly, for example, what a grade five student can do with English differently from a grade 2 student in introducing self and others in English. From Table 2.2, learners' skills

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of introducing self are not developed to a higher level as the learners move to higher levels. If introducing self has been extensively studied since grade 1-4, learners should be introduced to language skills of a higher level such as introducing interesting persons, places, stories and etc.

During 6 years of studying English, learners learn seven language functions repeatedly. Repetition is important in language learning because it allows learners to commit the knowledge to long-term memory. The same language functions recur in all levels of primary education; however, more complicated language structure and expression should be developed as learners move to a higher level. Moreover, learners' proficiency are not developed to the point at which they can use the language freely in different contexts or integrated with other language skills such as reading, and writing. For example, learners need to know how to apologize in a variety of situations with different situations or registers. As Widdowson (1979) argues in his paper, "the process of learning a foreign language should be presented not as the new knowledge and experience but as an extension or alternative realization of what the learner already knows" (p. 71).

In this curriculum of 1996, there have been no specific textbooks recommended or provided. Teachers are expected to produce their own materials based on a learner-centered approach. Research shows that English teachers have problems in understanding and using the English curriculum (Limlek, 1998). Panluck (1992) surveyed school administrators and English teachers about problems they face in using the English curriculum, and found that teachers' lack knowledge in interpreting the curriculum and do not understand the English curriculum. As a result, they cannot

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produce teaching materials to suit their own students. Moreover, schools do not have adequate resources for teachers to prepare their teaching materials or lesson planning due to budgetary constraints. As a result, *English Is Fun* has been widely used among teachers of grade 5-6 although it has been criticized negatively for its lack of authentic and up to date contents, the wrong sequence of difficulty of the lessons and activities, and the inappropriateness of the contents and activities for learners of grades 5-6 (Sudsawat, 1991). It can be concluded that there have been no major changes in the English curriculum of 1996, only that learner-centeredness has been specified in the curriculum as the principle of learning and teaching. The most important feature of learner-centeredness is that learners' needs will be taken into account in every phase of the curriculum process (Nunan, 1988).

English has not been considered a compulsory course in the primary education since the English curriculum of 1978 due to the lack of qualified English teachers. Any primary school can choose whether to teach English or vocational skills depending on the readiness of the school. However, most schools choose to teach English rather than vocational skills because of budget constraints. To teach vocational skills to students, schools need to hire at least a new vocational teacher, and buy new tools and machines which most schools can't afford to do. Teaching English is more cost-effective for these schools because English class minimally requires only chalk, black board, and a teacher who may or may not be qualified to teach. Moreover, as English is not a compulsory subject, it has not constituted part of the evaluation criteria for passing to the next grade, and it is no longer a subject for entrance examination to middle and secondary schools,

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but it is for entrance to a university. Therefore, students must get the knowledge of English if they want to continue to study in universities.

2.3. Teacher Education in Thailand

Generally, the teacher education system in Thailand is divided into four levels of qualification.

1. The certificate level is a two-year program, training students beyond grade 10 who intend to teach at primary level grades 1-6. Students are not trained to teach any specific subjects.
2. The higher certificate level (Diploma level) is a two-year program for certificate holders. Graduates of this level are qualified to teach at both the elementary and lower secondary school levels. (Grade 7-9) Students can choose their majors such as English, Math, Science and etc.
3. The bachelor's degree level is a four-year program, offered after completion of grade 12 or a two-year program after the completion of training for high certificate holders. All majors are available, including teaching English as a foreign language.
4. At the graduate level, there is a Master's degree program, requiring two years of graduate study, available in major universities. The graduates of the Applied Linguistics programs tend not to teach in primary schools, but in higher education. The doctorate in Applied Linguistics has not been available in the country.

The following are courses at the bachelor's degree level:

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1. General education: education, psychology, philosophy, and philosophy of education, educational psychology, general methods of teaching classroom research. The medium of instruction is Thai.
2. Major topics: Grammar, reading, composition, conversation, translation, English literature, language laboratory work, English western culture, first and second language acquisition theories, methods of foreign language teaching, research on foreign language teaching and learning. English is not always used as the medium of instruction. Some instructors use Thai as the medium of instruction.
3. Related areas: linguistics, psycholinguistic, socio-linguistics, sociology, arts communication, and non-verbal communication. English may be used in some subjects.

The language of instruction of most subjects in the teaching English major is Thai. These teacher education students do not have much chance to interact in English either inside or outside the classrooms; therefore, English teachers who have majored in English have been criticized for being poorly qualified in English proficiency and teaching methodology. Unyakiat (1991) studied Thai secondary school EFL teachers' perceptions of their preparation to teach English. Participants' ratings of the effectiveness of their college preparation revealed that they have not been prepared well enough to teach a foreign language during their years as student teachers. They report receiving only minimal preparations in the following courses: in writing research papers,

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oral presentation, idiom/register, foreign language acquisition theories, and second language acquisition theories. The topic which receives the lowest rating is research in foreign /second language teaching and learning. The results of teacher self ratings on the emphasis of topic in the English methods classes reveal four topics which received only minimal emphasis: designing communicative curricula, identifying students' foreign language needs, diagnosing students' learning problems, and progress in constructing communicative tests. Teachers report that there is not enough emphasis placed on the following teaching strategies: discussion, simulation, role-play, and language games, and film and videotapes in foreign language teaching.

Research about teaching behavior in teacher education institutions shows that even in the teaching method courses in teacher education institutions, instructors in teacher's colleges spend most of the time lecturing. Srisan (1979) who studied teaching behavior of instructors in morals in the Certificate of Education level, found that the ratio of instructors and students' talking were 77.81:13.51. Mostly instructors used closed questions 11.28 percent and divergent questions 0.07 percent.

Wongyanoi (1975) studied the lecture behavior of history instructors in a Thai university. He found that in lecturing, instructors used the time as follows: giving information 51.59 percent, giving viewpoints 25.47 percent, asking closed questions 8.44 percent, accepting students' viewpoint 5.93 percent, stimulating students 2.75 percent, asking divergent questions 2.63 percent, giving direction 2.55 percent, rejecting students' opinion 0.64 percent. The researcher proposed that instructors should reduce time for information giving and increase time for discussion.

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According to the report from the seminar of Problems of Teacher Education in Thailand during April 19-20 at Pitsanulok in 1982, instructors in the teacher education institutes do not know how to teach primary and secondary schools. They focus on theoretical knowledge rather than empirical knowledge, and lecture is the common teaching method used in all subjects. Most English teachers in elementary schools reported that they have not acquired sufficient knowledge of teaching methods during their training as student teachers, nor do they know how to coordinate methods of teaching with the materials. They do not have chances to actively participate in a teaching experience or practice teaching under the supervision of subject instructors (Department of Curriculum and Instruction, Faculty of Education, Srinakarinwirot University, 1976).

There has been a cry for improvement in Thai teacher education programs, and for better graduates from teacher education programs. So far minor changes have been made such as the increase both qualitatively and quantitatively in teacher education institutions. Instructors in teacher education institutions possess higher degrees and certification (Department of Curriculum and Instruction, Faculty of Education, Srinakarinwirot University, 1976). During July 14-30, 1999, instructors for all eight teacher colleges and all agents involved in teacher education met in order to improve teacher education programs in accord with the education reform. Many measures to improve the teacher education programs have been proposed. Among them are proposals to improve the teacher curriculum to suit the changes in the society, to put more weight on empirical knowledge, to reduce some irrelevant required courses, to stop using a teacher centered approach, and to replace it with a learner-centered approach. There are no documents to indicate how many ideas have been put into practice.

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Unyakiat (1991) proposed a five-year program for training Thai EFL teachers. A one-year period of practical training is added in order to help each prospective teacher deal with real problems which exist in classrooms, and they will also have an opportunity to implement their own solutions with constructive criticism while they are developing teaching skills. A one-year period is for preparation of knowledge and linguistic and communicative skills in English and related teaching disciplines, conducting classroom research and maximizing communicative and meaningful teaching experience.

Onkokesoong (1990) interviewed 201 undergraduate students after finishing their teaching practicum and workshop. The results show that teacher education students face many problems during their practicum. For example, they cannot put their theoretical knowledge into practice. They do not have teaching skills. They think that some courses in the teacher program do not help them.

In my opinion, a five-year program for EFL teachers is not cost-effective if these graduates are going to work and get salaries equal to the four-year graduates. Now, teaching professionals are already being paid less than other professionals such as engineers and doctors. As a result, there is the potential that the EFL programs will not attract highly qualified teacher students. A four year program could prepare well qualified EFL teachers who are proficient in the target language and target culture knowledge and who possess professional skills required of every EFL teacher if the EFL curriculum and programs are revised. The problem is that instruction in the teacher education institutes does not a) emphasize pragmatism over theory, b) allow more time for teacher students to actively participate in teaching experience, c) use English as the medium of instruction, d) make adjustments on courses, e) reduce the numbers of

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overlapping subjects such as psychology, philosophy, philosophy of education, and educational psychology, f) reduce the number of general subjects, and g) increase more professional courses such as teaching listening and speaking skills, task design and task development, and communicative language testing.

The Ministry of Education has about 531,072 teachers in all public education institutes of which 355,298 are teachers at the primary level (Ministry of Education, 1997). A report shows that the number of retired teachers (at the age of 60) in the Ministry of Education is low. During 1985-1989 about 4,001 teachers retired each year, and during 1990-1994 about 3,354 teachers each year. A majority of in-service teachers in primary school are at the age of 40+ and have been teaching more than 15 years. There is a huge number of new graduates from teacher colleges and teacher education institute, but only 5 percent of them can get teaching jobs per year (Jampathong, 1987). Therefore, a great number of in-service teachers have graduated more than 20 years ago, and they desperately need improvement and training in new teaching approaches, including communicative language teaching.

The Ministry of Education does provide training programs for in-service teachers; however, the personnel development training programs cater to approximately 11 percent of the total number of in-service teachers annually (about 40,000 teachers) (Ministry of Education, 1997). Teacher education institutes should take a new major step in helping in-service teachers who are currently in the education system. These institutes can provide training programs or more flexible and practical courses for in-service teachers to improve their knowledge of teaching English and qualifications.

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2.4. The Status of English

Thailand is a monolingual country where standard Thai is the sole national and official language. English has been recognized as the most important and most popular foreign language. According to the Educational Development Plan 8 (1997-2001), the ability to communicate in English is a necessary qualification of Thai people because this knowledge helps Thai people to communicate with the world and build a better understanding in the age of globalization (General Education Department, Ministry of Education, 1997). Due to this realization, English has been taught starting from grade 1 to the university since 1996.

In the Thai society, English has been the prestige language, and considered as a tool to get higher education and a better job. It is required knowledge for the entrance examination to universities. Many parents are willing to work hard to educate their children in expensive schools where English is taught starting in kindergarten (Jearranaipreparam, 1999). Parents want their children to learn English so that their children can get good future careers, and higher education (Boonthum, 1995).

There are many private English language schools which provide English courses after school starting from beginning to advanced levels for any children whose parents can afford it. Recently, a few private bilingual schools have started their business in all big cities, and the response from the parents is very impressive. Many wealthy children are now sent to bilingual schools to learn English.

Outside the classroom, although English is the prestige language, it is not the language of communication among Thai people. It is not part of daily life in Thailand. It

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is the most popular foreign language used only by certain groups of people who have to communicate with foreigners in major cities. There are three English newspapers (*The Nation*, *The Bangkok Post* and *The Business Day*) and a few English magazines (Reader's Digest, Asia Week, and etc). English radio programs mostly are available in big cities or tourist locations. Recently, due to satellite technology, there have been some English television channels airing famous television programs from American networks such as CNN, NBC, ABC and MTV. However, they are available only to certain groups of people who can understand English, and can afford the high cable fees. All these English language media, such as newspapers, television and radio, target foreigners and the elite who graduate from schools abroad.

In general, foreign movies such as American and European movies are translated into the Thai language. Only in big cities and tourist locations are English-speaking movies with Thai subtitles available.

2.5 Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)

Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) is an approach which emphasizes that the goal of language learning is communicative competence, that is, the ability to communicate in social contexts appropriately (Richards, Platt and Weber, 1985; Nunan, 1988; Yalden, 1981; Savignon, 1983). However, CLT has been interpreted differently in language learning situations due to the difficult relationship between two elements: namely, grammar and communication. When CLT was first introduced during the 1970s, it focused on fluent conversation. During the 1980s, it expanded to include the social

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aspect of communication, and during the 1990s, the grammatical aspect was included in CLT.

Howatt (1984) suggests that it is possible to consider a 'strong' and a 'weak' line in CLT. The strong version of communicative language teaching focuses on language ability as being developed through activities which actually simulate target performance, while the weak version includes teaching grammatical knowledge, and stresses the importance of providing learners with opportunities to use their English for communicative purposes.

One of the advocates of the strong version is Paulston (1974), who argues that classroom activities to improve communicative competence should emphasize more the social aspect of language use. The goal of language teaching is to provide successful interaction in the target culture with a focus on meaning. The social aspect is important to language acquisition, and the English curriculum of 1996 for primary education in Thailand realized this importance by including skills such as addressing persons, greeting, taking leave, introducing self and other, thanking and etc. However, what has been specified in the curriculum is not guarantee that it will actually be implemented in the classrooms.

The earliest prominent advocate of the strong version of CLT is Krashen (1985) whose Input Hypothesis states that acquisition takes place when learners understand input at the level which is slightly beyond the learners' present linguistic competence in a non threatening learning environment. Learners understand the input by using cues in the situation. Eventually, learners are able to produce the target language naturally. This

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hypothesis has been criticized widely for its lack of specificity and theoretical foundation (see McLaughlin, 1987; White, 1988).

In my experience as a teacher, the strong version of communicative language teaching was adapted in some advanced listening and speaking courses in Thailand. Thai learners complained of having nothing to cling to after English class. They felt that they did not learn anything because they could not remember what they had practiced in classes. For example, there were more than ten ways to request someone to do something, and they all used different syntactic rules. It was quite impossible for EFL learners to remember them all after class with the limited use of English outside the classrooms. These learners need some language structure to help them to remember what has been practiced in the classrooms, and this structure helps them to retrieve the knowledge, and to communicate it later when it is needed. On the other hand, in an ESL situation, communicative language teaching with the emphasis on communication may result in “terminal 2+” syndrome, i.e., a learner whose communicative ability is highly developed, but whose grammatical development is retarded (Higgs & Clifford, 1982).

During the last decade, there has been a significant shift due to the dissatisfaction with the results of the strong version of communicative language teaching. There have been calls for changes to include grammatical knowledge in developing communicative competence (Canale & Swain, 1980, Celce-Murcia, 1991; Celce-Murcia et al, 1997; Rutherford, 1987; Savignon, 1983, 1990; Scarcella & Oxford, 1992; Schmidt, 1993). Grammar helps language learning (Gass, 1997).

Canale and Swain (1980) take a broader view of communicative competence. Communicative competence is the ability not only to apply the grammatical rules of a

language in order to form grammatically correct sentences but also to know when and where to use these sentences appropriately and with whom. Canale and Swain's notion of communicative competence includes:

- a. Grammatical competence: the use of appropriate grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation;
- b. Sociolinguistic competence: the use of style, register, and intonation in appropriate contexts and settings;
- c. Discourse competence: the ability to maintain cohesion in form and coherence of thought in a given context such as knowing how to use and respond to different types of speech acts, such as requests, apologies, expressions of gratitude, and invitation;
- d. Strategic competence: the use of verbal and non-verbal communication strategies to compensate for imperfect knowledge of rules.

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 (1971). Similarly to Canale and Swaine (1980), she states that "communicative competence requires not only grammatical, but discourse, socio-linguistic, and strategic competence" (Savignon, 1990, p. 207). Communicative competence also includes "functional language proficiency; the expression, interpretation, and negotiation of meaning involving interaction between two or more

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persons belongs to the same (or different) speech community..., or between one person and a written or oral text” (Savignon, 1997, p. 272).

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.

What are teachers expected to do when they implement CLT? Based on Savignon (1971, 1990), I interpret that teachers should do the following four:

1. Focus both on function and form.

Research and experience have shown that either overemphasis or ignoring the teaching of grammatical rules does not produce satisfactory communicative competence. Therefore, grammar should not be excluded in communicative language classrooms. However, how should grammar be taught? Clearly, the goal of language learning in the communicative classroom is to facilitate learners to understand and make meaning. They should be allowed to use language forms in social contexts where the functions of language such as giving commands, asking questions, and giving information can be practiced. In order to incorporate both the form and function of language, teachers can use either deductive or inductive approaches to present the language rules. Littlewood (1981) suggests an interesting idea that drill and controlled practice still have a valid place in the language class as pre-communicative activities which provide learners with the warm up skills for more communicative language tasks. Ellis (1995) suggests that interpreting input is necessary for learners because this helps them to notice grammatical

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features in the input, comprehend their meanings, and compare the forms present in the input with those occurring in learner output. He believes that explicit teaching of grammar is helpful because explicit knowledge helps learners obtain intake. VanPatten (1993) suggests two instructions : word order strategy and learner's attention to meaning (content words) and elements of high communicative value. In his argument, these two strategies should be introduced during input by using processing mechanisms, and focused practice. Instructions introduced by Ellis and VanPatten are more relevant to adult learners who tend to learn better if deductive grammar teaching is provided to them. However, for younger learners, the inductive approach is more often recommended because through the problem solving approach to rule generations, learners develop by analyzing language data on their own. This will help them to communicate more efficiently. Exercises beyond the sentence level, language games involving physical movement, and group interaction are also highly recommended for young learners.

2. Provide communicative tasks or communicative activities for meaningful language use.

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 every day 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” (p.89). Long and Crookes’ definition is suitable for beginning levels of Thai learners because it emphasizes the authentic day-to-day activities when people use the 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.

3. Use English as the medium of instruction and communication.

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.

4. Respect and support learners.

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.

2.6. Challenges for Teachers in the Implementation of CLT

What problems did Thai teachers have when implementing CLT? The word CLT was first used in the English curriculum of 1978; however, the actual implementation of CLT has not been highly successful. CLT has been partially adopted in very few leading schools in urban areas where teachers have been trained abroad. Most teachers still use the Grammar Translation Approach, with which they are familiar. At the same time, the Grammar Translation Approach seems to satisfy most learners whose needs are to pass the exam or to meet the requirements of the program in which English is compulsory (Burnaby & Sun, 1989; Li, 1999; Vacharaskunee, 2000). This reason may be because there is no immediate need for learners to use English to communicate outside the

classroom in EFL situations such as in Thailand, where Thai is the national language and the language of wider communication.

On the other hand, even with the realization that there is no immediate need for learners to use English outside the classrooms, the need for learning English for elementary pupils stated by the Ministry of Education is still to be able to communicate in English (Ministry of Education, 1996, p. 15). There is a mismatch between learners' need, and the needs set for learners by the Ministry of Education. Although English is not part of testing in entrance examinations to middle and secondary schools, all students who pass the entrance examination to secondary schools are required to take placement tests in English.

English is part of the entrance examination to both private and state universities in Thailand. There is an attempt to provide the immediate communicative needs for learners studying English by designing exams to be more communicative. However, from my experience as a teacher of English in a university, this attempt may be truly practiced only in the entrance examination to universities. It is a written exam designed by Thai instructors of English in advanced universities of the country. These instructors were trained in TESOL or Applied Linguistics at major universities in the US, Europe, Australia and New Zealand. They know how to write more communicative English exams. However, Thai teachers of English at elementary and secondary schools may not have the knowledge or skill to write communicative tests. As a result, many tests still assess learners' ability to remember discrete points. As a result, elementary students still study English in order to get high scores on the exam which in turn causes another obstacle to the implementation of CLT in the country.

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The most profound problem of teaching English in Thailand is the lack of well-qualified teachers (British Council, 1977; Choradol, 1986; Kan-in, 1982; Naksuk, 1984). They are not able to cope with the CLT demands of using English as the medium of instruction in order to provide language exposure for learners. This problem is common among EFL teachers. Burnaby and Sun (1989) report that Chinese teachers of English have difficulties in applying CLT in their classrooms. One of the reasons cited is English teachers' deficiencies in oral English, and sociolinguistic and strategic competence. This finding corresponds with Li (1999). In Li's (1999) study, South Korean teachers report that deficiency in spoken English is a major difficulty in applying CLT.

Studies conducted to evaluate communicative competence show that communicative competence of senior students majoring in teaching English is low (Pornwiboon, 1993; Wongsothon, 1989; Wongrukmitre 1986). These students are going to graduate and become English teachers in schools. In Pornwiboon's study on English teaching senior students in major universities in Thailand, the raw scores on communicative competence of the best students are just a little higher than the median, and the most distinguishing aspect is that scores on sociolinguistic knowledge are lower than other knowledge such as propositional knowledge and functional knowledge. Therefore, these students majoring in teaching English are not able to communicate in English well enough to be models in language classrooms.

The qualification of teachers of English in the EFL situation seems to be an important issue in the implementation of CLT. As a learner and a teacher of English in an EFL situation, I assume that these teachers are the products of the grammar translation approach where learning English meant being able to read rather than to communicate in

English. At the same time, the linguistic environment of EFL situations like that in Thailand does not offer teachers many opportunities to be able to advance their English proficiency. Teachers have few chances to be exposed to authentic English.

However, teachers' low qualifications are not the only reason that they do not use the target language in their classrooms. In Vacharaskunee's (2000) study, Thai teachers of English report that they avoid using English in their classes because of their low English proficiency and learners' low English proficiency. Other major reasons for their avoidance of using English in their classrooms include teachers' language anxiety, students' objectives for studying English to pass the exam, the exams, the curriculum focus on grammar, and pre-service teacher training. Most teachers report that their pre-service teacher training did not encourage the use of English as the medium of instruction.

Teachers' low proficiency in the target language seems to be the major cause of teachers' avoiding the use of the target language in their classrooms. However, research shows that their perception also plays a very important role in using the target language. Research in quantified teachers' use of the target language in language classroom shows that even in the foreign language classrooms at university level in the US, where teachers are native speakers of the foreign language, the amount of target language used by teachers ranged from 10 to 100 percent. Over half of the teachers use the target language less than ninety percent of the time. Only one out of thirteen teachers never used English in his foreign language because of his department's policy not emphasizing the use of the target language in teaching (Duff & Polio, 1990). These native speaker teachers of the target languages avoid using them because they think that students can't understand

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enough of it, especially in teaching target language grammar, and students want to learn grammar for the exam (Polio & Duff, 1994).

Many teachers in Thailand avoid the use of target languages due to their real and perceived low English proficiency. It is true that many Thai teachers of English do not use English in their classrooms due to their real low English proficiency. Therefore, teachers need intensive language improvement sessions to help them improve their proficiency. However, teachers' beliefs play a very important role in the use of the target language (Duff & Polio, 1990; Polio & Duff, 1994; Vacharaskunee, 2000). Factors such as students' objectives for studying English to pass the exam, the exams, the curriculum focus on grammar, pre-service teacher training, department policy, learners' low proficiency, teachers' beliefs of their language proficiency and learners' proficiency, language anxiety, lack of self-confidence in the target language, and fear of providing a poor model as reported by those studies mentioned above, should be taken into account when help is given to teachers to improve their language proficiency.

Another factor limiting the implementation of CLT is the teachers' lack of knowledge of teaching methodology (Choradol, 1986; Kan-in, 1982; Naksuk, 1984; Wongwatjana, 1985). These teachers might think that as long as their learners speak English, or group work and pair work are used, it is communication, and through this kind of communication, their language competence improves. Long (1980) introduced the notion of the interaction hypothesis which holds that interaction promotes acquisition. Interaction allows learners to receive comprehensible input at the same time provide an inter-personal phenomenon which occurs during face to face communication, and intra-

personal phenomenon in which mental process interacts to construct an understanding of or a response to some phenomenon (Ellis, 1999).

During interactions, speakers negotiate meaning with each other. Negotiation or what Long (1980) has called “interactional modification” has been characterized as an “exchange between learners and their interlocutors as they attempt to resolve communication breakdown and to work toward mutual comprehension” (Pica, Holliday, Lewis, & Morgenthaler, 1989, p. 65). During the negotiation in the classroom, teachers and learners or learners and learners participate in seeking information, checking comprehension, and requesting confirmation that they understand the same thing.

Research shows that small group work in the language classrooms provides the optimum environment for negotiation. Varonis and Gass (1983) demonstrated that arranging pair work between learners of different level of proficiency is advantageous because it produces more negotiation of meaning. However, research shows that language competence is improved through the negotiation of meaning and creative language use in interactions (Long & Robinson, 1998; Polio & Gass, 1998). Negotiation of meaning in authentic conversation is a central factor in second language acquisition (Pica & Doughty 1985; Varonis & Gass, 1985) because “...negotiation is one means by which input can become comprehensible and manageable” (Gass, 1997, p.132). In this sense, conversation in role-play, group work and pair work involving memorizing may not help language learning because learners do not engage in negotiation which will help them to focus attention on what they are working on. Similarly, language in drills is not communicative because learners do not have the control of the language and the utterance is predictable by the interlocutor. Drill language does not have a meaningful and

immediate context (Allwright, 1988). Researchers in the area of interaction all agree that interaction facilitates acquisition. Pica (1996) points out a strong claim that meaning negotiation is not the only type of interaction which fosters language acquisition. She concedes that uninterrupted communication also contributes to acquisition. Negotiation may not be needed if interlocutors can understand each other. Teachers must realize the positive relation between interaction, negotiation, and uninterrupted communication and language development, and allow them to take place in their classrooms.

The last factor limiting the implementation of CLT is overemphasis on grammar because of the long rooted Grammar Translation Approach (Angwatanakul, 1975; Boon-Long, 1978; Klayanonda, 1976; Lee, 1974; Rungsaken, 1976; Wattanakul, 1977). In a common English class in Thailand, language rules are explicitly taught, and learners practice those rules in drills and grammatical exercises. Learners know language rules, and can apply these rules in analyzing English sentences very well, but they cannot speak or write very well. Another common picture of the English classroom is a teacher reading English sentence by sentence with the translation for each sentence. Learners are sometimes called to give the translation of the sentence the teacher has just read. Learners of the Grammar-Translation Approach cannot use language rules to express themselves. The Grammar Translation Approach has been rejected so long because it cannot develop learners' communicative competence. However, it is still widely practiced in Thailand. Part of the reason may be because it is an easy way to teach English, and may be because it is the only teaching method teachers know.

A new approach to grammar instruction, called focus on form, has been introduced where formal instruction of rules and communicative language use are

combined. This approach emphasizes both grammar forms and meaning with focused use of form in such a way that learners must notice then process the target grammar structure in purely communicative input (Fotos & Hinkel, 2001). The traditional way of teaching grammar where forms (with an s) are taught explicitly, and learning the language rules is emphasized, is called form-focused instruction. Doughty and Williams (1999) stress that focus on form instruction and form-focused instruction are not opposites. The fundamental assumption of focus on form instruction is that meaning and use must already be evident to the learner at the time that attention is drawn to the linguistic items needed to get the meaning across. Focus on form means that class time should not be spent only on discrete points such as in the grammar translation approach (Doughty & Williams, 1998; Gass, 1997; Long, 1991; Long & Robinson, 1998). The goal of focus on form instruction is to teach form in meaningful activities where learners' attention is briefly shifted to grammar in context (Long, 1991, 1998). Meaning and use are provided to learners while their attention is drawn to the linguistic points (Doughty & Williams, 1998). DeKeyser and Lightbown (1999) stress that focus on form for communicative purposes is helpful because learners can hold them in mental representation in memory for further processing. However, this cognitive ability is limited in the sense that, if no timely opportunity for use arises, the forms will no longer remain in memory. They suggest that a focus on form should focus on these issues: a. timing for focus on form; b. forms to focus on; and c. classroom context for focus. In this sense, focus on form instruction is language instruction in which meaning is the emphasis while learners' attention is consciously drawn to the form of the language. Grammar consists of forms that have meaning and use (Larsen-Freeman, 2001). Therefore,

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learners learn the form of the language at the same time they learn the meaning, and have a chance to use it correctly in social context. For example, when they learn the form 'will', they should understand that 'will' is used to describe future events, and finally they write or speak about their future lives with their peers.

It has been accepted that focus on form instruction should not be dismissed from language classrooms, but the issue is when and how form should be taught. Focus on form is essential, but should not interrupt communicative interaction (Doughty & Varela, 1998). Teachers should be more sensitive when focusing on form. Especially, for young learners in grades 5 and 6 (about 10-11 years of age) at the beginning level, with low educational background, the form-focused instruction as practiced by many Thai teachers of English is certainly not appropriate.

Due to the problems teachers have, English language teachers do not implement communicative language teaching in their classrooms; as a result, Thai learners have low English proficiency. They are not provided with chances to be exposed to English language inside or outside the classrooms. High school students who have studied English for more than 10 years cannot communicate successfully because they lack listening skills (Hiangrath, 1984); speaking skills (Pataranon, 1988); reading skills (Wiruhayan, 1987); writing skills (Puapan, 1988); and communicative skills (Panichanok, 1989). It is important that these factors contributing to the impossibility of implementing CLT to date should be taken into account when successful implementation of a learner-centered approach is the goal. All English teachers should be prepared well enough so that they have the ability, knowledge, and the will to change. Teachers should be

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provided with chances to practice teaching in the same way they are going to teach in real life situations with constructive feedback for improvement.

2.7. Learner Centered Approach.

What is a learner-centered approach? Page and Thomas (1980) define a learner-centered approach as “teaching in which the needs and developmental level of the individual are given more consideration than the content of the curriculum or the wishes of society” (p. 279). Based on Page and Thomas’s definition, Altman (1980) defines a learner-centered approach to foreign language classrooms as follows:

A learner-centered language program is one in which the structure of the program, i.e. the presentation and composition of the content to be learned, the role definition and behaviors of teacher and learners, and the system of evaluating learner performance—has been adapted to meet individual differences in an effort to accommodate, to the extent possible, the interests, needs, and abilities of each learner. (p. 20)

In both views, learners are important. While Page and Thomas (1980) pay more attention to individual learners’ developmental level, Altman (1980) focuses more on individual differences, and what is happening in the learning and teaching process in the classroom which should serve those individual differences. Nunan (1988) defines a learner-centered approach based on adult theory that in a learner-centered approach, there is “a collaborative effort between teachers and learners” (p. 2). The important element of this approach is that “information by and from learners will be built into every phase of the curriculum process” (Nunan 1989, p. 19). In Nunan’s definition, learners are involved by participating in decision making on content selection, teaching methodology and gradation because these are skills and experiences that can be shared in the classrooms. He pays more attention to the collaboration between learners and teachers in

planning and teaching. Moreover, he seems to suggest the notion of negotiation between teachers and learners in planning and teaching. However, all (Page & Thomas; Altman, and Nunan) share the same idea that a learner-centered approach is characterized by the attempt to meet individual learners' needs.

Theoretically, learner-centeredness is an offspring of communicative language teaching approach (CLT) and adult learning theory (Nunan, 1988). It is an approach based on an adult learning theory, which maintains that learners have their own experiences which are important and helpful for language learning. Nunan (1988) claims that due to different experiences, learners are distinct, and this distinction must be respected and taken into account in the educational environment. He also argues that learner-centered teachers also need to assume the role of curriculum developers.

A learner-centered approach is also related to communicative language teaching, in the sense that communicative language teaching focuses on learners, and learners are primary (Savigon, 1991). Learners' needs are used as a framework for elaborating program goals in terms of functional competence. In this sense, Savigon (1991) implies that the learner need is to communicate, and to develop his or her communicative competence.

Certainly, the centralized education system in Thailand was a mitigating factor in the success of a learner-centered approach based on adult learning principles. In the past, the centralized curriculum was designed for all students in the country. Traditional elementary and secondary education was fixed in terms of content and grammar points for each level. However, after the reform, the revised English curriculum of 1996 determined by the Ministry of Education was written in a more general fashion. Teachers

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and schools are now expected to design and develop their own English curriculum by taking the needs of learners and the community into account. The question is whether or not teachers are able to design and develop their own English curriculum. Is it too demanding for Thai teachers of English?

Thai learners at grades 5 and 6 (10-11 years of age) may not have enough resources to participate in decision-making or in the process of planning, teaching and learning, but teachers can assume the responsibility of understanding individual differences and take them into account when activities or tasks are assigned. On the other hand, Nunan (1996) introduces the idea that learner centeredness is a continuum as follows. Level 1 is awareness where learners identify the strategy implications of pedagogical tasks and identify their own preferred learning styles and strategies. Level 2 is involvement where they make choices among a range of options. Level 3 is intervention where learners modify and adapt tasks. Level 4 is creation where they create their own tasks. And level 5 is transcendence where learners become teachers and researchers.

How far are Thai teachers at grade 5 and 6 able to move along in the continuum? If learners at grades 5 and 6 are trained to be aware of their objectives, their needs, and their learning styles, the first two levels of the continuum seem to be realistic and practical for EFL situations in Thailand. Tudor (1996) suggests the use of *learner training*. It is important because young learners at grades 5 and 6 are not accustomed to taking responsibility for their own language learning. Learner training will help them to understand themselves better as language learners.

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According to Rubin and Thompson (1994), learners are the most important factor in their language learning process; success or failure in learning a language can be traced back to how best learners manage the learning process. Learners should be aware and understand their objectives and learning styles, and communicate this information to their teachers. Teachers should accommodate learners' objectives and learning styles in their teaching which is believed to enhance language learning. This means that teacher training should provide knowledge and information about what and how to provide learner training to their students which is essential in a learner-centered approach. Young learners after being trained can make good choices to suit their preferences when they are provided with options. For example, in class, teachers can ask learners if they want to work by themselves, or in pairs, or learners can be allowed to choose stories or books they like to read.

Tudor's (1993) idea about teachers' roles is very realistic when he argues that the two main roles in traditional modes of teaching still remain in a learner centered approach. These roles are 1) knower of the target language and the chooser of methodology, and 2) activity organizer setting up and steering learning activities in the right direction, motivating and encouraging students, and providing feedback on students' performance. However, teachers in a learner-centered approach need to assume an additional role, that of learning counselor. In this new role, teachers need to 1) get to know students well enough to be able to understand both their intentions and their resources, 2) help students clarify their intentions and develop their resources and their awareness, and 3) channel student participation in a pedagogically useful direction. The additional role as learning counselor is very important for learner-centered teachers.

In a learner-centered approach, teachers are asked to add more roles when they teach. Can Thai teachers adjust their roles which have been rooted for so long? The major problem is that the roles these teachers play in traditional pedagogy are attached to relatively high social status, respect, and learners' expectations. Conflict can take place when Thai teachers try to change their roles to a less dominant position, but not their expectations of learners, or views of their status. The teachers' role as facilitator may conflict with learners' expectations that teachers are the knowers who provide them answers.

A good example of this conflict is reported by Thein (1994), a graduate of English Language Teaching (ELT) of the University of Warwick in Britain, and an English instructor at university level in Myanmar. She was a traditional teacher centered teacher for 29 years, teaching reading in both graduate and undergraduate courses in her country. She believed that the more difficult the text, the more she explained, the better the learning. Learners' comprehension was checked through reading comprehension exercises and grammar exercises. Although she was introduced to new theories while working on a master's degree in ELT at the University of Warwick in Britain in 1984, she did not apply her new knowledge of teaching methodology. She resumed her traditional way of teaching.

In 1991, Thein observed a learner-centered approach in a pre-master's program for 35 science students representing 9 countries, an eight-week workshop in language and technology at the language center, the Asian Institute of Technology, Bangkok, Thailand. She started her observation from the beginning of the program with doubt and frustration, and with delight at the end of the program. It took her eight weeks to understand how

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learners learn through carrying out tasks, active investigation, developing concepts and skills, and gaining confidence to express themselves in English.

Changes in teaching practice involve many factors, and involve a gradual and meaningful process of changes. Teachers can be well prepared to implement new teaching methodology, but they may not want to change. Hayes (1995) observed English teachers in the Rural Primary English Program (RuREP) in Sabah, Malaysia and the Project for the Improvement of Secondary English Teaching (PISET) in Thailand. He finds that although teachers are teaching the content of the new curriculum, they are doing so in the old style; lessons are teacher-centered and with heavy emphasis on choral repetition and formal grammatical exercises. Research shows that teachers have not changed their teaching behavior. Most teachers still use a teacher-centered approach. (Ministry of Education, 1985; Wongwajana, 1985; Education Department, Chulalongkorn University, 1987; Office of the National Education Commission, Office of the Prime Minister 1987). Yusamran (1992) studies the relationships of the psychosocial characteristics and the adoption of learner-centered teaching techniques of social studies teachers in secondary schools of the educational region I under the General Education Department. The result reveals that teachers' attitudes toward the adoption of the teaching innovation are best in predicting the adoption of teaching innovation.

It is apparent that teachers in a learner-centered approach need to be well prepared for the range of new skills and roles to take if the ideal of a learner-centered approach is to become a reality. Teachers seem to get all the blame if they do not change their practice even though they are told to change. However, on the flip side of the coin, it would be fairer if we look at how well teachers have been assisted to change.

If the goal of the learning reform is to change teachers from teacher-centered teachers to learner-centered teachers, they should have enough chances to be trained and to observe an actual learner-centered class at the elementary level in real life situations. This will allow teachers to see how innovative theories are applied in a real situation and if they really work. In addition, the process of change in education needs time and sincere support.

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Chapter Three

Methodology

This chapter outlined the methodology of the research. It will first describe the Thai administrative system because it has a unique hierarchical system different from other countries. Then it presents the details of participants. Finally, it describes the data collection of the research: Non-participant observations, interviews and stimulated recall.

3.1. Thai Administrative System

Thailand is divided into 75 provinces. Each province, which is administered by an appointed governor, is subdivided into districts, sub-districts and villages. The Ministry of Education (MOE) is in charge of education of both primary and secondary schools. The Office of the National Primary Education Commission (ONPEC) is primarily responsible for the management and administration of state primary schools throughout the country. ONPEC has 403,947 personnel, of which 355,298 are teachers, 12,040 administrators and officials at the headquarters, provincial and district offices, and 3,886 supervisors (Office of the National Primary Education Commission, Ministry of Education, 1997).

The ONPEC is the major government agency responsible for the provision of six years of compulsory primary education (grades 1-6) for children between the ages of seven and fifteen years. ONPEC's administrative structure is divided into four levels: national, provincial, district, and school cluster levels, each of which is managed by a committee. ONPEC is responsible for the formulation of the national primary education policies and plans; defining educational strategies; approval of budget proposals and

budget allocations; setting standards for academic requirements and specifications; appointment of directors and the nomination of ONPEC's secretary-general (Office of the National Primary Education Commission, Ministry of Education, 1997).

The Provincial Primary Education Committees (PPEC) are responsible for the formulation of operational plans and policies in line with the national education development policies and local needs, preparation of budget proposals, recruitment of teacher, data collection and evaluation of academic performance. There are 76 Provincial Primary Education Offices (The Office of The National Primary Education Commission, Ministry of Education, 1997).

At the district level, the major responsibility of the Primary Education Committees (DPEC) is co-ordination between the office of the Provincial Primary Education and the schools. There are 851 District Primary Education Offices.

The School-Cluster Committees (SCC), where 7-10 schools in the same vicinity are grouped together geographically, are responsible for approval of projects for staff development and monitoring teachers' performance in their clusters. There are 4,249 SCCs. Each SCE consist of all school principals in the school-cluster and local elected teachers. They are the front line of the education battle. Although the Ministry of Education has claimed to decentralize power to the local authorities as the result of the administrative reform of the National Education Act 1999, all major decisions concerning budget proposals, recruitment of teachers, proposals for teachers' annual promotions, and appointment of the directors and nomination at district and provincial levels are still

approved by the national level. Especially at the school cluster-level, decision-making power in terms of policy or budget is not available.

Based on the Thai hierarchical administrative system, it was important to get information about the policy implementation and operational plan at the Ministry of Education. Data collection for this project was initiated by going to the Supervision and Educational Standards Development Office (SESDO), the Office of National Primary Education Commission (ONPEC), and the Ministry of Education in Bangkok on the assumption that the supervisor who was in charge of providing English training to English teachers in the country had information about schools and English teachers who had been trained to use a learner-centered approach. This information would provide a guide to the relevant teachers for this research. Supervisor 1 of English training at ONPEC could not provide the needed information about the primary English teachers although this office is in charge of English training for all primary English teachers in the Thailand. The reason given was that he had just taken over the position 2 –3 years ago, and all information was there, but he had not had a chance to organize it. When I asked him for the educational policy that ONPEC had on English teaching in the country, I was advised to go to the Policy and Planning Division (PPD). I could not get a copy of the education policy at PPD either, and was told to go back to SESDO again. I did, and told Supervisor 1 that I could not get a copy of the policy, so he finally allowed me to interview him about the policy.

Talking to Supervisor 1 at SESDO, I realized that SESDO did not give the training directly to English teachers, but to the English supervisors of the Provincial Primary Education Committees (PPEC) and the District Primary Education Committees

(DPEC) who are the responsible agencies of English training for English teachers at the provincial and district levels. These provincial supervisors are required to give training to their local primary English teachers. The training takes 2-5 days, depending on each province's financial situation. Supervisor 1 recommended an English teacher (Teacher A) in the capital who has attended most of the training sessions for the supervisor of the country, and she was included in the study. I was then told to go to PPEC and DPEC if I wanted more information about teachers and teacher training.

3.2. Participants

3.2.1 Background of Participants

I visited Supervisors 2 and 3 at the Office of Provincial Primary Education in provinces A and B, two major provincial areas of the country. Then I went to two District Primary Education Committees (DPEC) to meet Supervisor 4 and Supervisor 5 who are in charge of teacher training in their areas. Talking to these supervisors, I learned that English training was provided only to grades 1-4 English teachers who had not taught English before, and did not have knowledge of English. Most of these teachers were forced to teach English because the policy of teaching English starting from grade one had been implemented, and the most urgent work was to train and educate grade 1-4 teachers to be able to teach English. “[About 10 percent of our English teachers in primary schools majored in English]” (Supervisor 1, Interview, April 27, 2001, p.2). The training provided for grade 1-4 teachers basically focused on techniques for teaching English to young learners and improving teachers' English proficiency such as writing the English alphabet and pronunciation.

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When I approached five English teachers of grades 1-4 to participate in the study, four of five declined to participate. Two of them confessed that they did not teach English in English classes. They taught other subjects during English class time. When asked why they did not teach English, these teachers said they did not know English, and they were not comfortable teaching what they did not know. All of them said that they were not comfortable teaching English and they did not want anyone to observe them teaching something with which they were not comfortable. A teacher trainer said that from her experience, some English teachers stopped their teaching when other teachers walked pass their class because they were embarrassed. “[Some schools did not teach English, but they reported to the higher authorities in the center that they did...When we worked together in our school cluster, we asked them why they haven’t sent the paper work of teaching English in grades 1-2. They didn’t say a word, but laughed]” (Teacher B, interview transcription, February 20, 2001, p.13). Due to their unwillingness and discomfort regarding participation in the study, they could not be included.

On the other hand, grades 5-6 have taught English for a minimum of 10 years, and the teachers have been trained with communicative language teaching. Supervisor 1 stated that: (Quotes are taken from audio taped interviews of participants. They have been transcribed and translated into English by the researcher, and this will be done for all subsequent quotations)

Grades 5-6 teachers have a better foundation in English more than grade 1-4 teachers. They either majored or minored in English. Actually they have been trained (in communicative language teaching), and I have never been worried about grades 5-6 English teachers. They are older teachers, and they are the best English teachers in each school (Supervisor 1, interview transcription, April 27, 2001).

I received a lot of cooperation and participation from grades 5-6 English teachers because they were confident in their knowledge and skill in teaching English.

Three criteria were set to choose teachers for this study: class size, location and teacher training within the last 3 years. First, the English class taught by these teachers needed to have at least 30 students because this is the most common English class size in Thailand. Supervisor 2 and 3 recommended many English teachers they believed had adopted the learner-centered approach. However, they were not included in this study because the common characteristics of these English classes were small classes consisting of about 8-15 students, which is not a good representation of general English classes in Thailand.

Second, schools included in this study were from two major metropolitan areas of Thailand. Metropolitan areas were selected because teachers here were more likely to have changed compared to those in the rural areas. In metropolitan areas, teachers had access to more information and often witnessed the demands for English usage. Moreover, they had been more active in changing because they were physically closer to educational sources and educational authorities such as the office of provincial and district primary education. Socially, they were pressured by the high competition among major famous schools in the metropolitan areas and the community to use the latest and most effective techniques. Parents and communities in metropolitan areas particularly realized how important it was to change the learning process from the teacher-centered to the learner-centered approach through all kinds of media such as pamphlets, brochures, books, newspaper, television, and radio which were available intensively in the metropolitan areas.

Third, grades 5-6 teachers participating in this study had attended teacher training for communicative language teaching within the last three years, the conference and the lecture of a learner-centered approach. All teachers in this study participated in all training, a conference, and a lecture. Some of them participated at their own expense in teacher training provided by other organizations such as universities, language schools or private training by Supervisor 3. The Communicative Language Teaching Approach has been the main theme in teacher training for English teachers since 1978. Moreover, a learner-centered approach has been promoted as the principle of learning and teaching all subjects at all levels of education in Thailand since 1996. All agents involved in education promoted this approach both in terms of articles or training sessions. According to the supervisors, almost all English teachers have been trained and have experience in Communicative Language Teaching Approach or a learner-centered approach.

When these three criteria were set, I first asked for permission from both PPECs by appearing in person with a letter introducing myself and describing the purpose of the study. Each PPEC gave permission to collect data after a discussion of the purpose of the study, the method of data collecting and the report phase of the study. Permissions were granted more easily when participants understood this research was a part of my personal study and not a report to the Ministry of Education.

Following the accepted practice based on Thai tradition, after receiving permission and recommendation from the gatekeepers, I had to meet the principal or the director of each school to ask for permission to meet the English teachers. I first went to School A, and the principal allowed me to meet Teacher A after discussing the purpose of

the study. Teacher A was called through the school microphone to come to the principal's office. When she arrived, the principal introduced me to her, and explained that I would like to interview her and observe her teaching English as a part of my study. Teacher A discussed the study with me for a while at the principal's office. I felt less comfortable in such a formal environment, so I asked to talk with Teacher A in private. I preferred that she makes her decision to participate without any influence from the principal. Teacher A and I left the principal's office to further our discussion in Teacher A's office.

Without the presence of the principal, Teacher A confessed that she didn't want to participate in the study because she sometimes taught other subjects such as Mathematic, or Science in English class because those subjects were behind schedule. However, Teacher A felt she had to let me observe her since the principal knew about my visit. She didn't want to get in trouble for not letting me observe her, and I also didn't want to cause her any trouble. To not include her in the study would cause her trouble, and she did not want to contradict the principal's orders. To help her feel more comfortable, I showed her the consent form, and repeatedly assured her that no one could get access to the information collected from her classes. The report would show only "Teacher A"; therefore, there was no way that she could be recognized. She felt more relieved; as a result, she agreed to be observed for three classes, and I set three consecutive dates to observe her.

This experience provided a good lesson on how to approach the next teachers although it contradicts "Thai tradition". Instead of going to ask for permission from the principal or the director first, I personally talked with the teacher. I discussed details

about the consent form, and her rights. This teacher didn't show any hesitation to participate in the study. She made her decision without any pressure to please anyone. Then she set three consecutive English classes I could observe, and two hours of her time for the interview. After I got her consent to participate in the study, and set the times for observations and interviews, she kindly introduced me to the principals. Unfortunately, this teacher is not included in this final report because of a technical problem with the recording machine which resulted in a loss of data. However, collecting data with her provided extensive experience which would make data collection with other teachers more effective, both in terms of approach and data gathering.

I sometimes approached teachers by first calling them on the phone. I introduced myself and explained the purposes of my study, the methods of data collecting, and the ways the data would be handled and reported. I asked them if they would like to participate in the study. Without any hesitation, teachers agreed to participate in the study without seeing me in person. Some teachers asked to have only two observations, and I negotiated to have three. Finally, they set three consecutive English classes for me to observe, and another two hours for an interview. Teachers were very willing and helpful when I approached them in this manner. I appreciate the level of support and cooperation I received from them. The schedule for getting permission before the observations and interviews with teachers and supervisors is presented in Table 3.1 (See Appendix 1).

I observed and interviewed 9 English teachers of grades 5 and 6 from different schools from two major metropolitan areas. However, only three out of nine are reported in this study. Six of them are excluded due to the following reasons.

The first teacher can't be included because of the incompleteness of the data caused by the technical problems in the recorders. The second of six teachers was excluded because her classes were not communicative. She used a lot of substitution drills where students spoke in chorus without meanings, and copied the substitution drills in their notebooks.

The third teacher was excluded because she had not majored or minored in English. She could not pronounce simple English words correctly, nor could she understand the process of learning a second language. She had participated in the teacher training for communicative language teaching techniques. She had a teacher's manual. She may never have taught communicatively before the observations; her students appeared to be confused with her new way of teaching. They could not understand her simple English statements. The activities also were too difficult for the students. The students were not prepared step by step to produce the target language; as a result, the students could not follow or make sense of what was taught. They started talking to each other. She was frustrated and angry. She scolded and caned a few students although caning has been banned for many years.

The fourth teacher excluded had majored in Thai, but she was interested in teaching English. She had been teaching English for more than 10 years. She was an example of the one who could teach English well if one was interested in teaching and tried hard to improve her teaching. She represented English teachers in her province to participate in teacher training sessions provided by the ONPEC's headquarters. She is one of the major teacher trainers providing training to English teachers in her province. She was excluded because she was not just an English teacher, but she was a teacher

trainer as well. Her class was communicative, and her students enjoyed communicating in English. She told me that she could not teach communicatively everyday due to her workload as an English teacher and a trainer.

The fifth and sixth teachers excluded imitated what they saw without clearly understanding the idea of learner-centered approach or communicative language teaching approach. The fifth teacher imitated the science teacher who got a national award by using science projects with her students. In her science class, students worked together in small groups to set up a problem and find scientific solutions to solve it. The fifth teacher imitated what the science teacher did in the science class. Instead of a science project, students were asked to produce small picture dictionaries. The students were divided into five groups of nine each and decided on a theme for the dictionaries and when they wanted to finish that project. The project of producing small picture dictionaries had been adopted and used for a few months. While the students worked on their projects, she was at the library showing me her students' picture dictionaries on different themes. All of the pictures produced by her students were similar. Each page of the dictionaries showed a picture with the word. Only one to two dictionaries contained some English sentences. The fifth teacher insisted on having the interview during her teaching time; however, I requested to see how students worked on their projects. What I found was that students copied pictures and words from commercial picture dictionaries they had bought. The theme they worked on that day was "The human body". When I asked if they liked to learn English this way, the students told me that they enjoyed English class because they could do what they wanted to. Some said that they liked English because they did not need to get involved in the project.

The sixth teacher excluded participated in the training session for grade 1 English teachers. In the first observation, he used grade 1 communicative activities in grade 6 classrooms. The students were asked to bring fruits to the classroom and the teacher asked them one by one to say the names of those fruits in English, and show the fruits to the class. Then they were asked to draw and paint those fruits, write the name of the fruit under its picture, and finally one by one, to read the names of the fruits aloud and show their pictures to the class. This class was too easy for Grade 6 students, and they could not further develop their knowledge of English. Teacher Six changed his teaching approach in the second observation to the Grammar Translation Approach, and cancelled the third appointment.

In sum, only three teachers are reported in this study because from observations, they used teaching techniques which had some features of Communicative Language Teaching Approach in their classrooms. They include: Teacher A from school A, Teacher B from school B and Teacher C from school C. Teacher A and Teacher B taught grade 6, and Teacher C taught grade 5.

3.2.2. Details of Participants

These three teachers reported that they obtained their own teacher training from other educational institutions in the country such as universities, language centers and private teacher training sessions run by Supervisor 4 who personally offered two teacher training sessions for grade 5-6 teachers interested in improving themselves at their own expense. They each had participated in 2-3 teacher-training sessions on different occasions and with different organizations.

One of the teachers participated in a training session provided by the British Council, a private language center, and a training session provided by the Education Ministry. These three teachers had a strong interest in teaching skills. They all understood the need to change their teaching of English to be more communicative and more learner-centered. Table 3.2 shows the demographic information on these three teachers. All three English teachers reported in this study had bachelor's degrees. Teachers A and B majored in teaching English, and Teacher C minored in teaching English, and majored in primary education. All of them have been teaching English for more than 20 years.

Table 3.2. Teachers' Demographic Information

Teacher s	Age	Degree	Major	Years of Teaching
Teacher A	45	Bachelor	Teaching English	24
Teacher B	50	Bachelor	Teaching English	31
Teacher C	41	Bachelor	Primary education and minor in teaching English	21

Teacher A is 45 years old and has a bachelor's degree in teaching English, from the Education Department. She graduated in 1977 from a famous university in the country. She had been teaching English at the primary level for 24 years. She taught English to grades 3-6. She participated in the training sessions for grade 3 and 4 English teachers. Based on Supervisor 1 at the office of national primary education, Teacher A

was the only teacher who was fortunate enough to have attended many training sessions provided for the core leading English teachers or the supervisors of the country. She attended almost five training sessions within three years. Therefore, there is no doubt that she understood clearly about a learner-centered approach and a communicative language teaching approach. From her interview, it was apparent that she understood the educational reform and the learning process better than any other English teachers or supervisors in this study. During the time of the research, she taught many subjects in grade 6 including English, Thai, Social Science, Singing, Art, Home Economics, and Ethics, totaling 25 hours a week. She had many duties other than teaching such as being the treasurer of the Lunch Project for Kids, the head of the English teacher group, and the caretaker of the sound lab. She said that she had been working hard. After observing nine teachers teaching English in their classes, I believe that she had the best English proficiency. She could explain the grammatical points correctly. She pronounced English words clearly when she read English sentence by sentence, and the students repeated after her. Teacher A was not very willing to participate in the study at the beginning. However, after the first observation, and some small talk with her a couple of times, she became more relaxed, and was comfortable with me observing her classes. She was comfortable enough to ask me to help when she had problems with English questions or pronunciation. The observation and interview became more natural and relaxed when she felt that this study would not in any way risk the security of her position or her retirement!

Teacher B is 50 years old. She graduated from a teacher's college in 1969, majoring in teaching English, with a minor in Biology. She is also the head of the

English teacher's group. She has taught English in the primary level, especially grade 6 for about 31 years. She teaches two subjects: English and Boy Scouts. She teaches grade 1, and grade 6, totaling 25 hours a week. She participated in a teacher training session based on a learner-centered approach provided by the Provincial Primary Education Committee because she also teaches English to grade 1 students. She also participated in other sessions provided by a private language center. Moreover, in 2000 she participated in a private training session for grades 5 and 6 English teachers provided by one of the supervisors. She taught English in the sound lab where her personal desk was located at the back of the lab. Students of grades 5 and 6 would come to the sound lab to study English although the sound instruments were out of order. Basically, she read the English sentences herself, and used chalk and blackboard occasionally. She actively pursued information to improve her understanding and prepare for the next year's assessment. She was a famous English teacher whom many teachers admired because of the way she taught English. Her class was lively, and full of laughter. She was awarded the Golden Needle because she had taught English communicatively.

Teacher C is 41 years old. She graduated from a teacher's college in 1979. She had a bachelor's degree, majoring in primary education, and minoring in teaching English. She has been teaching English at the primary level, mostly grades 5 and 6 for 21 years. She has taught English to grades 5 and 6 in school C for more than 6 years. She was active in teaching, and worked hard to provide the best teaching approaches for her students. She planned to prepare herself for the assessment next year when the Ministry of Education is going to evaluate teachers for promotion.

Both Teachers B and C were active teachers who were ready to change to learner-centered teachers. They were very happy to have an external educator in their classrooms to reflect on and discuss what they were doing. At the beginning, I didn't plan to share the field notes and my ideas with teachers. However, Teachers B and C wanted feedback from me so that they could improve themselves, and get ready for the assessment in the year 2002. I was happy to provide this information for them as requested. I shared with them parts of the field notes from the observations and the interviews. I discussed with them what were, and what were not the characteristics of a learner-centered approach, and gave a copy of my feedback to each of them. For teachers, my feedback benefited them the most when a copy of the feedback was included in the teachers' individual portfolios showing that they were new open-minded teachers who were ready for the changes by having another teacher or lecturer observe them. I was glad that the observation and interview benefited the teachers participating in the study. In my opinion, students would get the most benefits from the feedback when these two teachers improved their teaching based on this input.

3.3. Data Collection Techniques.

Four different data collection techniques were used in this study to permit the validation of findings: document analysis, non-participant observations, stimulated recalls, and interviews.

The first method was document analysis. Document materials were the most important resource to understand what had happened before and after data collection.

Document materials were produced contemporaneously with what happened, and thus

they were highly reliable. Materials used for analysis included the written policy, publications and videotapes of a learner-centered approach, newspapers, English curriculum, English textbooks, teachers' manuals, teaching materials, teacher training materials and research studies.

The second method was non-participant observations with audiotape recording and field-notes. The purposes of recording was to have as much information as possible which eventually served as a rich primary data source. Recording made it possible to record every single word teachers spoke. Definitely, this rich data source helped to provide an in depth view of how they taught English in their classrooms. It also allowed me to have opportunities to review what was going on in the classrooms. This enabled me to ask the right questions about each component of their teaching in the stimulated recalls. This way I could ensure the validity of my observation. One small microphone (Aiwa small Microphone) was attached to the teacher's collar, and a small tape recorder (Aiwa stereo radio cassette recorder super bass JS135) was on her waist. Two other small tape recorders were placed with students. These two recorders were used both for small group and classroom situations. There was no video camera which might have threatened both teachers and students who had never been videotaped before, and which might have affected teaching and learning behaviors in the classrooms.

The observations were originally planned to focus on how the learner-centered approach was actually implemented in the classroom; for example, language used during communicative activities, the use of communicative tasks or communicative activities, a non-threatening atmosphere for learners to communicate, focus on form teaching, the use of L1 and L2, teachers' and learners' roles, and the patterns of interaction between

teacher and learners and between learners and learners. I first thought that teachers would use a variety of communicative activities and classroom interaction patterns such as pair work, group work, individual work, and whole class activities. However, what actually happened was that all three teachers used only whole class activities. This fact resulted in the changes in the analysis of observations as presented in section 3.5 Unit of Analysis for Observation.

Observations were used before interviews to ensure that teachers taught as they usually did. Questions in the interviews would have indicated the focus of the research, which might have affected not only their way of teaching but also their ideas in the interview. It was initially planned that each teacher be observed five times, with the first two times, having the observation made with the presence of audiotape, but not actually recording. The purpose had been to make teachers comfortable, and familiar with the presence of the researcher and the audiotapes in their classrooms. However, since these teachers had never been observed before, they were not very comfortable with the proposed five consecutive observations. Recall that Teacher A was initially not very willing to be observed at all. Finally, she allowed three consecutive classes to be observed. I needed to make her comfortable and willing to participate in the study so I agreed with her. Teachers B and C were somewhat reluctant with the proposed five consecutive classes. When observations were reduced to three consecutive observations, more cooperation was received from all the teachers. I understood their stress in being observed five times; therefore, when teachers compromised to be observed only three times with audiotape recordings, I agreed. Since there were only three observations for each teacher, observations without recording were canceled.

Table 3.3. The Observations for Each Teacher

Days	Observations with audiotape	Remarks
Day 1	With recording	Field-notes, and notes for stimulated recall
Day 2	With recording	Field-notes, and notes for stimulated recall
Day 3	With recording	Field-notes, and notes for stimulated recall

The third procedure was semi-informal interviews. Three teachers and three teacher supervisors were interviewed about their opinions about a learner-centered approach, and how they used it in the classroom. It was important for me that teachers and teacher supervisors willingly participated in the study. They had the right to specify the date, and time of the interviews. I realized and supported their rights. Apparently, teachers were at ease and happy to participate when I was in favor of their opinions. They realized their importance and power when they could voice their opinions, and were more co-operative. They were willing to participate, and expressed their candid opinions.

The fourth method was stimulated recall. This is an introspective research method which is used to encourage participants to “recall thoughts they had while performing a task” (Gass & Mackey, 2000, p. 17). In this study, teachers were asked to recall their own thoughts during their teaching performance which had just occurred. It was designed to allow teachers to clarify in more detail why they chose to teach in that particular way or to use a particular exercise or activity during the observational phase. In this manner, misinterpretation of teachers’ teaching performance was diminished.

3.4. Procedure

I usually arrived at the school about 20-30 minutes before class-time. I waited outside the class I was to observe until the teacher gave me the signal to come into the classroom. I then asked her to come out of the classroom so that I could attach the small microphone to her collar, and a small tape recorder on her waist. I told her that students would pay too much attention to the microphone and the tape recorder if we did this in front of them. Teachers understood and agreed to do so for the next observations as well. After that I entered the class by the back door, and sat at the back of the class. For each teacher, I observed and took notes which were later used to stimulate recall, and interviews. For the first observations, teachers were somewhat nervous and excited. Their hands were moist and cold when they were helping me to attach the microphone and the tape-recorders. However, after the first observation and a short but friendly talk with them, they were more confident and relaxed. They even asked me when they had problems with English. They did not hesitate to ask me even during their class time when they were teaching their students in front of the class.

The observations for each teacher were done during early February, six to seven weeks before the end of the semester. (The normal school year for all primary schools is divided into two semesters. The first semester starts in early May, and finishes early October. The second semester starts in early November, and finishes early April.) It was the right time for observation because by this time in the semester, teachers and students were acquainted with each other, and students were familiar with the teacher's teaching methods. If students had learned English more passively during the first semester and the

first part of the second semester, we should predict that they would find it difficult to change to become active learners in a communicative language teaching environment. Moreover, if teachers had never used English with their students at all, it would be difficult for them to understand simple English sentences. If teachers tried to change teaching practices just for the observation we would predict students would find it difficult to follow. In fact, this is what I observed from Teachers B and C.

Following the observations, an interview was first conducted with each teacher, then followed by the stimulated recall. First, a 45-60 minute semi-formal interview had been planned with each of the participants with a 15 minute stimulated recall. However, the actual interview and the stimulated recall took about one and a half to two hours because there were so many topics teachers wanted to share and discuss. The interviews were audiotaped and transcribed. Teachers determined the time and place of the interviews so that they felt more comfortable and relaxed. The Thai language was used because interviewees would feel more comfortable using their native language with the researcher who used the same native language. Moreover, using Thai allowed teachers to communicate their ideas precisely and clearly. Since the topic of the interview was their opinions on teacher training and the teaching of English, teachers felt at ease talking and sharing their ideas openly. Rapport was developed very easily after we had met many times during the observations and with some small talk afterwards.

Once the interview and the stimulated recall were complete, Teachers B and C asked for a few special meetings with me so that I could help them to better understand the learner-centered approach. This was very important for me. I never denied any requests from the teachers. I was willing and happy to help because they were my

professional colleagues who worked hard to help their pupils in this time of confusing educational reforms. I did my best to give them some helpful knowledge to improve their work. The teachers and I built a special relationship while we shared our knowledge to help improve the learning and teaching of English in the country. I was very happy that I could help them and shared with them what I knew from my studies in an English speaking country. We learned to understand each other very well. Teachers told me frankly what they thought, and what problems they had. I have met these teachers again since the study and we continue to maintain our good relationship. They introduced me to their family, friends, and asked me to join in their activities. They asked me to visit them, and work with them after I graduate.

I had many impressive experiences during data collection for this study, not only from teachers but also from students. Before I went into each class for the first time, the teacher introduced me to her class. The students looked at me with interest when they knew that I was a Ph.D. student from Michigan State University. Studying in the US is exciting for Thai students. They were good students, and paid attention to the lessons. Sometimes I noticed that they glanced at me while I sat at the back of the class. They smiled if I got them to look at me. They also greeted me by putting both of their palms on their chests and bowing to me when I met them outside the classes. Teachers told me that pupils were very interested in me, and asked when I would come to their classes again. I received special gifts from these students such as roses, candies, cookies, juice, books, a music box, friendship, and smiles.

About one to two hour semi-formal interviews were also conducted with supervisors who are in charge of in-service teacher training to investigate what they

thought about a Learner-Centered Approach, and what help they had provided to teachers. Follow-up interviews were arranged with some supervisors, especially Supervisors 3 and 5 who clearly showed high involvement in teacher training and understanding of the new way of teaching, a learner-centered approach. Supervisor 3 personally provided training sessions for grades 5 and 6 English teachers in her area. Table 3.4 presents the schedule for the observations of the three teachers and interviews with three teachers and five supervisors. (See Appendix 2)

3.5. Data Analysis

The first step in data analysis was to transfer data from audiotapes to CDs with Easy CD Creator 4. This software made it more convenient to transcribe and at the same it allowed me to keep track of sentences spoken by the participants more efficiently. I first planned to transcribe only the relevant excerpts of the interviews and observations after I got the overall picture and saw patterns of ideas and behaviors of the informants. However, listening and re-listening to the rich data of the interviews and observations, it was more effective to produce the whole transcription of the observations and the interviews so that every important detail would not be missed. Moreover, during the transcription of the audiotapes of the observations and interviews, the vivid pictures of going into the field came back to me. This enabled me to have a better understanding of the information and details I got from those participants. After the full transcription was produced, I analyzed related documents, then read and reread the observation notes, and the transcriptions of the observations and the interviews in order to understand the data in

context. I looked for relationships and patterns among documents, the observation notes, the transcriptions of the observations, the stimulated recall, and the interviews.

Table 3.5 shows the overall design of the study: research questions, methods of data collection, and data analysis.

Table 3.5. Table of Data Collection and Analysis

Research questions	Methods of Data Collection	Data Analysis
<p>1. What is the conception of a learner centered approach by policy makers, teacher training personnel and English teachers?</p> <p>-Are their conceptions of a learner-centered approach similar or different?</p> <p>-What are the similarities or differences?</p>	<p>-Interviews with teachers, teacher training personnel</p> <p>-Analysis of documents</p>	<p>-Read and re-read the transcription of the interview from teachers, teacher training personnel.</p> <p>-Read documents written by policy makers.</p> <p>-Looked for patterns of behaviors.</p> <p>-Compared/contrasted information from teachers, teacher training personnel and policy makers.</p>
<p>2. To what degree do teachers actually</p>	<p>-Stimulated recall</p>	<p>-Read and re-read the transcription of the stimulated recall and looked for patterns</p>

<p>implement a learner-centered approach?</p> <p>- What are the major characteristics of their teaching?</p> <p>-Is it a learner-centered approach or CLT?</p>	<p>-Non-participant Observation</p>	<p>of behavior.</p> <p>-Read and re-read field notes of observation, the transcription of observation, and looked for the patterns of behavior.</p> <p>-Compared/contrasted information from stimulated recall and interviews with teachers and teacher training personnel.</p>
<p>3. What hinders or facilitates teachers implementing a learner-centered approach?</p>	<p>Interviews with teachers.</p>	<p>-Read and re-read the transcription of the interviews with teachers, and looked for the patterns.</p>

3. 6 Units of Analysis for Observation

Observations of three teachers will be analyzed based on the following two major features: Class Interaction Pattern and the Use of Target Language by Teacher.

Classroom Interaction Patterns They are divided into three major groups: 1) Whole-class, 2) Individual work, 3) group work and pair work. Group work or pair work interaction is considered a key feature of a communicative or learner-centered orientation. The higher the frequency of group-work, the more communicative opportunities learners have.

I. Whole class participation It is further divided into:

1. **Grammar.** Teachers focus on grammar rules, learners listen or answer teachers' questions on grammar rules.
2. **Translation.** Teachers provide translations of words or sentences into native language.
3. **Reading aloud:** Teachers read the passages, learners listen without repetition.
4. **Pronunciation:** Teachers teach pronunciation.
5. **TPR:** Teachers use Total Physical Response with the students.
6. **Repeating after teachers:** Class repeats a phrase or a sentence after the teacher in unison.
7. **Reading one by one:** Learners read a phrase or a sentence aloud one by one.
8. **Learners answer teacher's question one by one**
9. **Choral.** The whole class is choral in reading, singing and singing with acting
10. **Learners working as a group** without verbal interaction or with limited number (3-4) of phases they had been taught for example, in a Total Physical Response (TPR).

II. Individual work

Individual work: Learners individually copy sentences from the blackboard, write or do exercises.

III. Group work or pair work

Group work or pair work. Learners work in pairs or groups independently from teachers. They are involved in negotiation and interaction. They use language freely and meaningfully as in a natural setting. Target language used during the interaction is not predictable. Information flows two ways from learners to learners.

The Use of Target Language in the Classroom by Teachers. It will particularly look at two features: I) The quantity of teacher talk in target language and II) Functions of teacher talk.

I. The quantity of teacher talk in the target language. The more the use of the target language by teachers, the more learners get exposure to it which is believed to promote communicative competence. English used here did not include the reading aloud of the reading passages, the lyrics of a song or the pronunciation drill by teachers. The criteria for differentiating sentences or phrases for analysis were based on Polio and Duff (1994). English phrases or sentences containing only a word or a phrase of the native language were considered target language sentences if the native language mix is not more than one word in a phrase or a phrase in a sentence. Sentences containing the mix of target language and native language in equal proportions were considered a mix and not included in the calculation. Thai sentences containing only a word or phrase in English were considered native language. If the sentence or phrase was repeated, it was counted only once. Each sentence or phrase produced by the three teachers was tallied.

II. The functions of the target language. All target language produced by teachers was coded according to its function; such as giving commands, giving information, giving confirmation, giving compliments, greeting and leave taking.

Chapter Four

Findings from Documents

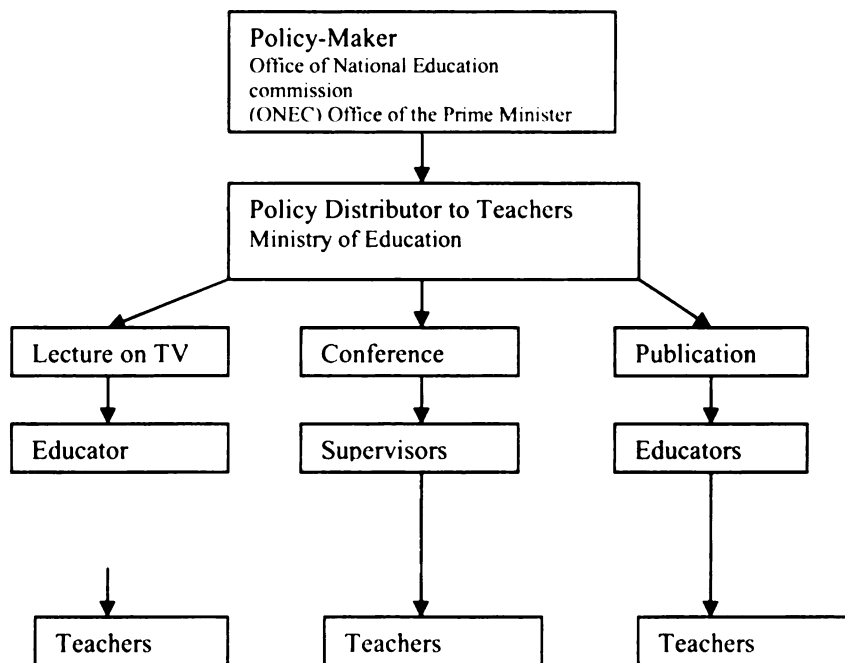
Chapters four, five and six will focus on the findings of four procedures: document analysis, observations, stimulated recalls, and interviews. The findings will be presented as follows. Chapter four is the findings of document analysis of how policy makers, policy distributors, supervisors, and teachers perceived a learner-centered approach. The findings of document analysis presented first because they give background knowledge of how a learner-centered approach has been defined differently by different agents and how these definitions have been distributed to teachers. Chapter five is the findings from the observations and stimulated recalls. It is important to present stimulated recalls from teachers with the findings of observations because in stimulated recalls, teachers have chances to clarify what they did and why in the classrooms during the observations. This crucial information from teachers moderates any misinterpretation that might take place. Chapter six is the findings of interviews. The findings from interviews are presented last in order to see if what teachers think they do and what they actually implemented during observation are compatible. Excerpts from documents, observations, stimulated recalls and interviews are used to illustrate the comments of participants and content of each document.

The education reform of 1996 is one of the most important events in Thailand because in this reform, the process of teaching and learning was shifted from a teacher-centered approach to a learner-centered approach. Most Thai educators and teachers call it a child-centered approach. Due to a lack of knowledge and understanding, many teachers still do not understand what a learner-centered approach is, and many have

misinterpreted it. For example, teachers misinterpret it as an approach in which learners are shifted to sit in the center of the room, rather than sitting in rows as in the traditional case. To address the misinterpretation to some extent, *a learner-centered approach* has been substituted and the term has been used more often among Thai educators. In order to avoid confusion in this report, only the term *a learner-centered approach* is used.

Before moving to the findings in each document, it is important to look at how the knowledge of a learner-centered approach has been delivered to teachers again. Figure 4.1 shows the diagram of how knowledge of a learner-centered approach is communicated from the policy-makers to teachers throughout the Ministry of Education.

Figure 4.1. Model of How a Learner-Centered Approach Is Communicated to Teachers.



(Sh. stands for short; Lng. for long)

The policy makers set the guiding principle of a learner-centered approach for all agents. The Ministry of Education has been responsible for delivering the knowledge of

a learner-centered approach to teachers through three channels: 1) a lecture on TV, 2) a one-day conference, and 3) a publication.

These three resources were in a lecture format with a document giving the theoretical knowledge of a learner-centered approach, and they did not focus on the teaching of any particular subject. Teachers had to apply the ideas of a learner-centered approach to their subjects on their own. From my conversations, according to the understanding of English teachers and most supervisors, there has not been any training or workshops on a learner-centered approach specifically designed for any subjects including English. They believed that English teachers have been trained on communicative language teaching, but not a learner-centered approach. The reason was that both supervisors and teachers were provided with knowledge of communicative language teaching and a learner-centered approach separately, and consequently, they were considered two different approaches.

4.1. Findings from Document One by Policy Makers: The Publication of the Office of National Education Commission (ONEC)

It is important to first see how ONEC policy makers define a learner-centered approach. ONEC as the central organization responsible for national policy, produced a publication called *Learning Reform: A Learner-Centered Approach*. It was meant to illustrate the concepts of a learner-centered approach so that all educators would implement a learner-centered approach in the same direction. It defined a learner-centered approach as:

The process involves identification of objectives, contents, activities, learning sources, instructional media and evaluation aimed at development of the

“persons” and the enrichment of their “lives”. Learners should therefore be allowed learning experiences to their highest potential and in line with their aptitude, interests and needs” (Office of National Education Committees 2000, p.25-26).

A learner-centered approach was defined as a learning process and that learners’ aptitudes, interests, and needs are the important elements in teaching and learning. Therefore, objectives, contents, activities, learning sources, instructional media and evaluation are particularly designed in order to meet learners’ particular aptitudes, interests and needs. The goal is to develop learners to the optimal stage of their learning. There are various stages for learner-centered teachers to follow: 1) Needs identification, 2) Preparatory work, 3) Organization of learning activities, 4) Evaluation, 5) Conclusion and subsequent application

Based on the policy makers’ version of a learner-centered approach, on a practical basis, teachers have to work harder. First, they need to identify learners’ needs, interests, and knowledge through questioning, observation and questionnaires. Next, in the preparatory stage, teachers need to study the contents and curriculum to plan content and teaching methods. Learning activities provide authentic experiences and a relationship to learners’ lives. Teachers prepare learning resources in terms of instructional media, fact sheets, instructions, materials and equipment; and self-learning centers with data available for learners to study and search when they wished. In this stage, teachers need to survey learning sources for learners such as public libraries, museums, zoos, and the environment.

In the section on the organization of learning activities in the documents, it was clearly stated that teachers offer nothing but friendship and assistance in all matters. Learners are encouraged to participate in the learning activities at their own pace in a

non-threatening environment. At the evaluation stage, teachers evaluate learners' learning outcomes to see if the goals have been accomplished. Two methods of evaluation are given. For the first one on reading practice, criteria provided are: fluency, correctness and clarity in pronunciation; correctness and clarity in pronunciation of /r/ and /l/; correctness and clarity in pronunciation of compound consonants with /r, l, w/; correct pauses at the end of phrases/sentences. These criteria focus on accuracy, and were used a lot by Teachers A, B and C. Especially, Teacher A used these criteria in her class, and spent almost all class time in reading and pronunciation practice which did not help developing students' communicative competence. The second one was called creative evaluation for speaking skill. There were no specific criteria, but a teacher's comments were provided:

When a child starts to speak, no matter whether he makes a mistake or not, we have to, first of all, praise him and give him such encouraging words as 'Very good'. If you continue like this, you'll be better and better. I never say he's wrong, but will ask 'what has happened to this part?' 'Is there something missing?' The boy concerned will then find additional information. We call this 'Fill in the gap process.'

Guidance of how to deal with situations when students could not fill in the gap was not provided. This seemed to focus more on student's language performance. However there was no explanation of how to interpret this performance for scoring since teachers needed to give evaluation in terms of grades. Moreover, these comments were a teaching technique rather than an evaluation method. However, from the observations, none of the three teachers used the creative evaluation because none used any speaking activities.

This publication also provided examples of teachers applying a learner-centered approach in different subjects and different situations. For example, Vimolsri Suwannarat received a national award because she had applied a learner-centered approach in her science class.

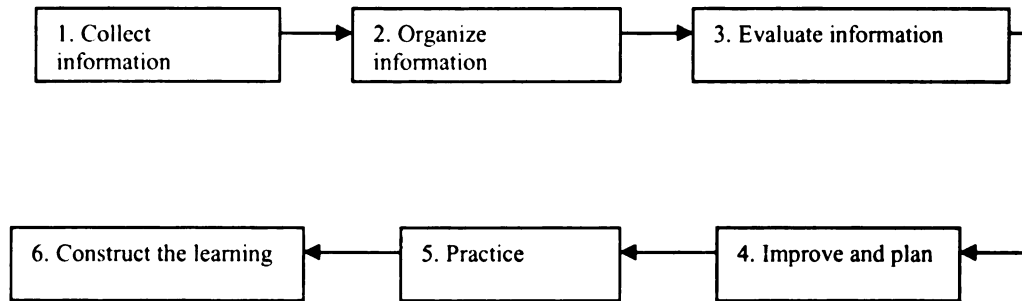
Vimolsri Suwannarat makes a plan for organizing the learning process by allowing her students to carry out a small-scale research project of their choice. The teacher and her students decide on a topic closely related to their lives, e.g. the best hours for rubber tapping for maximum quantity of latex; use of extracts from *tinospra cordifolia* and king of bitter to prevent worms in salted fish; production of mosquito repellent from palm blossoms etc. The teacher's role is confined to the provision of advice and recommendation on planning, seeking knowledge and identification of and solution to problems with her students. (Office of National Education Committees 2000, p. 31)

4.2. Findings of a Lecture on a Learner-Centered Approach: A lecture by an educator from the Ministry of Education

This lecture on a learner-centered approach was conducted by Dr.Gowit Prawalaprit, a Thai educator of the Ministry of Education. It was televised via an educational channel on July 24, 2000. All teachers were required to watch this program and produce a lesson plan based on the lecture for their teaching situations. The following is taken from the transcription of his lecture:

A learner-centered approach is a teaching method which allows learners to go through a process of participatory learning. Teachers no longer provide the right answers to learners, but guide learners to reach the answers and solutions in their own. Teachers are coaches, trainers, or facilitators who support learners on their process of learning. In this process, teachers help learners collecting data, organizing the data, evaluating the data, improving the data, practicing and producing. Finally, learners are expected to be able to construct the body of knowledge on their own.

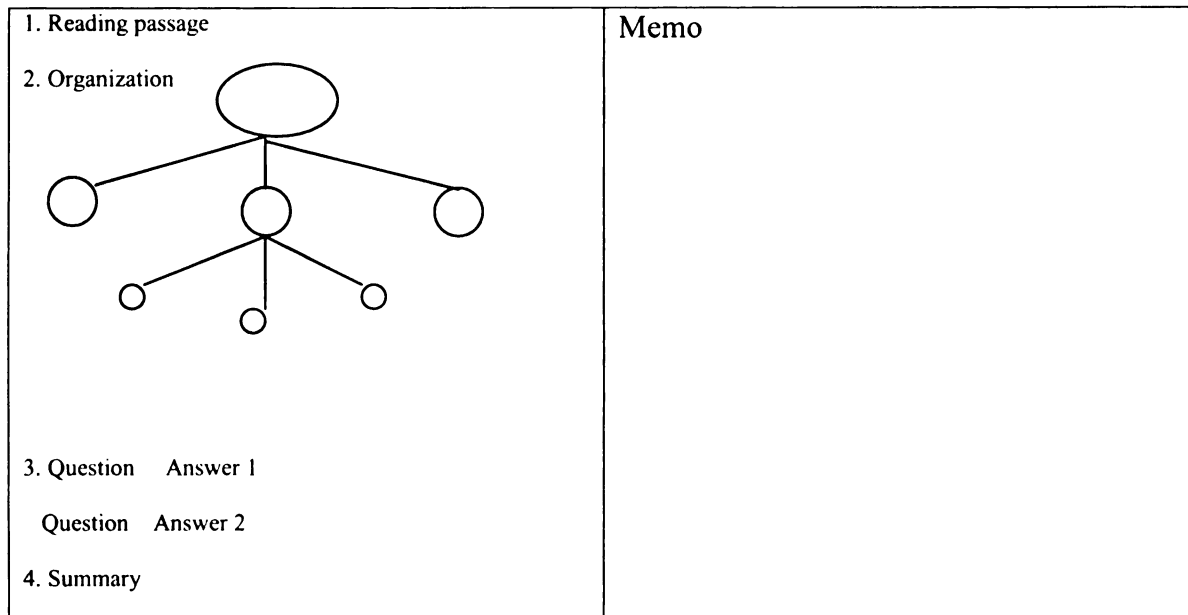
Dr. Prawalaprit introduced a diagram of participatory learning as follows:



An example given in the lecture was a reading comprehension lesson. Learners and teachers worked to find an interesting reading passage. Learners read the reading passage to collect information about the reading passage. After analyzing the data, they were told to organize the information meaningfully based on organization of the passage. According to Dr. Prawalaprit's lecture, learners had to discuss and evaluate the diagram in terms of rightness, virtue and beauty. There were no specific steps or guidance on how to discuss and evaluate the diagram in terms of rightness, virtue and beauty. Then the learners were told to improve the organization of the information, and planned for practice. Learners practiced or produced tasks. Finally, learners summarized and constructed the knowledge on their own. In this process, teachers were not supposed to give any answers, but to guide them to find the answers on their own. He stressed that if the answers were given, this process would be teacher centered. Teachers were facilitators asking questions to encourage learners' process of thinking. He emphasized that learners were different; therefore, teachers should be aware that some learners might or might not be able to do the same thing at the same pace. It was possible that different learners might produce different outcomes based on their potential. This diagram was explained without any example of how it was actually implemented in classrooms. He

then transferred the diagram into a lesson plan which he called the “play book”. Figure 4.2 shows the Play-book as suggested in the lecture.

Figure 4.2: Play-book



The above figure was presented to teachers on a board. Again, the implementation of the figure in a real situation was not provided. All teachers were expected to use this framework when they produced their lesson plans after watching the program. What was surprising was that the six stages of the participatory learning process were reduced to four stages in the play book. Stages 4 and 5 disappeared. There was no explanation given. The memo on the right side of the lesson plan was for teachers to record what actually happened in the classroom which had no clear usefulness to learning given. There was a concern if teachers could really record what was going in the class at the same time they were facilitating their learners. He stressed that learners had to work on their own at every stage. How could learners do it on their own?

After watching this one-hour lecture, teachers of all subjects produced a lesson plan based on this lecture, and handed it in at the Office of District Primary Education the following week. From my interviews with both the teachers and the supervisors, teachers did not understand the lecture, and they could not apply it in their situations. According to Supervisors 4 and 5 of the District Primary Education Offices, many teachers copied each other's lesson plans, and many teachers copied the same lesson plan they had had. Many tried their best to produce the lesson plans, but they did not produce good ones. According to Supervisors 3, 4 and 5, all teachers would get the certificate as long as they handed in something. They said they did not expect application of the knowledge teachers got from the lecture at this point. I wonder if supervisors themselves understood the lecture, and were able to apply the knowledge in any actual teaching situations. Supervisors could not provide training on their own; they relied heavily on leading teachers in their areas to help them in terms of interpreting the curriculum and designing teaching materials to meet the qualification of the curriculum. They gave the certificates to all teachers without any evaluation because good evaluation must provide an explanation of why the lesson plans were not approved, and how teachers could improve or correct them. Supervisors were not able to do so.

4.3. Findings from a One-Day Conference on a Learner-Centered Approach conducted by supervisors at the Provincial Primary Education Office.

The second resource of a learner-centered approach provided by the Ministry of Education was a one-day conference, organized by supervisors at the provincial level who had been trained and were knowledgeable in the procedures for giving training about

a learner-centered approach to teachers and other supervisors. About 80-100 teachers participated in each session. Supervisor 3, as the organizer and trainer of this conference, defined the concept and explained the procedure she followed in the following excerpt:

A learner-centered approach is learner important. They learn happily based on their potential. The five principles of learning reform of a child-centered approach were: 1. Learners learn happily, 2. Learners learn by doing, 3. Learners learn from friends and groups, 4. Learners learn with integration of related subjects, and 5. Learners summarize the learning on their own. The Ministry provided us the procedures to organize the training. After we gave the knowledge of five principles, teachers were divided into 5 groups and rotated to 5 different learning centers. Teachers learned through learning centers. There were five learning centers for five principles. For example, one learning center demonstrated teaching and learning of integration. Teachers studied and learned at each learning center. Other learning centers demonstrated how learners summarized the learning by themselves. Each learning center had a trainer demonstrating the stages of teaching and learning. This way, teachers learned. After that teachers wrote what they had learned from each learning center. Each group designed a lesson plan based on what they learned.

Teachers were encouraged to seek their own knowledge through the learning centers provided. There were five learning centers for teachers which demonstrated how each principle was actually used in different subjects. According to Supervisor 3, none of these centers showed the use of a learner-centered approach in teaching English. Most of them were teaching social science subjects and Thai. Working together as a group, teachers finally summarized the knowledge and produced a lesson plan after they went through those learning centers.

The ideas of a learner-centered approach from the conference seemed the most effective way among the three channels to reach teachers and supervisors. Teachers and supervisors seemed to cite the characteristics of a learner-centered approach based on this conference the most which provided opportunities for discussion between teachers. As a

result, this experience stayed longer in teachers' memories. However, English teachers who participated in this conference reported that these ideas from the conference were not suitable for teaching English. Details will be presented in Chapter 7, dealing with the findings of research question 1.

4.4. Findings from the Publication Produced by the Curriculum and Instruction Development Department, the Ministry of Education

The third resource of a learner-centered approach provided for teachers was a publication, *Teaching methods of a learner-centered approach*. In this publication, a learner-centered approach was defined as:

A teaching method which provides learning activities in line with learners' lives, aptitude, and interests. In this approach, learners participate at all stages of learning process, they learn through actual practice or action till self-learning is attained (Department of Curriculum and Instruction Development, Ministry of Education, 1996).

This definition of a learner-centered approach was similar to that in the first publication by the NEC. Both emphasized the participation of learners at all stages, and development of learners to their highest potential. This publication added the features of actual practice and self-learning into the definition. Learners were expected to have actual practice through 21 teaching methods provided in this publication. This publication devoted only the first three pages to the concept of a learner-centered approach, and the rest of it was detailed description of 21 teaching methods. It did not provide any specific examples of teaching procedures for any subjects. It served as the reference book for 21 teaching methods. Only one out of ten schools I visited had a copy

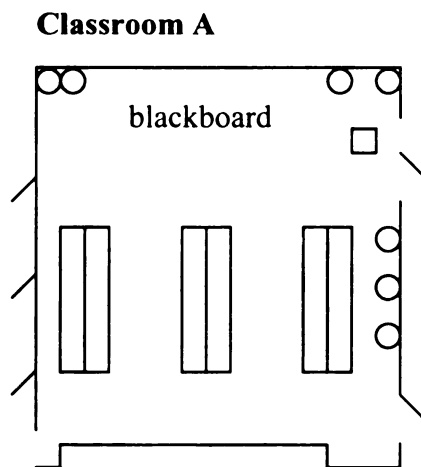
of this publication. This school is situated close to the Department of Curriculum and Instruction Development, Ministry of Education. This publication was not well known among teachers and supervisors.

Chapter Five

Findings from Observations and Stimulated Recall

Three teachers were observed in this study with three consecutive observations for each. The analysis will be made for Teacher A, B, and C consecutively. I will first describe the classroom arrangement of each class, to acquaint the readers with classroom situations in Thailand. Then I will describe the details of three observations with information from the stimulated recalls for each teacher.

5.1. Findings of Observations and Stimulated Recalls of Teacher A



This was a 6/5 class, one of the five grade six classes at this school. There was a blackboard in the front, windows to the left, and two doors to the right. Teacher A taught eight subjects to class 6/5, except physical education. Her desk was next to the front door. There were some pictures with English vocabulary next to the board, and pictures of child development, human internal organs and human evolution on the wall in between the two doors. There were some metal shelves, a garbage bin, a sweeper, two pairs of slippers at the back of the room with some litter on the floor tile. Thirty-two students sat

in six rows. They all wore white shirts and blue skirts for girls, and blue shorts for boys. Students took their shoes off before entering the class, and left them on the floor under their desks. This class was on the third floor of the building. The language lab was on the second floor, but had not been used for a while because of broken sound instruments. The adjacent building close to the window of the room was under construction; therefore, construction noise was part of the learning and teaching of this class. I always sat at the back of the class where I could see what was going on in the class clearly.

5.1.1. Teacher A's Observation 1

Thirty-one students were doing mathematics exercises. Without mentioning my presence in the class, Teacher A told the students to put away the mathematics exercise they were doing and open the English exercise book. She told the students to repeat after her in chorus when she read the vocabulary word one by one (Look at Appendix 3. Exercise 6.1. Vocabulary list 1). The following was an excerpt from the observation. (TA refers to Teacher A; C to Class.)

TA: วันนี้เราจะมาต่อกันเรื่องญาตินะคะ (Today we will continue studying the same topic "Cousin"). Open your book, page 65. Page 65, repeat after me. Aunt

C: Aunt

TA: Aunts

C: Aunts

Then she told the students to open page 68, which was the homework assigned at the previous English class. The following is the passage students were assigned to read and finish the question before coming to class.

Question 1. Whose birthday party am I going to go to? Next month, some people are going to have birthday parties? And I'm going to go. I'm going to wear my best clothes. I want to eat a lot of cake and ice-cream. I think I am having a good

time. Whose birthday party am I going to go to? Guess. Number one, this man was 55, when I had my first birthday. My father and uncles look like him. He played with my father, when he was a little boy. His wife is my grand mother and I am his grand child. Whose birthday party am I going to go to? Guess!

She asked students who finished the homework to raise their hands. Not many students raised their hands. Teacher A read the passage sentence by sentence, and each student was called to translate the sentence she just read. If a student translated it incorrectly, she called another student to translate. After all sentences were translated into Thai, she called a student to answer the question. Teacher A explained the answer. Her explanation and conversation were all in Thai. Then she asked the class to repeat after her, reading question one again. She explained later that she wanted them to practice pronunciation. Finally, every student was called to read a sentence one by one. There were another four questions similar to question 1, and Teacher A repeated the same teaching technique for question 2. She assigned questions 3 and 4 as homework again for the ones who had not finished them. This was the second time that this exercise was assigned as homework.

The class was asked to open the textbook to page 69, which contained another vocabulary list. (See Appendix 3. Exercise 6.2.Vocabulary list 2). Again, Teacher A read the vocabulary and asked the students to repeat after her. She called on some specific students to translate each one in Thai. If any student could not provide the right translation, she called on additional students until she got the correct answer.

After finishing this reading and translating, she started reading the same list for the second round. Students repeated and provided the translation for each vocabulary item. Two students who sat together at the back of the class did not repeat after her, but used their feet to fix the broken floor tile under a table. Three to four students did not

bring their English books, so they did not read or translate any word. Another two students were writing something on the tables.

After the series of repetitions and translations, Teacher A told the class to write down the translation of each vocabulary item on the list. Although the translation of each vocabulary item was given twice in this class, some students still either looked for the meanings in the dictionaries or asked for the meaning from friends. It was clear that students were not paying attention to the reading and the translation.

After the writing of translations was finished, every single student in the class was called to read one word from the list starting with the student who sat in the last seat of each row. Teacher A said that she wanted to test if each student could read after a few times of repetition. Now most students were alert and counted when their turns would come and which word they were supposed to read. Again, they did not listen to the reading of their friends, but paid attention to counting the turns and practicing the vocabulary they were going to read. One student in this class did not have the English textbook, and did not participate in any reading or translating. He did not pay attention to the class.

Teacher A corrected all pronunciations she thought not perfect. The class ended with students reading aloud one by one. All students were corrected on their pronunciation. Teacher A admitted that the correction might discourage her students. However, she felt that she had no choice because she thought that mistakes needed to be corrected; otherwise, they would repeat the same mistakes. She believed that it was her duty as a teacher to correct students' mistakes.

5.1.2. Teacher A's Observation 2

The second observation started with the teacher reading the same vocabulary list from observation 1, and the class repeating after her. (See Appendix Exercise 4.2. Vocabulary list 2.) Then each student read each word aloud followed by the translation, again starting with the students who sat in the last seat of each row. She explained that each student was called to read a sentence one by one because she wanted every single student to have an equal chance to read. It was a technique to stimulate inattentive students to pay more attention to the lesson. She complained that some students in her class did not participate in learning English because these students thought that English was not important and not necessary to their lives. I asked a student after observation 2 why he never participated in any activities. "I am bored," he said. It was possible that the students thought that the learning and teaching of English was very boring rather than very difficult, as she thought.

After every student had a chance to stand up and read a word with the translation, Teacher A asked the class to open the homework she had assigned. (See Appendix 3. Exercise 4.3. Cloze Test.) There were about eight students who did not do the homework. The homework was a cloze test where students filled in the blanks with information from the reading. Teacher A read the Cloze Test, and stopped at the blank, then asked each student to provide the missing word to fill in each blank. She wrote down on the black board the right answer provided by students until the Cloze Test was completely filled. The missing words were both grammatical and content words. She seemed to focus more on grammar. The following is an example taken from Teacher A's

observation transcription. The explanation was all in Thai (the translation of each Thai sentence is provided in the following parenthesis).

TA: He...45 Kilograms.

C: weight

TA: อย่างนี้หรือเปล่า (Is it like this?) มี S ด้วยหรือเปล่า (Is there an -s?)
นักเรียนดูนะคะ W-E-I-G-H-T (Look at W-E-I-G-H-T) Weight คำนี้เป็นคำนาม
(Weight is a noun) หนูใช้ไม่ได้ (You cannot use it) แต่ในลักษณะนี้ . (But in
this case). He...45 Kilograms หนูต้องไปหากริยามาใส่ (You have to put a
verb in this lot) มันมีประธาน (It has a subject) มันต้องมีกริยา (It needs a
verb) คำว่า Weight ตัวนี้ไม่ใช่คำกริยา (This word Weight is not a verb)
คำกริยาที่แปลว่ามีน้ำหนักหาเร็วในภาคผนวก (You can find the verb of this
word in the appendix, look for it quickly)

C: Weigh

TA: สะกดอย่างไร (how do you spell it)

C: W-E-I-G-H

TA: แปลจะคล้ายๆกัน (similar meaning)

C: W-E-I-G-H-E-D

TA: เขาทำไมต้องใช้ ED ทำไมล่ะ? (Why do you need an -ed?)

นี่มันเป็นเรื่องอดีตหรือเปล่า (Is this story past) หนูดูขีมันเป็นอดีตหรือเปล่า (Is
it past)

C: ลบ -ed ออก (Delete -ed)

TA: ลบ -ed ออก มันไม่ใช่อดีต (Ed should be deleted; it is not past)

นักเรียนต้องดูต้นประโยคเขาใช้ IS อยู่ แสดงว่ามันเป็นปัจจุบัน (You should look
at the sentence, they use 'is'. This means that it is present.)

คราวนี้ถูกหรือยังถ้าเขียนอย่างน weigh. (Is it correct to write down weigh)

Class: ยัง (No)

TA: ที่ถูกจะต้องทำอย่างไรอีก (What to make it correct?)

C: เติม S (Put an-s)

TA: เติม S ประธานเป็น He ฉะนั้นใช้ He weighs นะคะ He weighs 45 kilograms.
(Add an-s. He is the subject of the sentence, so we use 'He weighs.)

Next, Teacher A started to read some questions such as: How old are you? When
is your birthday? How tall are you? How much do you weigh? She told the students to
repeat after her. She told her students that for the next class she wanted them to ask each
other about their age, weight, and height by using the questions they had just read.
Before they could do that, she wanted them to practice pronunciations with her first.

Reading aloud continued until class was over. Students did not have a chance to ask each other information.

5.1.3. Teacher A's Observation 3

Teacher A did not continue what she planned the day before, for her students to ask each other about their personal information. Class was started when Teacher A read a short passage (See Appendix 3. Exercise 4.4. Reading passage.) She told the class to read after her sentence by sentence. After that, Teacher A asked the class to read aloud the Cloze Test they had finished the day before (See Appendix 3. Exercise 4.3. Cloze Test.) One by one each of the 31 students was called to stand up and read a sentence in the Cloze Test. After all students had had a chance to read one sentence, Teacher A told them to look at an application form. (See Appendix 3. Exercise 4.5.) She had assigned students to fill in the form at home with their personal information. Now in class she asked each student to give the answer. There were about eight questions provided after the form. Teacher A assigned eight students to write the answers of these eight questions on the blackboard. Some students, especially boys, talked quietly to each other or played quietly with their pens or pencils. They seemed inattentive to what was going on in the class. Class ended after she checked all the answers on the blackboard.

5.1.4. Summary of Teacher A's Observations

It can be concluded that Teacher A depended heavily on the textbook. Reading after the teacher, reading aloud one by one, translating into the native language, doing

comprehension exercises, and focusing on grammar were highly common activities repeated in all three observations.

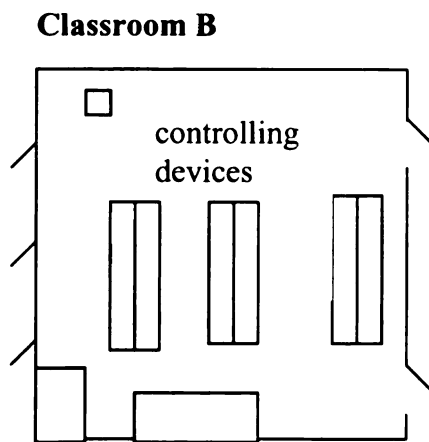
In all three observations, students were sitting at their desks. They were not supposed to move around without her permission. In three observations, only one student asked the spelling of a word. Other students never asked any questions although she asked them if they had any questions before continuing. While going over the homework, she called on students to read or answer in row order. If the students' responses came too slowly, the teacher would go on to the next student. She allowed very little time for students to answer. If the response was incorrect, she would call on the two or three particular individuals who always seemed to know all the correct responses, or she would move on to ask the same question of the next student. Some students did not pay attention to any activities at all. They did not even write down the answers provided to the questions.

Based on my observations, only a few students paid attention to the lesson, and Teacher A usually called these students to answer her questions. A few students were never called at all. There were one or two ignored by the teacher, for example the one who always sat at the back next to the window. In my field notes I wrote,

In all three of her classes I observed, there was a student who was never called on to make any response. He also did not seem to pay attention to what was going on in the class. He sat at the back of the class next to the window. He always looked out through the windows. He didn't have the textbook with him. He did not bring his English books in the first and the second observations. In observation 1, Teacher A was very upset with him. In observation 2, she did not pay attention to him. He was ignored. He was not in the class during the third observation.

Teacher A said that she had been a learner-centered teacher because her students did things in class. They read and wrote English. She wanted to use more communicative language teaching in her class, but the nature of the book she was using (*English is Fun*, 1997) was not suitable. It did not provide many communicative activities. Actually, *English is Fun* was written based on communicative language teaching theory. Most of the activities in the book are focused on communication. The problem was how these teachers used them. Rather than having students talking in pairs, or discussing the reading, the communicative language activities provided in the book were implemented as activities of reading aloud and repeating after the teacher as demonstrated by Teacher A's classes.

5.2. Findings From Observations of Teacher B



Classroom B was a sound lab with the sound controlling devices next to the blackboard, and a television set on the top. There were 16 fixed booths in the front with ear phones hanging on the glass wall of each booth, and behind the booths were 16 desks and 16 chairs. All the sound instruments were broken. The teacher's desk was at the back of the room. Teacher B took the back of the sound lab as her office. There were

piles of students' exercise books, small English books, and activities. Next to her desk, there was another desk for students who came to practice English during lunch break. On the top of this desk, there were some exercises, and English activities for students. All students wore uniforms of white shirts with blue skirts for girls, and khaki shorts for boys. They came to this classroom for English. They took their shoes off, and left them outside. There were some pictures with English words on the walls of the room. Outside of the room, there was a poster of Valentine's Day, made by Teacher B with her students.

5.2.1. Teacher B's Observation 1

After introducing me to the class, Teacher B asked students to look at pictures of eight different activities students were doing around a camp. In each picture, there was a clock telling the time of the activity. Next to the eight pictures, there were eight different sentences describing the pictures. She asked in Thai what they could see from the pictures in Thai, and the students replied in Thai as well. Teacher B asked them to say it in English. They could not.

Teacher B gave them the first letter of the words to help them. She could elicit only two items of vocabulary from students: camp and clock. Then she told the students that she would read the eight sentences on the left of the pictures one by one. The students matched what they heard with the picture. (The students could see the sentences she read on the left of the picture). The following excerpt was taken from my observation transcription of Teacher B's class during the listening-matching activity: (TB refers to Teacher B; C to class.)

TB: ฟังข้อความจากครูแล้วก็ไปหาภาพ (Listen to me, and look for the picture) "Listen and answer the question."

"Number one. "The camp will start at seven with some exercises."

"The camp will start at seven with some exercises."

"Which picture?" "The camp will start at seven with some exercises."

"Which picture?" ภาพไหน ภาพไหน ภาพไหน บอกเลย ภาพ (Which picture? Which picture? Which picture? Tell me the picture)

C: ภาพออกกำลังกาย (The picture of exercise)

TB: ภาพออกกำลังกาย (The picture of exercise) ใครเจอแล้วภาพออกกำลังกาย (Has anyone found it?) เขาจะนะถูกอันนั้นนะ (It is correct)

Students did match the first pair right without any problem by using information from the sentences they heard. However, instead of continuing, Teacher B directed students to use some tips in listening. Consider this excerpt:

TB: "The camp will start at seven with some exercises."

"Exercise" คือการออกกำลังกาย (Exercise means exercise)

แล้วตัวที่บอกนักเรียนคือตัวไหน (Which word in the sentence gives you the clue to choose the right picture?)

C: "Exercise"

TB: "At seven" "At seven" เป็นการบอกเวลา (At seven is telling time)

ถ้าเรารู้ตรงที่ว่า "At seven" คืออะไรเราหาภาพง่ายไหม (If we know the meaning of At seven, can we find the right picture easily?)

C: ง่าย (Easily)

TB: จักรวิธีการให้ง่ายคือพอเรารู้เวลาเราก็ดูนาฬิกาจะ เอาต่อไป (Therefore, to make it easy we should look at the time on the clock)

In my field-notes, I wrote,

In the listening activity, students were expected to listen to the target language. They made sense of what they had heard, and matched what they could make sense of with a picture. In this case, they had to choose a picture based on their understanding. If they could get the right picture, it confirmed what they understood was correct. This confirmation was part of the language development. I was surprised when Teacher B told her students to pay attention to the time on the clock rather than to the sentence. Teacher B cut short the learning process that definitely hurt rather than helped students' language development. Teacher B's tip inhibited the learning process. Students did not pay attention to the sentence, and did not try to understand it. They simply looked at the time on the clock as suggested.

After this activity, Teacher B drew students' attention to the grammatical point common for eight sentences. Then she read only the verb of each sentence, such as "will have", "will start", "will get", "will walk", etc. The class repeated after her. After reading after the teacher, students were asked to produce a sentence containing 'have' as a verb. She hoped that the students would produce a sentence containing future tense since they had just repeated after her with all the future tense sentences. Students could not make a sentence containing the verb 'to have.' They told her that they needed more time, but she pushed them to think faster. Finally, a student could think of one. He said "I have two hands." Then some other sentences were produced such as "I have two legs," and "I have a leg." Things did not go as she wanted. So she changed the verb to 'study.' The students produced "we study English" and "we study Thai." The sentences were perfectly correct, but again were not in future tense as she wanted. The teacher tried again by asking them when they would study Thai. Finally, through her elicitation, "We will study Thai tomorrow" was produced. Teacher B did not have question asking skills. It took so much time to get what she expected, which was a sentence containing future tense. However, Teacher B did not take advantage of it at all. Instead of having them produce the sentences with the future tense again since they understood what she wanted, she asked them to translate the verbs she said into Thai. She provided the verb in the future tense, and the class provided the translation of that verb. An example was the following:

T: "Will go"

S: จะไป (will go)

T: จะไป "Will play"

S: จะเล่น (will play)

She conveyed to the class in Thai the usage of 'will,' and the meaning of 'will.' Then she asked a student to cite some weather broadcast in Thai that the students usually heard on the radio. She wanted to relate the tense with real life situations such as a weather forecast in their native language. Here, there was an indicator of some idea of trends in language teaching, e.g. connection to real world. However, due to the teacher's lack of eliciting skills, students did not understand what the teacher was expecting of them. They did not produce a forecast showing the use of future tense in the native language. She then asked some other students until one of them used a component of the future tense (the word 'will' in Thai). Class was almost over when one sentence in Thai was produced with the word 'will.' The students were confused. They did not understand why Teacher B was not satisfied with their answers, and if their answers were correct.

When asked later after class why she wanted to ask students to talk about Thai forecasts, she said that she wanted them to relate a weather forecast in Thai also using a future tense. Students did not practice English very much this day. They listened to the sentences and matched them with the pictures by focusing on time on the clocks rather than the sentences. They translated some English words into Thai. Only one student produced an English sentence to meet her expectations. Teacher B asked some questions in Thai about their background knowledge of weather forecasts, and the students answered based on their knowledge. Most communication was in Thai.

5.2.2. Teacher B's Observation 2

It was Valentine's Day. Teacher B said in English, "Valentine is the day of love" and asked her students to repeat after her many times and copy it in their notebooks. Her students could not write Valentine, so they ran to the board outside the class to see the spelling of the word "Valentine's Day". Most of them ran to the board more than once. I asked Teacher B why she wanted the students to copy this sentence down. She thought that after the students listened to the sentence, and then said it by repeating after her, they should be able to write the sentence too. In her opinion, copying and writing were the same.

After that, Teacher B asked all students to go to the front of the class, and she divided them into two groups: boys and girls. There were about 16 students in each group. She gave a set of seven strips of seven English words to each group. Then she told both boys and girls who did not have a strip to go back to their seats. At this point, these students had stood there with no directions for almost five minutes.

The seven students in each group had to arrange seven strips into this order: Valentine- is -on -the- 14 -of -February. From the stimulated recall, Teacher B explained that this activity was meant to warm up and lead students to the Valentine's Day atmosphere. She said it was too difficult for her students, but she had not prepared another activity. She used this sentence scramble activity because it did not take so much time to prepare, she said. In this observation, Teacher B used much more English. However, the students were confused because they were not familiar with English instructions and did not understand. They did not understand even easy English sentences. This strongly suggested that Teacher B had never used even easy English with

these students before the observations. Teacher B said each English instruction more than four times, and finally ended it with a translation. Teacher B admitted that she was willing to do so as long as she did not have difficulty in speaking English. She admitted that she switched to Thai when she could not find the word in English.

After students arranged the sentence scramble correctly, she asked them to return the strips to her and return to their seats. She wrote, “Valentine is on the 14 of February” on the board. She read the sentence that she wrote five or six times, and the students repeated after her each time. Then she told the students to copy the sentence in their notebooks.

Teacher B might have forgotten that students had already repeated this sentence “Valentine is on the 14 of February” after her, copied it in their notebooks, rearranged the sentence scrambles, repeated after her again, and finally copied it again for the second time. This time they did not need to run to the board outside. All students knew that Valentine’s Day is on the 14 of February because they gave each other roses and stickers of hearts. I also received some before this English class. This activity took more than 20 minutes of the observed time.

After they finished, the teacher told them to sing a song called “Love.” It was a short song taught to them before. However, Teacher B started to sing phrase by phrase, and the students repeated after her, phrase by phrase. The students repeated singing after their teacher three times. She explained to me that singing was meant to recharge her students, and the repetition after her helped them to memorize the song better. I first thought that Teacher B introduced this song because it was about ‘love,’ which was related to Valentine’s Day, the theme of the day. However, this was not the case.

After the singing of the song of love, Teacher B switched to the theme of weather forecast again. Recall that in observation 1, she wanted her students to produce a Thai sentence about a weather forecast with the word 'will.' To continue this theme, she showed the map of Thailand. She also reviewed students' knowledge of directions: north, south, east and west, and introduced four pictures of different weather conditions: cloudy, snowy, rainy, stormy. After that she said a sentence, "Tomorrow will be cloudy." The students repeated after her. She substituted the weather condition (cloudy) with other words such as snowy, rainy, stormy; the students repeated after her for every single sentence. She then added more information about places in the former sentences. She said, "Tomorrow will be cloudy in Songkla" (a province). She substituted the place with other different provinces in Thailand. Again, students repeated after her. Teacher B believed that repeating after the teacher was important because learners had the chance to listen and speak at the same time. Therefore, she always made sure that her students had a chance to repeat after the teacher.

Finally, Teacher B gave four pictures of weather conditions to four students. These students were supposed to show the picture that matched what she said. Students showed them correctly. Teacher B explained in the stimulated recall that she used this activity to check her students' comprehension. If they remembered and understood the words and sentences, they showed the right pictures. Before class was over, she told the students to draw four pictures in their notebooks without stating clearly what pictures students were going to draw. I wonder if they knew what pictures they were going to draw. Teacher B explained in the stimulated recall that drawing the pictures of weather

conditions helped the students to review what they had learned in the class, and helped them to remember better.

I asked if she had a lesson plan. She stressed that she had been teaching English for more than 20 years, and she did not need a lesson plan. Her lesson plan was in her brain. She could remember them all. Students still did not have a chance to communicate in English.

5.2.3. Teacher B's Observation 3 (This was a two hour class)

Today, class was moved from the language lab to an ordinary classroom. When I entered the room, the students were sitting in groups of five to six. She didn't mention the homework assigned in the former class. On the blackboard was the lyrics of the song, called "Whatever Will Be, Will Be" or "Que Sera, Sera." She read each line of the song twice, and the students repeated after her line by line. Then she played the cassette tape of the song, and asked the students to sing along with the tape, but the students did not follow. She stopped the tape. She sang the song line by line, and students sang after her line by line. Then the students sang with her twice. She called one student to sing, but she couldn't. Teacher A sang the song line by line again, and asked that student to sing after her. She called another one to sing after her, too.

In the former observation, Teacher B had switched to focus on the theme of weather forecasts and future tense again after focusing on the Valentine's Day theme. This song "Whatever Will Be, Will Be" contained the use of word 'will.' There seemed to be a link between activities here. However, instead of keeping the same theme, Teacher B had her students practice pronunciation of final sounds /l/ and /n/. She also

introduced some new words related to weather forecasts. Again, she had them repeating after her. Then, she said the words in Thai, and asked students to translate them into English. Or she said the word in English, and students translated it into Thai. This activity was apparently not relevant and not necessary because it distracted students' interests and attention. Pronunciation practice could have been done later if misunderstanding or communication breakdown occurred due to the incorrect pronunciation.

She then gave a name card of different provinces to each group of students. She asked each group to show their name card, and pronounce the name on the card. She told the students that they were going to do group work. The students were divided into 8 different groups based on the name card of a different province they received. Now students sat in groups of four to five. She showed the pictures of different weather conditions used in observation 2, and asked them to repeat after her again.

She then distributed the map of Thailand to each group. She told the class to listen to the tape of a weather forecast twice, and they had to write what they heard on the maps. There was no clear message what they were supposed to write on the maps, the temperature, the name, or the weather condition of each place. She started the tape which was a weather broadcast from eight different provinces. The speed was too fast, and the sentences were too long for the beginning level. It was too difficult for these students to write down everything they heard. They were not provided with any information except that they were divided into eight groups. Grade 6 students did not have note-taking skills. After listening the first time, she stopped the tape, and went around to different groups to see if anyone could write anything. She was very disappointed because no one

could write any information they had heard. They could not do the task because they could not understand the difficult listening, and they did not know what to write.

She rewound to the tape in order to replay the weather forecast for the second time. Unfortunately, although she tried hard, she could not do it. Students started to talk to each other. A student next to me started to draw a picture while waiting. Teacher B was not very happy that she had no way to replay the same weather forecast.

This group work activity ended due to a technical problem. From the stimulated recall, Teacher B explained what she meant by group work activity. In this listening activity, the students sat in groups and each of them listened to the same tape. She wanted these students to remember all the information and share the information with peers in the group. Finally, after each student had enough information, she wanted these students to work individually by listening to the same tape they had listened to before, and fill in the temperature of each city on the map.

Her explanation concerned me because she divided students into groups so that after listening to the tape, each member of the group could copy each other's information. They could fill in the map with information about the temperature of each city without listening to the tape, by copying each other. Teacher B argued that this was group work.

After she could not replay the same weather forecast, she wanted to dismiss the class; however, these students did not have a chance to finish their listening activity. I asked her if she could read the weather forecast for the students. She said she could not because she did not have the script of the tape. She thought that she could jot down the information at the same time the students were listening. Unfortunately, she could not.

I had jotted down important information of the weather forecast for each province. I told her that she could read my notes to her students. However, she declined to do so. I did not want to read to the students because I came to the site with no intention of taking part in the teaching and learning activities. However, it was difficult for me to see students dismissed without any substantial teaching or learning. I asked her if I could help. Finally, I helped her teaching these students listening skills. At this point, it was no longer a non-participant observation. I had changed my role from a non-participant researcher to a participant researcher. I took part in the teaching activities in the classroom, and my first priority was not only to observe, but also to teach. Therefore, this information was not included in the analysis. Before I started to read, I told her students to write down all eight provinces on the map. And I told them to listen for the weather condition (four conditions: sunny, rainy, stormy and snowy) and the numbers for the temperature in each province. With sufficient information given to them, students could fill in the map with needed information. This was the field-note I took.

The first problem was the failure of the teaching technique. These students were not told clearly what they were expected to do in this listening activity. They were told only they were going to listen to weather broadcasts, and they had to write the information. There was no purpose provided for these students. They also were not told how to write the information, writing it as sentences as they heard, or just symbols and numbers.

The second problem was the map that did not provide any information or clues for the students. Teacher B could have prepared a better map with more helpful information such as numbers in the same order as the tape with provinces written on the map. This was helpful because it made students aware of the next information they were going to listen to.

The third problem was the teacher's lack of technology experience and classroom management skills. She could have prepared the tape better, for example, recording the weather forecasts 4-5 times so that she did not need to rewind it since her tape player did not have a tape counter.

The final problem was that she did not have knowledge of teaching methodology. In her view, group work was activities with students sitting together so that they

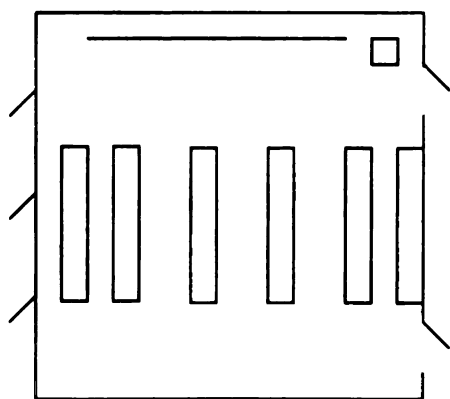
could copy information from each other. There was no purpose for working as a group, no roles, no interaction, no problem to solve, and no decision to make.

5.2.4. Summary of Teacher B's Observations

Teacher B had some knowledge of communicative language teaching, but she did not understand it clearly. She used some communicative features in her teaching, but ineffectively. In three observations, her students were involved in unrelated activities. Their interests were distracted by these activities. She could not reach the goal of communicative activities because she lacked classroom management and teaching technique. She tried to use English as much as she could in her teaching, but her students could not understand her simple English instruction. As a result, her students did not actually practice in any substantial activities or tasks.

5.3. Findings from Observations of Teacher C

Classroom C



Classroom C was on the second floor of one of the three main buildings in the school. The students of this class learned all subjects in this room. Different teachers of different subjects rotated to teach their subjects. Teacher C taught only English to this class. Students wore white shirts with blue skirts for girls, and khaki shorts for boys.

They normally sat in rows. However, in the first observation, class 5/1 had their English class under a big tree in the front yard near the building. In the second and third observations, teaching took place in this room, but desks and chairs were pushed to the back of the room. Students sat on the floor, stood in rows, or moved around depending on the requirement of the activities.

5.3.1. Teacher C's Observation 1.

This class was under a big tree in front of the building. Teacher C was standing in front of her students in their gym uniforms sitting on the ground. She told them to divide into groups of six. Students stood in five lines, and sang about four to five English songs that Teacher C had taught them. They sang and acted to the song. Then she told the students that she was going to teach them how to give directions to strangers. She told them to sing a song about turning. They turned left, right, and around while they sang. After the song, she gave the instructions to them such as turn left, turn right, go around, go straight, and go to the back. The students followed the instructions by turning in the right direction as instructed by the teacher. Teacher C stressed in the stimulated recall that action was helpful to language learning. Action helped them to remember the language pattern and use this language later.

After that a student was called to give the same five instructions to the members in his groups. The rest of the class was watching. All members of the group could follow the instruction correctly. Teacher C explained in the stimulated recall that this group was used as the model for other groups. Then a student from each group took a turn giving instructions to all members of his or her group. Finally, each member of each

group took a turn giving instructions to each individual of his or her group. Again, almost all students could follow the five instructions correctly. Students were told to bring a piece of cloth to the next class.

5.3.2. Teacher C's Observation 2

The students were in their classroom. Class was started with singing songs twice related to directions. They also sang and acted to the songs. Now the tables and chairs were pushed to the back of the room. The students were divided into six groups. She then told the students to cover their eyes with a piece of cloth. Then she gave instructions: turn left, and right, go straight, go to the back, go around, and stop. Most of the students followed her instructions correctly without seeing their friends. Teacher C explained later that she wanted to make sure that the students could follow the instructions by themselves. Covering their eyes prevented them from copying their friends. The result was impressive. Students could follow the instructions correctly without seeing their friends.

Then she explained in Thai the game "Covering eyes, feeding a banana," a popular Thai children's game. One student of each group was the feeder who covered his or her eyes with a piece of cloth with a banana in one hand. One was to be the eater, who stood stationary at a spot unknown to the feeder. The rest of the group helped by telling the directions such as go left, go right, and go straight to the feeder so that he or she could put the banana into the recipient's mouth. In order to make this game more competitive, two groups at a time competed with each other. The score went to the faster group. The students were very excited. They did their best to get the score. Class was very noisy. It

was full of shouting, screaming, and laughing. All students had a chance to be either the feeder, the recipient, or the navigator. Class was very loud. All students had smiles on their faces, but almost all of the talking between students and teacher and between students and students was in Thai. Noise and fun did not equal language learning by themselves.

5.3.3. Teacher C's Observation 3

Teacher C gave the same instructions used in observations 1 and 2 to a student, and he could turn correctly. Teacher C said that she wanted to review what the students had learned in the previous class. Then she showed five vocabulary cards of the same five instructions: turn left and right, go around, go straight, and go to the back. She showed the cards for four to five rounds, and the students read them all. They could read what Teacher C had taught them. So far students had been exposed to only these five vocabulary since observation 1. It was possible that students had been pre-taught about these five words before observation 1 because they all knew them and had been able to turn correctly as they were instructed since the beginning of observation 1. In observation 3, Teacher C continued to use drill activity although her students appeared ready to move to the next level where they could use language communicatively.

Then Teacher C told the students to play a whisper game, another drill activity. They divided into five groups, and they sat in line on the floor. The teacher showed one card only to the first student in each group who whispered to the next student behind him or her. Each student whispered it to the next student behind him or her. The last student of each group told the class what he or she was told. The teacher revealed the card she

showed to the first one to show if it was right or wrong. The score went to the right answer. All students actively participated in order to get the highest score. Each member of a group had a chance to be the first one in each line, and started to whisper the word he or she saw on the card.

After that, Teacher C reviewed phrases about places and expressions used in asking for directions “How to get to a (place).” It was clear that these students had been taught about this expression before because Teacher C asked in Thai what phrases and expressions she had taught. Students were able to tell her correctly in English. Then instead of having a communicative activity, Teacher C used the expressions for asking for directions in Thai, and the students gave her the English translations “How to get to a (place)”. Or she said them in English, and students translated them in Thai. Now she asked the class the directions to the post office of the town. The class gave the directions to her in English. They answered her differently depending on where they started. They looked confused, and lost their confidence. They started to talk to each other in Thai about the problem. To help her students to gain back the confidence, Teacher C called the three best students in the class (Student A, B, C) to the front of the class to demonstrate how to give directions to a stranger. She told Student A in Thai to ask how to get to the market. Student A said it in English. Then she told Student B in Thai to say *go straight*. Student B said it in English. The following excerpt was taken from my observation transcription: (TC stands for Teacher C)

TC talking to Student A: อยู่ที่โรงเรียน แล้วนิดาอยากจะรู้จักทางไปตลาด
เขาใกล้ๆก่อน. (Student A, you are at school, and you want to go to the
market.)

Student A talking to the teacher: หันหน้าไปทางไหนละ (Which direction do
I face?)

TC talking to Student A: หันหน้าไปทางนี้ เาแล้วเธอจะถามว่าอย่างไร (This direction, how do you ask the direction?)
Student A talking to TC: How do I get to the market?
TC talking to class: เาดูนะคะเดี่ยวเธอต้องปฏิบัติ (Class, look! You will do it yourself later)
Student B: It is....
TC talking to Student B: เ้ายบอกให้ตรงไป (Wait, Student B. Tell her to go straight). ให้พูดไปเลยว่า Go straight (You say 'go straight')
Student B talking to TC: Go straight ahead, turn left, go straight ahead, turn right.
TC: เา เาใหม่ฯ ถามใหม่ฯ (Do it again. You ask again)
Student A: How do I get to the market?
Student B: Go straight ahead, turn left, Go straight ahead, turn left
TC talking to Student A: Thank you, Thank you ขอขอบคุณ บอกทาง (Thanks for telling the directions)
Student A: Thank you

In my field-notes I wrote,

This was not a communicative activity. Students A and B actually talked to Teacher C, not to each other. Student A did not listen to the directions because in reality, she knew where the market was. There was no need to listen to Student B's directions. Three students were called to the front of the class, but only two of them were given the roles to play. Student C stood there uncomfortably without any role.

Teacher C used another pair to demonstrate how to tell directions to a place in their town. They gave the directions based on the location e.g. turning left and right and directions they were facing at the moment, but Teacher C said it was wrong. She was facing the direction opposite to the students! As a result, students were confused. They were confident that it was correct, but the teacher told them that they were wrong. Both the teacher and the students were not satisfied with the result.

In the stimulated recall, Teacher C said that she was very disappointed because she expected them to tell the directions fluently and accurately. Teacher C thought that this activity was too difficult for the students. She admitted that the activity had

discouraged her students in speaking English, and they thought that they could not give directions in English. She explained that she adjusted this activity class by using actual places in the school. Students actually walked to the place while they gave directions and pointed to the locations at the same time. Teacher C misunderstood that what she explained was real communication. In fact, it was not real communication because learners used language to describe the phenomenon rather than to communicate. In other words, learners were describing what they were doing. In actually giving directions, no one could follow a stranger around, giving him or her directions and pointing to the locations at the same time.

5.3.4. Summary of Teacher C's Observations

Teacher C focused only on drills such as total physical response and games. These activities were suitable for young learners especially during the preparation stage, and they were relevant only at the pre-communication stage where students were prepared step by step linguistically and emotionally to use the target language later in real communication. In her three observations, Teacher C did not have communicative activities that allowed learners to speak or practice giving directions authentically although students appeared ready to use them communicatively. Students needed communicative activities that allowed them to talk, interact and negotiate for meaning, not just act. In Teacher C's class, students did not have any chances to talk to each other communicatively.

Chapter Six

Interviews with Teachers and Supervisors

This section presents the findings of the interviews of three teachers and five supervisors. They were interviewed to see what they thought a learner-centered approach is, how it was implemented in teaching English, and what problems they faced while implementing a learner-centered approach. It will start with the findings of the interviews with the teachers followed by those with the supervisors.

6.1. Interviews with Three Teachers

Three teachers were interviewed about how they defined a learner-centered approach, and what problems they faced during the time of changes in language teaching in Thailand. They were Teacher A, B, C. Recall that the interviews were conducted in Thai, and I have translated these excerpts into English.

6.1.1. Findings from an Interview with Teacher A

Teacher A's opinion of a learner-centered approach is evident in the following excerpt taken from her interview:

Learners think on their own and do on their own. Teachers reduce their roles. They are supporters... I mean if learners are not able to seek knowledge on their own, they consult with teachers. Teachers are consultants... Learners have to be able to think, and act. They understand the content, and are able to summarize the content on their own.

In her opinion, a learner-centered approach was different from a teacher-centered approach in the sense that in a teacher-centered approach, teachers provide the content, teach how to think, summarize, and deliver the knowledge to students. But in a learner-

centered approach, learners do most of the work on their own. They seek knowledge, think and act on their own. Teachers are supporters and consultants. When asked how she was told to teach in a learner-centered approach, she said,

They told us to stimulate learners' curiosity in the way that teachers are counselors who advise their learning process, guide learners to learning resources, suggest interesting topics. Learners take most responsibility in seeking knowledge because learners should seek knowledge on their own.

This was the knowledge she got from the training of a learner-centered approach with all the leading supervisors from different parts of the country. She thought that this idea was not suitable for teaching English. She said,

The idea is suitable to teaching other subjects such as science or social science, but it is not suitable for teaching English. It is impossible for learners to seek knowledge in English on their own. It is impossible.

Teacher A showed her opinion about how using a learner-centered approach could cause problems from parents. She explained that all parents expected their children to learn at the same pace as other children. Weak students' parents were not happy to know their children could not learn as much as the stronger ones. They complained and asked their children to be taught like the others. Teacher A said:

In a child-centered approach, smart students could get all the knowledge and enjoy seeking knowledge, taking notes, and summarizing on their own. On the other hand, for weak students although the teacher summarizes for them, they still can't understand. They can't summarize on their own. They do not have their own work. When their parents ask them later what they learn, they cannot tell. They do not know, nor understand. It seemed a failure of learning and teaching. They do not learn anything.

The following was an excerpt from Teacher A's interview. She showed her opinion on how to use a learner-centered approach in teaching English. She said:

A learner-centered approach can be used in teaching English through interaction, group work where learners participate in language activities.... I first knew about a learner-centered approach during my college year. For example, in teaching writing, we cut a passage into strips of sentences. Learners learned by doing on their own (combining strips into a passage). This way, learners think and do on their own as well.

Her knowledge of applying a learner-centered approach in teaching English was not from the lectures or the conference by the Ministry of Education, but from the university where she had graduated. Teacher A understood a learner-centered approach and knew how to apply it in teaching English. However, when asked if she had changed to be a learner-centered teacher, she admitted that she had taught in a learner-centered approach only a few periods. There were three major problems that inhibited her from teaching English communicatively.

The first problem reported by Teacher A was her heavy teaching load (25 hours a week excluding her other routine responsibilities). She explained it in the following excerpt taken from the interview with her.

For most teachers, going to a teacher training is like energy recharging. The heavy teaching loads are like energy extinguishers. Heavy teaching loads make teachers run out of energy to teach in a learner-centered approach. Other teachers said that they should go to the training more often because the more training, the more energy recharged for teachers. I think it is safer in terms of budget if we provide good training to teachers, reduce their teaching loads so they can apply what they have been trained in their teaching. The next problem is teaching materials preparation. Teachers have to prepare tools and teaching materials. It takes a lot of time and effort for that preparation. If teachers are required to teach in a learner-centered way, teachers teaching loads should be reduced. It may take a week to prepare for a period, and if there are 5 periods a week (like English), there is no time for preparation... Moreover, there is no support in preparation in terms of resources and budget. It has been difficult already just to find a teacher's manual, and the school doesn't provide any financial support for the expense in teaching materials preparation. Teachers need to use their own funds in preparation.

Her second problem was a classroom problem. She reported,

In a class, it is not convenient to move tables and chairs, or to have physical movements, or to have loud noise. Definitely, the class next door won't like loud noise because they may be concentrating on a serious subject.

The third problem she reported was a problem with some students. She said,

Some students do not want to participate in the activities because they do not need English in their lives. When I ask them if English is useful, they say English is useful, but not for them. They don't use English outside the classroom...Some students cannot read or write Thai language very well, and this deficiency of mother tongue affects the learning of English as well. If students have a mother tongue problem, I know that these students will have problems in learning English...Another problem is that some students do not like English because they think English is difficult. It is not fun for them to see red crosses of mistakes on their work, and they have to correct their mistakes. In other subjects, students do not need to correct, such as artwork. Although it is not correct, they still have a piece of artwork.

Teacher A also reported the problem of materials preparation. She had already had a heavy teaching load with extra routine jobs in school activities such as the lunch program for all students and sound lab supervisor. She said,

Materials preparation is overloaded for teachers with heavy teaching loads. If teachers are required to teaching in communicative language teaching or a learner-centered approach, teachers' teaching load should be decreased so that they have enough time to prepare teaching materials... It may take five hours of preparation for one hour in-class teaching. Some subjects have five hours a week. Then how can teachers find time to prepare materials? (She teaches eight subjects to class A). Moreover, teachers do not have any technical support in materials preparation. Just to find a teacher's manual has already been difficult for teachers. Schools do not have resources for teachers. Definitely, expense in materials preparation is unavoidable, and teachers have to assume the responsibility.

Teacher A had known about a learner-centered approach since her college years. She understood clearly how a learner-centered approach could be applied in teaching English and other subjects. She was fortunate that she had never had to use her own funds to participate in any training. She attended six to seven training sessions a year which was considered many compared to other English teachers. However, she still

thought that teachers were not trained or had not seen enough of a learner-centered approach. In her opinion, changes take years. Teachers could change fast only if teachers grow up and are taught in that teaching fashion which is not the case for Thai teachers. She also suggests good ideas for the content and timing of teacher training. She emphasizes that teaching methodology and English proficiency improvement are two major components of any training for English teachers. Her ideas are reflected clearly in this excerpt:

Teachers have not been trained in nor seen enough of a learner-centered approach. Normally, we can do it only when we have seen it not just once or twice. We need to see it for years. Or we can do it if we grew up in that environment... A learner-centered approach can be used well in some subjects, and teachers of those subjects should be trained until they are confident to teach in a learner-centered approach...Each training should take at least 15 days. I think 1-2 days of training is not worth doing. It is better not to have that training. Each training should include teaching methodology and English improvement, vocabularies, grammar, listening, speaking, writing and reading comprehension. In English training sessions, teachers should be provided with a lot of activities... The training should be held during the school breaks, not in the middle of the semester. What happened is that training was held when budget was available. It always falls on school days which caused students at schools to suffer from having no teachers during the training.

Teacher A was trained during her college years to be a communicative language teacher by a leading teacher education institution. She understood communicative language teaching, and a learner-centered approach, and knew how to apply the knowledge in practice. However, she did not want to change. She planned to retire the following year after 25 years of teaching which allows her to get the pension. She looked forward to it, and at the moment, she was trying to survive in her teaching profession waiting to be freed from this hard work.

6.1.2. Findings from an Interview with Teacher B

According to Supervisor 3, Teacher B once was a very serious traditional teacher who taught the grammar of English. She has changed after being trained in communicative language teaching. In the training, she learned how to teach more communicatively. After the training, she produced many communicative activities for her students, and showed them to Supervisor 3.

Teacher B understood communicative language teaching to some extent, and tried to apply it in her teaching. She heard about a learner-centered approach through TV programs, and a conference. She barely understood it, and found it difficult to apply in her teaching. She said, "It is not difficult to change if we know how to". Like Supervisors 3 and 4, who were Teacher B's trainers, Teacher B thought that a learner-centered approach was not related to communicative language teaching. The following excerpt was taken from the interview of Teacher B when she tried to define a learner-centered approach based on her understanding.

In a learner-centered approach, learners are the center. Teaching and learning have to serve learners' interests. I agree with the idea, but not in teaching. ...In teaching, they (The educator of the Ministry of Education) told us that in a learner-centered approach, learners do and act on their own, and teachers are facilitators. If we let learners do and act from the beginning of the English class, it is the end of the story because they do not know what to do.

Teacher B's opinions reflected the reality of how a teacher perceived a learner-centered approach. She worked hard in order to change to a learner-centered teacher. She paid her own expenses to participate in conferences and training. Teacher B reported a lot of problems she faced in teaching English after the reform. She received training in communicative language teaching before the reform, and was encouraged to change to a

learner-centered teacher. She wanted to be a learner-centered teacher, but did not know how. She waited for the training to help her to change. In her opinion, a one-day conference, and long distance learning were not enough if the successful implementation of a learner-centered approach was the goal.

Teacher B reported that she had many problems in teaching English. The first one was the principal who did not provide her academic and administrative support. She said,

Teaching English is a failure because grade 1 teachers refused to teach English to their students although they were trained to teach. The principal does not do anything to them... I was asked to teach English to grade 1 students. I am happy to teach them because I want them to love English. Then these grade 1 students pass to grade 2. Again, grade 2 teachers do not teach English to them. The principal does not follow up with teachers if they have done their job, and I cannot tell teachers what to do... I have very serious problems when I have to teach these students in grade 5 or 6. I have to give them a foundation in English which they should have had since grade 1 again. Most principals do not realize the importance of English. They never participate in any English teacher training. They do not know about the new curriculum focusing on communicative language. This principal invited an English teacher from a private school to teach classification of words, count and noncount nouns to young students. This is deterioration. According to the new curriculum of English, grammar should not be taught to young learners, but he does not know.

Of the principal, Teacher B said,

He never listens to teachers' opinions. In the school meeting, teachers are not supposed to speak... He thinks that this school belongs to him only.

She reported that the principal did not provide support in terms of budget for academic activities. She said,

He used most of the school budget on building concrete things such as buildings, a football field, painting and flower gardens which can be easily noticed by visiting authorities.

As a result, a very small budget was left for the academic domain. Teacher B reported that she suffered from having no access to a working language lab because the electronic sound instruments in the language lab had been broken for a long time, and had never been repaired due to the lack of funds. She also lacked teaching supplies such as markers, and paper for teaching and producing materials for learners.

The next problem Teacher B complained about was that her grade 6 students had almost no English proficiency. She said,

These students have serious problems in reading. They can't read, or write. For example, "what day is today"? They can't read the word 'what' or 'day'. I still do not know how to solve this problem. Memorization is still needed, right? I have them memorize the words although they told me not to.

Because of their very low proficiency, these students did not want to participate in learning activities because they did not understand and thought that English was too difficult. She could not see any progress she could make with her students. She blamed former English teachers at her school who did not teach English to these students. In the interview, Teacher B not only complained a lot about her principal but also her colleagues. She called them school staff rather than teachers who talked all day without teaching. She thought that she was different from them. She did not interact with other teachers very much. She did not have any professional conversations with them. She thought that they did not understand her work and her goal of teaching English.

She also complained about her English proficiency, especially pronunciation. Teacher B reported that during her college years, English was not used extensively. She said,

I learned how to teach English. The teaching was all in Thai. I now get so used to using Thai with my students... Even during my practicum, I used Thai in my teaching, and my teacher did not tell me to use English. She also talked and

taught in Thai. I had very rare chances to speak English only when a native speaker was the instructor. Otherwise Thai was used in every subject.

She knew her weakness, so she tried to practice before class, and tried to speak English to her students. Her students could not understand English, so she used English followed by Thai translation. She said,

In the new English curriculum, English teachers are supposed to speak English to the students to make them familiar with English. I even sometimes need to translate Thai into Thai for these learners. If I speak only English, they don't understand. I, therefore, speak an English sentence followed by a translation ... I want to use English all the time, but I cannot. I switch to Thai when I can't find the needed word in English to communicate what I think. I admit that I also have a bad habit of speaking Thai to my students.

She participated in English proficiency programs provided by a teacher's college and teacher training sessions, and teacher training in communicative language teaching provided by Supervisors 3 and 4. She expected to get practical knowledge she could apply to improve her teaching. However, it seemed that she had not received the help she needed. She also could not improve her English proficiency to the level she expected. She still did not understand communicative language teaching. She stressed that before training, teachers should have been asked what and how they wanted to be trained so that the training could serve their needs better. Teachers should have had chances to see how the theory was actually applied in classrooms.

Teacher B taught English about 22 hours a week, and her extra responsibility was as a bookkeeper keeping records of all the students' savings. She did not look forward to her retirement like Teacher A. She was the oldest participant in this research, but she was the most energetic. She enjoyed teaching although her efforts and expectations had not been fulfilled which was discussed in the observations. She still kept up her hopes that one day she could help her students to be able to read, write, and speak English.

6.1.3. Findings from an Interview with Teacher C

The following excerpt was Teacher C's answer when she was asked what a learner-centered approach is,

In a learner-centered approach, learners learn by thinking and acting on their own. We have to teach learners to be able to think. There is no more memorization. Learners are encouraged to seek knowledge from learning resources, and they are encouraged to put knowledge into practice.

When asked how she used this knowledge in teaching English, she said,

Teachers have to teach learners to think, not to memorize. Learners are encouraged to seek knowledge related to their lives. I don't know how to use it in teaching English. I don't know how to do it... No one has given us the knowledge how to use a learner-centered approach in teaching English. Teachers are expected to apply this knowledge to their subjects on their own. They can watch the education programs from TV, read books. We have not been trained how to teach in a learner-centered approach... In teaching English, it is difficult to ask learners to think on their own. We need to give learners a foundation of knowledge first. For example, they don't know the meaning of a new vocabulary word; it is impossible for them to think of the meaning of the word on their own. However, if they want to know something, they can plan what they want to know. They can ask about words they want to know. Teachers can help them or encourage them to use dictionaries...

Teacher C did not major in English, and her main problem was her English proficiency. Teacher C reported that Thai was used in teaching during her college years.

Less than 20 percent of class time was used in improving speaking skills. Most of class time was used in reading and writing. Thai was used as the medium of instruction... I think the way we were taught during the college years was not correct because it was very boring. In phonetics class, the instructor explained how to pronounce the sound. There was no pronunciation practice.

She wanted to improve her English proficiency so badly in order to be able to acquire new knowledge of teaching. She said,

Since graduation (in 1979), I have never joined in any proficiency courses...I have to improve my English pronunciation, speaking skills and reading. I want to be taught by a native speaker, or one who is very proficient. I have a serious problem in listening, and vocabulary. Training provided by a group of native

speakers from Malaysia, and India was very interesting, but I could not understand the training clearly. If I could have understood everything in that training, I would have been very happy because it was a very interesting training.

Teacher C's school was a middle-sized school extending from grade 1 to grade 9. There were only 3 English teachers. Some teachers were forced to teach English to the lower levels such as grades 1-4, and she was very worried that she would be forced to teach English to grades 7-9 when the English teacher for grades 7-9 retired. She knew that she did not have enough knowledge of English to teach that level. She tried to improve herself by reading and watching videotapes.

The next problem she reported was administrative. She said,

We have three English teachers in the school. One of them did not want to teach English. The principal also assigns a teacher who has no English knowledge to teach English in grades 1-4. English is not continuously taught during English class... When I teach these students in grade 5, I have to start from A, B, C. I wish I could teach them from grades 1-4, and have another English teacher for grades 5-6 who would continue teaching English to these students... Some teachers teach only when the principal is at school. If not, they do not teach. Children love playing around without classes. There has been no administrative measure to improve the learning and teaching quality.

She reported that some learners did not want to study English. They refused to participate in any learning and teaching activities. She said,

The most serious problem is that they are not attentive to learning English, especially boys. They do not see the usefulness of English. They think they do not need to work hard because the grade in English is not taken into consideration in passing to the next level.

Teacher C also reported pressure for teachers to change to learner-centered teachers. She explained about her and her colleagues' situations:

We want to change, but we don't know what to do. There is no model, no help. The Ministry of Education needs to realize this problem. It needs to give better

knowledge of how to reform the learning and teaching to teachers... Teachers need training before asking them to change. We are told to change, but we do not know which direction they should go; as a result, they stick to what we know... Now we are very worried that they are going to evaluate us in August of 2002 to see if we have changed. They told us to do so many things in order to change that we don't think that we can work to meet the standards set.

6.2. Interviews with Supervisors

Five supervisors who were in charge of training English teachers were interviewed. However, only four of them were reported in this study because data from Supervisor 2 was not available due to the problem of the recording during the interview.

The four supervisors are:

Supervisor 1, the supervisor of English at the Office of National Primary Education (ONPE). According to the Thai hierarchical system, Supervisor 1 has higher rank than any other supervisor.

Supervisor 2, the supervisor of English at the Office of Bangkok Metropolitan Primary Education (OBMPE). These data were lost due to recording problems.

Supervisor 3, the supervisor of English at the Office of Provincial Primary Education (OPPE).

Supervisors 4 and 5, the supervisors of English at the Office of District Primary Education (ODPE).

6.2.1. Findings from an Interview with Supervisor 1

Supervisor 1 defined a learner-centered approach in the following excerpt taken from his interview:

Learners have individual needs. Teachers provide learning activities to meet their needs. Teachers are the facilitators who set the learning process in which learners are encouraged to seek knowledge on their own.

Supervisor 1's opinion was that teachers provide learning activities and the learning process to meet learners' differences. Teachers should teach what interests their learners. When asked how learning activities and the learning process could meet learners' differences, he explained,

For example, learners may want to use cartoons, teachers' work is to think how to use cartoons to teach four language skills to learners. Or teachers study the objectives and the content of the curriculum, and try to relate cartoons to the curriculum provided.

When asked if teachers were able to do as he explained, he answered that

There were many teachers who had already changed. An actual example given by Supervisor 1 was that learners at one province told their teacher that they wanted to learn about a soccer game. Then the teacher and learners looked for information about a soccer game together. The teacher could not find information in English. He told his students to help. Finally, one day a student came to class with a textbook from grade 11, which had the history of soccer.

One of the serious problems for teachers has been the lack of English teaching materials. This teacher took time to look for information about soccer, and he failed. He was fortunate enough that his student could get some. How often will an English teacher be lucky to find a piece of information in English that interests learners and is suitable to their proficiency level? Often, teachers do find some materials, but they usually are in the Thai language. Some may not be able to translate them into English due to their low

proficiency. For others, translation could possibly be made, but learners should be exposed to authentic language rather than simplified input. Why is authenticity important? Learners who learn a second language through simplified texts or conversations find it difficult or sometimes impossible to communicate in real life situations because they are not familiar with the authentic language used by native speakers. Apparently, Supervisor 1 agreed with the one-day conference where learners were encouraged to seek knowledge on their own. Teachers guided them to the sources of knowledge for example, by suggesting they go to the library.

Supervisor 1 stressed that a learner-centered teacher encourages learners to seek knowledge interesting to them. Teachers are just the facilitators, not the knowers. He stressed that learners seek knowledge on their own; teachers do not need to take the role of the knowers providing the new knowledge of English to learners. In his opinion, teachers can learn at the same time with learners. Supervisor 1 also stressed that learners should be encouraged to practice the four language skills in English. Learners provide part of the content, and teachers provide learning activities to practice four language skills. When asked if teachers could fulfill that expectation, Supervisor 1 gave the following answer. (S1 stands for Supervisor 1 ; R stands for the researcher).

S1: Many teachers still do not understand the concept of a learner-centered approach, and they also do not understand how to teach English. However, we have to understand that we have many teachers. We have at least 32,000 teachers.

R: 32,000 only?

S1: We have 32,000 primary schools all over the country, and supposedly we have one English teacher for each school. Not even 10 percent of English teachers in primary school majored in English..... Teachers are not ready to change. They do not understand the concept of a learner-centered approach. As a

result, we try to provide them concepts and rationale of a learner-centered approach. We provided the knowledge through the seminar, long distance learning through television programs, and we invited the provincial supervisors to get the concepts from us, then they train their teachers.

Supervisor 1 believed that the conference, and the distance learning provided to teachers were sufficient for teachers to get the right concepts of a learner-centered approach, and sufficient for them to change to learner-centered teachers.

6.2.2. Findings from Interviews with Supervisor 3

The following excerpt illustrates how Supervisor 3 defined a learner-centered approach:

A learner centered approach is a learner important approach. Learners are different. Teachers should know learners individually. Instructional media and learning activities are designed to meet learners' potential, background, and aptitude...Teaching techniques can be different (for different groups), or sometimes similar for example at the presentation stage (when new knowledge is taught)

Supervisor 3 stressed individual differences, and these differences were met by providing teaching media or activities to different groups of learners. This was not different from Supervisor 1's definition. When being asked how teachers should teach to serve all differences in a learner-centered approach, Supervisor 3 suggested a teaching method for English in the following excerpt. (In the conversation, Supervisor 3 used some English words. All English words she used will be bolded, and this will be applied to all excerpts taken from all informants. She used the word "present" to mean teach, demonstrate, and speak). (R stands for researcher; S3 stands for Supervisor 3)

R: Supposedly, learners are required to introduce themselves. (It is the skill mentioned in the curriculum of 1996). How does a teacher teach this through a learner-centered approach?

S3: The teacher should teach this information such as name, surname, age, or hobbies first, then what new information students want to tell (about themselves). They have to prepare this information.

R: Everything is spoken in English?

S3: English. Can students speak English? They want to know how to speak the new information in English, the teacher has to tell them in English. And the one who doesn't want to know, the teacher doesn't need to tell.

R: So the teacher will go around to tell them how to say so in English.

S3: Yes, yes, this is learning because they hear what they want to know, so when this student **presents** his information introducing himself, it will be different from others. Students will learn from each other... Now each student introduces himself. The rest just listen to information about others.

R: How do they start to have a conversation?

S3: First teachers teach. Teachers **present** first. (Telling the students) "You converse like this, *What's your name? My name is. What's your name? My name is.... What is your father's name? My father's name is....*". This is what the teacher presents to the students... "Now what is your information? You need to prepare the information".

R: What?

S3: "You listen to the information the teacher **presents (teaches)** you, now you have to prepare your information to **present (talk)**". After that they exchange their information. Speak with their pairs.

R: The asking and answering depends on what the learners want?

S3: Yes, do they have the information to talk? If not, other learners can help teaching them how to say in English. They exchange the teaching and learning. This is how learners can learn by themselves. This is the learning reform. They learn happily because they can speak, and they can greet each other.

R: In communication, have you heard about negotiation and interaction? (She earned a master's degree in Applied Linguistics from India)

S3: Yes, yes.

R: When communicating, we can't tell what the other will ask or answer. If we use this method as you told me, learners imitate their teachers, right?

S3: Yes, imitate their teachers.

The following was an excerpt taken from the field notes for Supervisor 3:

I was so surprised to get this answer because this teaching method was not a learner-centered approach, but an audio-lingual approach where learners imitated the model provided by the teachers, and practiced. There was no real communication among learners. I might have misunderstood her; therefore, I discussed it further. I asked her:

R: In our real life situation, when we ask, it means that we want to know the answer. When students ask each other like “**what is your name**”, do they know the answer already? For example, if I ask you now “what is your name?” It is the question that I know the answer to already. It is not communication. When we communicate, the interlocutor will give the unknown information.

S3: Umm. (She paused for 3-4 seconds). We have to make sure that learners know the language, and understand the language. When we meet friends whose names we know, we don’t need to ask. If we want to know a visitor’s name, and if we want to know his or her name then “*what’s your name?*” Then he or she can answer the question. This is in the classroom. This is practice. When they are in the real situation, they can do it. We can do it. Teacher shows the model, and learners imitate. In the real situation, meeting a foreigner or a visitor is quite impossible. However, when they want to use it, they can use this information.

R: Ok.

In real communication, people ask something when they do not have the answers, and they want to know the answer. Apparently, Supervisor 3 could not understand real communication in language learning. If the major supervisor did not understand the concept of real communication in communicative language teaching, then how could English teachers understand it?

Supervisor 3 realized learners’ differences, but the teaching method described to meet the differences was an audio-lingual approach where correct models of language were provided for learners in order to show accurate models of language structures. Learners imitated the models and they were expected to produce the models when they were needed.

An audio-lingual approach has been rejected for a long time because it produces learners who may remember the correct sentences, but cannot communicate appropriately, who do not have communicative skills because in class they do not have a chance to practice authentic language in authentic situations. In an audio-lingual approach, learners are not prepared to use the language drill in a situation close to real

life language interaction. To be able to communicate, these learners need practice in communicating spontaneous and personal messages, not just models presented by the teacher.

What was crucial in this situation was that even the major supervisor at the provincial level who trained supervisors at the district level and teachers in the area could not apply a learner-centered approach in teaching English, and did not know how to apply a learner-centered approach to teaching English effectively. She did not realize that a communicative language teaching approach is related to a learner-centered approach. The purpose of learning a second language for learners is to be able to communicate, and communicative language teaching which focuses on improving learners' communicative competence serves learner's needs. Therefore, communicative language teaching fits well in a learner-centered approach framework. Supervisor 3 trained English teachers for many years before the reform based on the English curriculum of 1987 and 1996 focusing on communication. She also trained teachers in a one-day conference on a learner-centered approach.

Supervisor 3 stated that she understood communicative language teaching and claimed that she had trained English teachers in her areas to use communicative language teaching. From the materials used in the training, English teachers were not trained to use communicative language teaching, but to use communicative drill activities, or pre-communicative activities. It was important to know further if she knew that communicative language teaching is related to a learner-centered approach. The following excerpt illustrated Supervisor 3 did not understand that communicative language teaching, and a learner-centered approach are related.

R: ... if there is any training based on learner-centeredness for English?

S3: No,

R: No training based on a learner-centered approach?

S3: Training of English based on learner-centered approach has not been given by anyone. But we have a learner-centeredness for all subjects. We have done that. We have the procedures. (The Ministry provided all the procedures for supervisors to follow step by step to organize training of a learner-centered approach)

6.2.3. Findings from an Interview with Supervisor 4

Many sentences spoken by Supervisor 4 could not be understood clearly although the interview was conducted in the native language. When being asked to clarify, she became more confused, or sometimes changed the answer. Repairs for her broken sentences are provided in parenthesis. Supervisor 4 defined a learner-centered approach as

Learners are the most important. Teachers provide activities for learners to learn... Each learner is different. Therefore, teachers must provide activities for groups of learners who have (different) capability.

Supervisors 3 and 4 defined a learner-centered approach similarly. This was not surprising at all because Supervisor 4 was trained in learner-centeredness by Supervisor 3. Both emphasized learners' individual differences. However, Supervisor 4's opinion of how teachers taught based on a learner-centered approach was different from Supervisor 3's. The following illustrated Supervisor 4's opinion: (R stands for the researcher; S4 stands for Supervisor 4)

R: How should a learner-centered teacher teach English?

S4: Um. Try to find many methods to teach so that they learn. We use many activities they can do, and finally they learn as well.

R: What kinds of activities?

S4: The activities that students have a good time. They can do things and have a good time, and finally they summarize the learning together.

R: Does repeating after the teacher still exist?

S4: (pause) Yes, but changes, instead listening to the teacher, learners can listen to the tape cassette, or CD, or listen to the native speaker.

R: What is the main reason for using various activities?

S4: Students are different. Some students can learn from one activity (but some don't.) The one who learns first will learn more. The one who can't learn from one activity, will gradually learn (Supervisor 4, interview, April 29, 2001, p.32).

The following is from my field notes made after the interview:

Supervisor 4 suggested the use of a variety of activities to accommodate all individual differences in the class. In her opinion, a learner-centered approach had two major characteristics: knowing learners' differences, and providing activities to serve the differences. She emphasized the good time learners had from the activities rather than language development. The use of various activities was not only to accommodate individual differences, but also to provide more room for grading activities from the easiest to the most difficult so that learners can be developed systematically to their highest potentials. Various activities also provide room for language skill integration. All four language skills can be developed under the same theme which definitely help learners to develop their communicative skills fully. The most important point was that learners' proficiency was gradually developed to their optimal stage where they used language communicatively. This way all individual differences are met since they could use language to communicate as they wish.

When being asked about roles the learner-centered teachers had to take,

Supervisor 4 answered the following:

R: What roles should the learner-centered teacher take?

S4: Pay attention to all students.

R: How?

S4: Communicate with every student in the class, instead of just standing in front of the class and teaching.

R: How can a teacher communicate with all students since there are a lot of students like 49 students?

S4: (Chuckling) Divide them into small groups. To communicate with all students is to communicate with the representative of each group.

R: Why do you emphasize the communication between teachers and students?

S4: Because other than teaching media (teaching materials), learners learn from teachers.

S4: Look for the smart students who can teach other students.

R: What else?

S4: Correct the one who is still not perfect.

R: Is correction necessary?

S4: Very important. When teachers find mistakes, they should correct them, but don't make students lose face.

R: How?

S4: If they read incorrectly, instead of giving the immediate correction, give them the compliment then correct them.

R: (I can't help laughing) They are smiling because you just gave them the compliment, then you correct them?

S4: (She is chuckling.) This is better.

R: So you mean you correct the mistakes when you find them, but give the compliment first and then correct them.

S4: Yes.

The roles of a learner-centered teacher, in Supervisor 4's opinion, were not different from those of a teacher-centered teacher. Teacher-centered teachers paid attention to their students, communicated with their learners by giving them commands, and corrected learners' mistakes. Due to the lack of knowledge of teaching a second language, she had difficulty in expressing her ideas and controlling her thoughts. Her turn when answering each question was very short compared to the preceding supervisors. During the interview, she sometimes changed her opinion when she reconsidered the questions.

In the following excerpt, she explained to me about a group of effective English teachers in her responsible area. They could interpret the curriculum of 1996, and designed communicative teaching lessons and activities. This was an excerpt from this conversation with Supervisor 4:

S4: Our 13 leading teachers from 6 school clusters will meet and discuss what they have done. What techniques they use?

R: What exactly are they doing?

S4: Designing activities, and reforming the learning of English. They are leading teachers. We have seen their work and they are good. Su is an example.

R: What do they do?

S4: I invite them to come

R: Why?

S4: They exchange their ideas. Then we tell other teachers based on the report of the meeting. These teachers share what they know, and what they have done. (These teacher's teaching materials were used during the training sessions organized by Supervisor 4)

Su was an excellent English teacher whom Supervisor 4 mentioned in her interview. I observed Su four times, and interviewed her. I was very impressed by her experience and knowledge of language teaching. She was not included in this report because she also worked as a teacher trainer. From interviews with her and supervisors, it was clear that supervisors did not have as much ability to interpret the curriculum and design activities as she did. Supervisors had used her work including that of other leading teachers in the area to promote themselves. Su reported that some leading teachers who also worked as teacher trainers now stopped working with supervisors. They did not get a promotion, but supervisors got a promotion to the higher level by using the teachers' teaching materials. They felt that they were taken advantages of by the supervisors.

6.2.4. Findings from an Interview with Supervisor 5

Supervisor 5's definition of a learner-centered approach was captured in the following piece taken from the interview:

Teachers select the content, teaching methods, and provide learning centers such as interviewing other people, language labs, fieldtrips, and libraries with interesting English books. They learn through the learning centers, or resource center. They learn and think, divide into groups, and make conclusions of their learning on their own. They learn by themselves based on their interests.

When asked if this approach was suitable for teaching English, Supervisor 5 gave the most sincere answers compared to other supervisors. She was the only supervisor

among the four who criticized the knowledge she got from the one-day conference as not suitable for teaching English. The following was an excerpt taken from her interview:

R: Is this way suitable for teaching English?

S5: Not exactly. Learning a language is to use it in daily lives.

R: So this teaching method where learners think and do by themselves is suitable?

S5: Not suitable. English needs practicing. It is not relevant. This is what scholars told us, but we can use only part of it. We can't use all of what they told us in teaching. English needs practice listening, speaking, reading and writing skills.

R: You said they are not relevant.

S5: Yes, it is irrelevant.

R: Can you explain what you mean by that?

S5: It (Learning center) is not relevant for English because if learners study about life and their environment, they can learn through the learning center. However, they learn English through listening to the events, and then use those events for speaking. English must have listening, speaking, reading and writing skills. This is the framework of learning a language. The learning center cannot develop the ability to communicate. Language is for communication. It is the goal of learning a language.

R: So is a learner-centered approach suitable for teaching English?

S5: Yes, suitable because a learner-centered approach focuses on learners, and learners do and act. They listen, speak, read and write, but they do not need to look for information from the learning center.

What was interesting here was that Supervisor 5 rejected the use of learning centers as suggested in the conference on a learner-centered approach as they not suitable for teaching English. She said that in English four language skills are needed to be practiced in real life situations rather than seeking information from learning centers. She had worked in Thai situations long enough to know how to survive. The following excerpt showed her expertise:

S5: We can use the idea once only to show the educator that I have already used this method...Use it as a part of many teaching methods. For example, one can say today he or she uses a learner-centered approach, and he or she can do it once just to show off.

R: To show off?

S5: (Chuckling) To please those educators who gave the knowledge, to show that I have already done what they suggested. But in reality, their ideas do not work. They are not the teaching methods for teaching English, right?

Supervisors had different interpretations when putting the idea of a learner-centered approach into practice based on their qualifications. Some supervisors were confused and had no idea about a learner-centered approach when teaching English. On the other hand, they had to do their duties, and maintain their pride of being the supervisors who knew better than teachers. As a result they had given their misinterpretations of a learner-centered approach to English teachers without realizing that it was just not helpful to teaching English as a second language. Although they tried to fulfill their jobs, Supervisor 5 frankly reported that not many teachers had confidence in supervisors of English. Teachers did not see that supervisors were sufficiently knowledgeable to guide them in teaching.

Chapter Seven

Findings on Research Question One

Having presented data from documents, interviews, observations and stimulated recall, in the previous chapters, I will unify the data to answer the research questions through summary and interpretation. Chapter seven will provide answers to research question 1, and chapter eight will provide answers to research questions 2 and 3.

7.1. Research Question 1: What were the conceptions of a learner-centered approach by policy makers, teacher training personnel and English teachers?

In order to answer research question 1, it was necessary to see how each agent defined a learner-centered approach. The findings were based on the findings from documents and interviews with three teachers and four supervisors. Table 7.1 shows how policy makers and policy distributors defined a learner-centered approach. The common elements shares by the policy makers and policy distributors are in bold.

Table 7.1: Definition of a Learner-Centered Approach by Agents (ONEC stands for Office of National Education Commission. MOE stands for Ministry of Education.)

Agents	Main features of a learner-centered approach	Goal of teaching and learning
ONEC (Policy makers)	Learner's differences Objective, contents, activities, learning resources, instructional media and evaluation designed to meet learners' differences	Learners' optimal development
MOE (Policy distributor)	Learners' differences Learner's participation in learning process Learners actual doing, thinking and acting on their own Teachers as facilitators	Learners' optimal development
1. Lecture		
2. Publication	Learners' differences Learners' participation in learning process Learners actual doing or practicing through different teaching methods.	The attainment of self learning
3. Conference	Learners' differences Learning through learning centers Learning happily Learning with a group of friends Learning by doing Learning with integration of related subject matters Summarizing their knowledge on their own	Learners' highest potential

Policy makers and policy distributors shared the idea that in a learner-centered approach, learners are different, and their differences should be taken into account in the teaching and learning process. Policy makers and policy distributors also shared the same concept in terms of the goal of using a learner-centered approach to develop learners' optimal potential. However, in the publication by MOE, the goal was to attain self-learning which was the highest goal of the learning process, and it was an unrealistic one for teaching and learning in schools. If learners could be independent from teaching and learning, they did not need to go to schools.

There were differences in terms of how to develop learners to their optimal potential. ONEC emphasized the importance of needs identification to find learners'

differences, and it designed objectives, content, activities, learning resources, instructional media and evaluation to meet learners' differences. On the other hand, MOE had its own interpretations which were different from ONEC. It is important to note that in MOE's different channels of delivery, the knowledge of a learner-centered approach had its own interpretation. The lecture and the publication shared the same interpretation that learners participate in the learning process, and in actually doing, thinking and acting. In the lecture, learners participate in the learning process where they have to learn and find the answer on their own. As was shown in the findings of the lecture, the guidance provided for teachers was not clear nor sufficient. Some of the guidance was neither practical nor meaningful; for example, teachers were told not to give answers, but guide learners to the answers without explaining how to guide them. Teachers did not understand what they were supposed to do. Although MOE's publication shared the same concept of how to develop a learner in a learner-centered approach with the lecture, it did not provide any help to teachers on how to change. It only provided a description of 21 teaching methods for teachers.

The most interesting idea was that the one-day conference for all teachers had different interpretations from the other two channels by MOE. In this interpretation, learners learned through learning centers, and learning with integration of related subject matter. They learned happily with peers. They learned by doing and summarizing knowledge on their own. In this interpretation, teachers were only facilitators; they did not need to identify learners' needs, design teaching materials, and evaluate to see if what was taught served learners' needs. How were these concepts put into practice? Table 7.2 shows how the concepts were put into practice.

Table 7.2: The Implementation of Concepts of a Learner-Centered Approach by Policy Makers (ONEC) and Policy Distributors (MOE)

Agent	Practice	Practice	Practice	Practice	Practice	Practice
ONEC	Teachers identifying learners' needs, interests, and knowledge	Teachers preparatory work in analyzing curriculum	Teachers planning content, and methods	Teachers organizing learning activities to serve learners' interests.	Teachers evaluating learners' progress	Learners concluding and applying knowledge
MOE	Teachers providing learning process	Teachers as facilitators	<i>Learners</i> participating in learning process	<i>Learners</i> thinking and acting on their own		
2. Publication	Teachers providing various teaching methods	Teachers planning learning activities.	<i>Learners</i> participating in teaching methods	<i>Learners</i> learning through actual practice or action		
3. Conference	Teachers guiding learners to learning centers	<i>Learners</i> seeking knowledge through learning centers	<i>Learners</i> learning by doing on their own	<i>Learners</i> learning with friends and groups,	<i>Learners</i> learning with integration of related subjects	<i>Learners</i> summarizing the learning on their own

It is clear from Table 7.2 that policy makers and policy distributors have different ways of putting their concepts into practice. According to the policy makers, teachers take most of the responsibilities in learner-centered classrooms. Teachers analyze learners' differences, interpret curriculum, design materials, organize learning activity, evaluate progress, and guide learners to the highest development. Learners in this interpretation are responsible for sharing their needs and interests, participating in learning activities, and at the end producing learning outcomes. With teachers' current teaching qualifications, most teachers would find it impossible to take on such responsibilities. The work to develop teachers to meet the working demands would be tremendous for policy distributors.

As a result, teachers in the policy distributors' interpretation take fewer responsibilities. They could provide the learning process as in the lecture, or use various teaching methods in which they act as facilitators providing support and friendship. Or teachers could guide learners to learning centers which are available. Learners in this interpretation take more responsibilities. They have to participate in the learning process, and learning activities. They have to seek knowledge, actually think and act, interact with friends, and summarize the learning. Teachers act like facilitators in this interpretation.

According to the policy makers, learner-centered teachers need to do many things with which teacher centered teachers are not familiar. Starting from the first role, teachers need to identify learners' differences. Teachers have to take action to identify learners' differences through questioning and observation. In preparatory work, they study the curriculum, and plan for the learning process by focusing on integration of the content of related subjects. They then organize learning activities which motivate learners to learn to the best of their abilities. It is clearly stated in this stage that teachers "should offer nothing but friendship and assistance in all matters" (Office of the Prime Minister and Ministry of Education, 2001, p. 31). In this stage, teachers provide various learning activities and learning resources outside classrooms so that they can guide learners to the right resources. Teachers help learners to discuss the outcome or body of knowledge gained from learning activities. In the next stage, teachers evaluate learning outcomes by using various assessment methods. Finally, teachers provide a chance for learners to draw conclusions and search for implications of the learning by using role-play, self-expression, presentation, etc. (Office of the Prime Minister and Ministry of

Education, 2001). These new roles for teachers are very important. They are the most important messages that MOE should send to teachers.

However, teachers in the ONEC policy are considered only as facilitators although they assume many additional roles such as needs analysts, curriculum interpreters, materials designers, activity organizers, evaluators, and counselors. The messages are confusing and cause misinterpretation for related agents such as teachers and MOE. It can be seen how MOE interprets teachers' roles in the lectures, publications and the conference. Moreover, in a learner-centered approach, the teachers' role as the knower is still necessary and important in English teaching. Teachers still need to teach; for example, delivering linguistic, socio-linguistic, and pragmatic knowledge of a language and culture, and giving feedback when the time is right. Learners should be guided until they get the answers or solutions on their own because this will enhance comprehensible input. In guiding, teachers can mime, show real life objects or pictures, and suggest contextual clues to guess the meaning. In some cases, direct translation is also useful or sometimes even more effective, for example when teaching words related to concepts and abstraction. Definitely, translation should not be practiced too often; otherwise learners become used to the idea that there always is a one-to-one translation from one language to the other. Learners should be guided in a way where meanings are always based on the context. Learners have to interpret the meanings by using the context and their background knowledge.

This publication *Learning reform: a learner-centered approach* by the ONEC was produced for all agents involved in education, including teachers of all subjects. Examples of how the concept of a learner-centered approach could be applied in many

situations are not helpful at all. Teachers of different subjects could not use these examples correctly and effectively. One important thing that should not be overlooked is that different subjects have different requirements for teaching. For example, the nature of learning and teaching English is different from that of science; therefore, different teaching methods should be used in order to develop learners to their optimal level. Problems can happen when teachers apply teaching methods not appropriate to the nature of the particular subject.

For instance, Teacher 5, who was not reported in this study, copied what Vimolsri Suwannarat had done in her science class. Vimolsri Suwannarat, whose work was cited as an example of a learner-centered teacher, had her students divided into groups and carried out science projects. Teacher 5 had her students divided into groups of 9 and utilized a small language project of making a picture dictionary based on their interests (The topic was parts of a human body). In her English class, some students in the group drew pictures of different parts of human beings, some copied a commercial picture dictionary, some wrote the vocabulary, some played, and some did nothing. Teacher N, including her principal and her colleagues believed that she had already implemented a learner-centered approach although such a project was flawed.

Did Teacher 5's students learn anything appropriate to their level, did they improve their English skills, and did they develop to their highest potentials? Learners were definitely happy that English was no longer difficult, but they were happy at their own expense. These students plan to move on to higher education. How could they catch up in English with other students in the same level?

In the televised lecture, Dr. Gowit Prawalaprit, an educator of the Ministry of Education, focused on how a teacher can apply a learner-centered approach in the classroom. He particularly looked at only one of the five characteristics provided by ONEC, which was the organization of learning activities to serve learners' interests. He overlooked the other four important characteristics. However, he particularly stressed that in this interpretation, learners had to think and act on their own under the teachers' guidance. Similar to the teachers' role given by ONEC, teachers in this lecture played the role of facilitators who guided and asked questions to elicit learners to think and act. Teachers were not supposed to give answers to students but to guide them until they got them on their own. He seriously emphasized that this learner-centered process would be a teacher-centered process if answers were given to learners.

In this interpretation, learners thought and acted on their own when they went through the participatory process where they 1) collected information, 2) organized it, 3) evaluated it, 4) improved it and planned for practice, 5) practiced it and finally 6) constructed the body of knowledge on their own. Teachers facilitated them during the participatory process.

According to second language learning theory, it is important that learners get enough comprehensible input through various learning activities before they are asked to produce language performance. Learners in the participatory process suggested in the lecture need to help themselves considerably in order to get comprehensible input during stage 1. There are no pedagogical activities that help learners to get the meaning across or that allow them to interact with peers to get more information in order to understand the passage. If teachers are not allowed to help more, then the only source of knowledge in

English for learners would be dictionaries, especially in the absence of authentic materials and context. It is possible that learners in this participatory model seek meanings of new words most of the time. In stage 2, learners independently organize the information they get from the passage. They evaluate the information and plan for practice. It was not mentioned what the purposes were for stages 3-4 (evaluating the information and improving and planning), and how they help improving communicative competence. Stage 5 is practicing and he stressed that the language could be mechanical or drill like. Practice could be recycled until learners learn the target skills. During the final stage, learners reconstruct the knowledge based on their background knowledge and interpretation. They should be able to use language to interact and negotiate meaning.

The issue is what language would be used during their reconstruction. These learners did not have chances to interact before in stages 1-4, and they had drill practice in stage 5. How were they able to produce the target language meaningfully in stage 6? It was impossible for the learners to use English since they did not get much comprehensible input. How would these learners have comprehensible output? In this participatory process, the learners interacted frequently with the text. They had very little interaction with peers. These learners also had very little exposure to spoken English which is important for language development for young learners. Teachers were told that they were just facilitators. They should not provide answers to learners, but guide them until they found answers or solutions on their own. If learners are expected to produce the outcome of the learning at stage 6, pedagogical activities, communicative activities, and tasks should be provided to them. Since teachers were only the facilitators, who would prepare and design communicative activities and tasks for these learners?

In this interpretation, learners thought and acted on their own when they went through the participatory process and collected information, organized it, evaluated it, improved it, planned for practice, and finally constructed the body of knowledge on their own. The teachers facilitated them during the participatory process. The lesson plan, called the playbook, was not helpful. The six stages in the participatory process were reduced to four stages. Learners read the reading passage, collected the information on their own, and organized the information. Teachers asked the questions; learners answered. Then teachers helped them to summarize the reading passage. This participatory process was not different from the activities one of the teachers used in her class. During my observations, Teacher A told her students to do things on their own. For example, they found the meanings of unknown words, read the passage and answered the questions before coming to class. In the classroom, they were called on to read their answers aloud one by one back to the teacher. She called on the next student if the answer was not right. She would not give the answers but called on new students until she got the right answer. At the end of the class, she helped her students summarize what they had learned through asking questions as well. Teacher A did claim that she was a learner-centered teacher.

Dr. Gowit Prawalaprit's interpretation of participatory process is basically suitable for teaching social science subjects where the medium of instruction is their native language. In his participatory process, there are not many interactions between teachers and learners, nor learners and learners. It is not ideal for teaching English as a foreign language to beginners because comprehensible input and language exposure are not provided to learners sufficiently through language activities.

Second language learners should not learn a second language independently from their peers because they are going to use the language in society. Therefore, they should learn through interaction and communication as it will be in their target language situations. Good language teachers are not only facilitators, but also knowers, counselors, and guides. They adjust their roles to suit their learners' differences, they tailor their language to suit the learners' proficiency level, and they give answers to learners when the time is right.

The next interpretation was provided through a publication by the Ministry of Education. In this interpretation, learner-centered teachers need to allow learners to learn through actual practice or action until self-learning is attained. This idea is appropriate for language teaching. Teachers need to plan learning activities and teaching methods that allow learners to practice using English authentically and meaningfully. Of the total, 88 pages of this publication were devoted to descriptions of 21 teaching methods followed by an example of each teaching method. Most of the examples provided were for teaching Thai or social science subjects, and none for teaching English.

How could English teachers make use of these detailed descriptions of 21 teaching methods? How possible is it for teachers to follow the descriptions and apply them in their classes with their current knowledge of the subject matter, teaching methods, and experience? Especially when teachers are not familiar with new teaching methods, and had not seen them in real practice before. Similarly, those who do not know how to swim, and are asked to swim based on the descriptions provided, would not

be able to swim due to lack of skills and experience. Teaching skills can not be acquired through reading, but practicing and training only.

In the one-day conference by supervisors at the provincial primary education office, a learner-centered approach was interpreted as teaching that allows learners to learn under 5 principles of learner-centeredness: learning happily, learning by doing, learning from friends and groups, learning with integration of related subject matter, and summarizing the learning on their own. The five principles could be accomplished through using learning centers. Learners are encouraged to seek knowledge on their own from learning centers available such as a library, museum, zoo, park, the environment, etc. Learner-centered teachers provide or guide learners to these sources of knowledge. This conference is provided for teachers of all subjects. And this interpretation is claimed to be suitable for any subject. Teachers should apply these principles in their teaching.

This interpretation puts most of the responsibilities on learners. Teachers just guide and provide learning centers which in most of the cases are school libraries or public libraries. When being asked how learning centers can be applied in teaching English, Supervisor 3, the major responsible agent of the conference argued that English teachers apply this in teaching English. Teachers take students to the sources of learning such as a park, a museum, and asked students to tell each item they saw in English.

How many years will it take to improve learners' communicative competence through learning centers as suggested by Supervisor 3? English teachers complain that they can not provide or guide learners to learning centers. School libraries do not have suitable English books for learners, and schools do not have extra budgets for them.

During data collection in the field, I went to the library of each school I visited. Most libraries had two to three small shelves with some old Thai textbooks. Some libraries had some cartoon books, and some had some old newspapers. There were few English books, and most of them were free copies of English textbooks for learners provided by the Ministry of Education. Teacher B's school library was empty due to a big flood a few months before my visit. None of the libraries I visited had English newspapers or English books for young learners such as English comics or children's stories. The local library could be an option for learners, but how much could a local library cater to all learners' different interests without guidance? Especially, English books were not the local library's interests since the target clients were not just elementary children. The most serious problem was that English books were much more expensive than Thai books because they were imported. This would add more problems for any library to purchase English books.

English teachers were told to attend both the lecture on television and the one day conference, and they were asked to be learner-centered teachers by applying the concepts from these two sources in teaching English. It is apparent that the concepts from these two sources are not appropriate for teaching English. For example, the one-day conference's interpretation was suitable for a social science subject where learning and teaching is in Thai, but not for teaching English as a foreign language to young learners. Second language learners need learning activities that allow them to communicate meaningfully with their peers. They need to learn the language in a social context with authentic situations and language. Learning centers are not an ideal place to get verbal interaction. On the other hand, self-learning centers with suitable pedagogical and

communicative activities and tasks with different level of difficulty are still needed and important for language learning. Graded learning activities focusing on different skills and topics are ideal for meeting learners' differences.

The problem is how many self-learning centers are available for learners in the country. At least, a technician, a materials designer, and a teacher are needed to develop an effective self learning center. Knowledge, hard work, creativity, and care from each of them are the most important factors in determining success or failure of a self-learning center. This is because learning activities provided in the center need to be graded suitably to learners' levels and interests, and they have to be challenging, interesting for learners, and motivating to keep them coming to the centers. This means that the activities need to be available and suitable for them as learners progress in development.

ONEC has provided five major characteristics to conceptualize a learner-centered approach. Teachers take many important roles such as identifying differences, interpreting curriculum, designing learning activities, organizing learning activities, evaluating, and helping learners to be able to summarize the learning. On the other hand, MOE, the distributor of these concepts to supervisors and teachers, has its own interpretations of a learner-centered approach. Moreover, it does not include all teachers' major duties in the lecture and the one-day conference on learner-centeredness. How did supervisors and teachers perceive a learner-centered approach based on three channels of knowledge provided by MOE? Table 7.3 shows the concepts of a learner-centered approach perceived by supervisors and teachers. Information was taken from the transcription of their interviews.

Table 7.3: Concepts of a Learner-Centered Approach Perceived by Supervisors and Teachers.(Ts stands for Teachers, and Ls for Learners).

Agents	Ts planning content and methods	Ts organizing learning activities to serve Ls' interests	Ts as facilitators	Ls seeking knowledge on their own	Ls learning through learning centers	Ls summarizing the learning on their own	Ls thinking and acting on their own.
Supervisor 1		X	X	X			
Supervisor 3		X	X				
Supervisor 4		X					
Supervisor 5	X		X	X	X	X	
Total	1	3	3	2	1	1	0
Teacher A			X	X		X	X
Teacher B		X	X				X
Teacher C				X			X
Total	0	1	2	2	0	1	3

According to the interviews with teachers and supervisors, they reported these seven major characteristics of a learner-centered approach as shown in the first row of Table 7.3. Numbers represent the total number of supervisors and teachers who shared the same perception of each characteristic of a learner-centered approach. Supervisors and teachers received the concepts of a learner-centered approach through the lectures, a publication, and a one-day conference which included only one of the roles a learner-centered teacher suggested by ONEC. The other four major roles that teachers should take (identifying learner's needs, interests, and knowledge, preparatory work by analyzing the curriculum, evaluation and conclusion and application of the learning) were not included in the original sources of knowledge for supervisors' and teachers. As a

result, in their perception of a learner-centered approach, those four major characteristics did not exist. They interpreted the concepts based on what they had been provided.

Three major characteristics of learner-centeredness which were mentioned most often by supervisors were: teachers planning learning activities to serve learners' interests, teachers as facilitators, and learners seeking knowledge on their own. These were the strongest messages that most supervisors received. Supervisors still focused more on teachers' roles in planning learning activities to serve learners' differences, and taking the role of facilitators. However, only Supervisor 5 got the message that teachers have to plan the content and teaching methods for learners. This is one of the most important messages that supervisors have to possess and deliver to teachers under their supervision. Only Supervisor 5 expanded and modified the concept by adding more roles for learners. Learners in her concept learned through learning centers, and summarized the learning on their own.

None of the three teachers in this study mentioned their roles as the planners of content and methods. None of these teachers realized that they need to analyze the curriculum of 1995 to see what language skills, language items and themes have to be included in their planning. Only Teacher B mentioned that teachers need to plan learning activities to serve learners' interests. But she stressed strongly that she could not apply this idea in her situation because her learners are not interested in learning English. Surprisingly, these three teachers all agreed that in a learner-centered approach, learners have to think and act on their own. And two out of the three agreed that learners need to search for knowledge on their own, and teachers are facilitators. These were the strongest messages obtained by teachers. Teachers seemed to focus on learners' roles

and responsibilities rather than their own. In their perceptions, learners take more responsibility in learning; they have to seek knowledge, summarize the learning, and think and act on their own.

The idea of a learner-centered approach is not at fault, but it is misinterpretation of the Ministry of Education, and the transmission of the information from the top and the comprehension of it by teachers in the absence of a model and practice that are flawed. Teachers misunderstood. If these characteristics of a learner-centered approach cited by teachers are actually applied in classrooms, learners will be in trouble. The responsibilities of teaching and learning no longer belong to teachers. Learners take all the responsibility. The learning and teaching is not helpful to the learning development of Thai learners in general.

Although these three teachers cited different characteristics of a learner-centered approach, they all agreed on one thing - that it was problematic for them to apply a learner-centered approach in their classrooms. It would be fortunate if they do not apply what they understood in their teaching although they were strongly encouraged to apply it.

The following is parts of interviews of the three teachers to illustrate how they thought about applying the concepts of a learner-centered approach. Teacher A said,

Actually, I agree with this idea, but it is difficult to use it with all subjects because our society is not familiar with this learning culture, and some subjects are not suitable for a learner-centered approach... For example, Science. Science is a subject which we can motivate learners to learn and seek knowledge on their own, or handy crafts, but for some subjects, it is not suitable... In English, it is possible to motivate learners to learn such as telling them about the usefulness of English, or showing them beautiful sceneries from abroad, or advertisement. But it is impossible to tell learners to seek knowledge for themselves in English.

Teacher B said:

I agree with the idea, but not in teaching. It is always easy just to talk, but not to apply it. They tell us to teach to serve learners' needs. We should teach what learners want to learn. I wonder what my learners want to learn. Let's follow what they have said. I asked "students, can you tell the teacher what you want to learn?" The students smiled. They said "I want to learn whatever you want to teach"... Then I asked if they wanted to learn about tourist spots, traveling, cooking, football? They said they wanted to learn all. That means they can't think, and teachers need to guide them to think. Then why I bother to guide them to something I don't have the teaching materials. I guide them to what I have already had... In teaching activity, if I have to teach to serve their needs or their aptitude, I would be dead. No students like English. If I were a store-owner, I would have been bankrupt because there were no customers... Then they told us that in a learner-centered approach, learners do and act, teachers are facilitators. If we let learners do and act from the beginning of the class, it is the end of the story because they do not know what to do. They cannot read. How can learners communicate if they cannot read? They cannot read an English sentence on their own, then how do these learners seek knowledge in English on their own? The worst is that we don't have English resources for them to search for knowledge. I bet a learner-centered approach doesn't work with teaching English at grades 5-6.

Teacher C said:

I don't know. I don't know how to use it... No one has given us the knowledge on how to use a learner-centered approach in teaching English. Teachers are expected to apply this knowledge to their subjects on their own. They can watch the education programs on TV, and read books. We have not been trained how to teach in a learner-centered approach... Teachers have to grow by themselves. They (Teachers of other subjects) are told to teach learners to think and do on their own. Teachers are happy now. They let their students do their own thinking and learning... Students are now dead. It is not successful. Teachers need urgent help. They don't know what to do. No one advises them. No teaching model for them to follow.

She added:

"In teaching English, it is difficult to ask learners to think on their own. We need to give learners a foundation of knowledge first. For example, they don't know the meaning of a new vocabulary word, it is impossible for them to think of the meaning of new words on their own."

It can be concluded that policy makers, policy distributors, supervisors and teachers have different concepts about the approach and about putting it into practice.

ONEC, the policy makers, emphasized more roles for teachers. In order to successfully

implement it, teachers need indepth training. MOE's responsibility is to train teachers based on the policy given by ONEC. It would take a considerable burden and sacrifice on the part of MOE to train all teachers for all subjects. Therefore, instead of training teachers, MOE provides only lectures, a conference and a publication for teachers. MOE has its own interpretation of a learner-centered approach in order to fit it into the lectures and the conference. In MOE's interpretation, learner-centered teachers could encourage learners to participate in the learning process as suggested in the lecture, or guide them to available learning centers as suggested in the conference, or encourage teachers to use many teaching methods as suggested in the publication. This interpretation was different from the policy makers.

Both supervisors and teachers received the knowledge of a learner-centered approach through MOE's three channels, and they did have some different concepts about a learner-centered approach. While supervisors focused more on teachers' roles, teachers emphasized learners' roles. However, most supervisors and most teachers in this study seemed to agree that in a learner-centered approach, teachers organize learning activities to serve learners' interests, and act as facilitators. And learners need to seek knowledge on their own. Teachers in this study perceived that in a learner-centered approach, learners take more responsibilities in learning. They seek knowledge, summarize the learning, think and act all on their own. However, all three teachers agreed that as long as no training sessions are provided, it is quite impossible for teachers to be able to implement a learner-centered approach in their situations.

Chapter Eight

Findings on Research Questions Two and Three

8.1. Research question 2: To what degree did teachers actually implement communicative language teaching in their classrooms?

This study attempted to investigate how English teachers actually implemented communicative language teaching which is related to a learner-centered approach in the sense that both focus on learners' need and interests. English language learners' needs and interests are developed through communicative language activities and tasks.

As mentioned before, I first thought that teachers would use a variety of communicative activities and classroom interaction patterns such as pair work, group work, individual work, and whole class activities. However, after carefully looking at the transcription of the observations of the three teachers, I found that the three teachers used a lot of whole class activities. They did not use pairwork or groupwork where learners could have communicated with each other. In the transcription, there was no communication in English between learners and learners or learners and teachers. Teachers used short single English instructions such as *repeat after me, do you understand?* These were common phrases in the classroom. There were no verbal responses or questions in English from the learners to the teachers.

Based on the patterns of teaching behavior found in the transcription, two major features of communicative language teaching were used to determine the degree of teachers' implementation of communicative language teaching. They are: classroom interaction patterns, and the use of target language in the classroom. Initially, the first

look at classroom interaction patterns was from three observations of each teacher, followed by a look at the target language used in each observation of the three teachers.

8.1.1 Classroom Interaction Patterns in Three Classes.

Table 8.1 demonstrates the proportion of class time for whole class activities, a student with a group, choral, individual work, and pair work/group work from the three observations of the three teachers. Whole class activity is when the teacher interacts with all students in the class. A student with a group of students is a student interacting with a class or a group of students with a central activity for all groups, and the language used is drill like (e.g. command and response in TPR). Choral is when all students in a class do things in chorus such as greetings, singing and reading aloud. Individual work is each student working individually such as copying the sentences on the board, and writing answers to questions individually. Pair work or group work is students interacting and negotiating in pairs or groups, and they use language freely and communicatively. Examples of communicative group work and pair work are problem solving activities, information gap activities (jigsaw activities), simulations, drama, etc. In these types of activities, learners control what to say and how to say it. The information given between them is unpredictable.

Table 8.1. Percentage of Observed Time for Different Participation Patterns of the Classes of the Three Teachers

Teachers	Whole class	L> G A learner with group/class	Choral	Individual	Pair work /Group work
Teacher A	99.02	0	0	.98	0
Teacher B	79.21	6.10	9.67	5.02	0
Teacher C	38.77	43.58	17.65	0	0

Long (1980), and Varonis and Gass (1983) suggest that small group work in language classrooms provides the optimum environment for negotiation and interaction. Therefore, a communicative classroom should provide considerable group work and pair work for learners. In this study, none of the three teachers used group work and pair work, which is the most important feature of communicative language teaching.

Table 8.1 shows that all three teachers used extensive whole class activities. Teacher A used more whole class activities (99.02%) than the other two teachers. She was the most powerful agent who directed all the moves in the class. She directed the class to the textbooks which provided a time frame of what to do next. She followed the textbooks closely. She read the passages in the textbook, and instructed the students to repeat after her or to answer her questions. Mostly, students sat passively listening to her reading aloud, and repeating after her. They would speak a word or a sentence only when they were called on to answer her questions. They did not have a chance to interact with their peers at all.

Like Teacher A, Teacher B used substantial whole class activities (79.21%). In a whole class activity, Teacher B spoke most of the time while her students listened to her talk. Learners did not have much chance to talk. Compared to Teacher A, Teacher B used a greater variety of activities including learners working with a group, choral, and individual activity. Although more varied activities were used, students still did not have a chance to talk in English; for example, in the student working with a class or group, students still did not have a chance to talk because the activity used was a sentence scramble where learners silently arranged the right order of the words in a sentence.

However, compared to class A, class B was more relaxing because of the use of singing in chorus which helped create a better learning environment for learners.

Compared to Teachers A and B, Teacher C used the fewest whole class activities (38.77%). She spoke less than the other two teachers. Class time was used in students working with class or groups (43.58%), and choral (17.65%). Students in class C had chances to speak an English word or phrases to their peers. However, the language used was predictable, and drill like. The learning environment in this class was a lot better than the other two because students talked, sang, and acted to the songs.

It was significant to investigate in further detail which activities were used by each teacher. Table 8.2 shows all activities used by the three teachers in three observations for each: 1) teacher teaching grammar, 2) teacher translating, 3) teacher reading aloud, 4) teacher using pronouncing activity, 5) teacher using TPR with class 6) class repeating after teacher, 7) learner reading aloud one by one, 8) learner answering question one by one, 9) individual work, 10) learner working with group, and 11) learner reading or singing in chorus. Each activity was timed by minutes. The activities representing the longest amount of time in each observation are in bold type.

8.1.1a Teacher A's class

Table 8.2 shows that in observation 1, Teacher A spent most of the observed time (43 percent) reading after her word by word, sentence by sentence. Learners repeated after her every single word without any sense of what they were repeating. Students were told not to write the pronunciation of each word in Thai. Teacher A explained that if the students wrote the wrong pronunciation, this caused serious pronunciation problems later.

The pronunciation written with the Thai alphabet could be wrong because there are many English vowels and consonants that do not exist in the Thai sound system. The students were used to repeating after the teacher. They sometimes repeated after her even when the command was given to listen to her reading, or to answer her question. (TA refers to Teacher A; C to Class)

TA: Number two, Listen

C: Listen

TA: Listen แปลว่า (Listen means....)

S: ฟัง (Listen)

TA: ฟัง (Listen)

TA: ฟัง (Listen)... Listen. Listen แปลว่าอะไร (Listen, listen means what?)

ไม่ได้บอกให้ repeat นะคะ (I didn't ask you to repeat) Listen and think.

Think แปลว่า (Think means ...)

C: คิด (think)

TA: คิด ให้ฟังแล้วก็คิดไปด้วย (Think, I want you to listen and think)

Another example of how learners did not pay attention to what they were repeating after the teacher.

TA: Whose birthday party

Class: Whose birthday party

TA: Am I going to go to?

Class: Am I going to go to?

TA: Guess

Class: Guess

TA: Answer

Class: Answer

TA: Answer

Class: Answer.

TA: ...Answer นะครุบอกให้นักเรียนตอบ (Answer. I want you to answer the question.) ตั้งใจฟังหน่อยนะคะ (Pay more attention, please!)

Despite the above problem, Teacher A argued that repeating after the teacher was important for learners because they were exposed to the correct pronunciation, and exact reading according to the punctuation. As a result, they could pronounce and read correctly. Teacher A used the same criteria for teaching reading as suggested in the publication by ONEC:

Fluency, correctness and clarity in pronunciation;
Correctness and clarity in pronunciation of /r, l/;
Correctness and clarity in pronunciation of compound consonants with /r, l, w/
Correctness in pauses at the end of phrases/sentences” (Office of the Prime Minister and Ministry of Education, 2000, p. 36).

About 37 percent of observed time in observation 1 was used in translation. Teacher A read aloud each sentence of the passage, and gave the translation for each sentence she just read although the glossary of difficult words had already been provided at the end of the book. She explicitly told her students to write down the translation she gave in the books. Teacher A thought that translation was necessary in studying English. If there was no translation, the students could not understand the passage, and they could not answer the comprehension questions. Although Teacher A told her students that it was not necessary to know all English words when they read, she persistently focused on translating every single word and sentence. These students were not trained to be patient when they did not know some of the words, and they were not prepared to guess meanings from the context. They were told to check unknown words before coming to class. Some gave up trying to find the meaning in the dictionary. These students ended up not doing homework and not bringing the English textbook which upset Teacher A.

In observation 2, Teacher A used most of the observed time (40.0%) in explicitly teaching grammar rules. Teacher A used the traditional way of teaching grammar where forms were taught explicitly, and learning the language rules was emphasized. Doughty and Williams (1999) called it form-focused instruction. Meaning and function were not combined during the teaching of forms. She explained later in the stimulated recall that forms were important because they helped the students to write correctly. The following excerpt was taken from Teacher A’s stimulated recall:

R: ทำไมครูคิดว่า grammar rules สำคัญคะ (Why do you think grammar is important?)

TA: เพราะจะทำให้การเขียนนี้ถูกต้อง (Because it helps learners to write correctly) คือมีบางคนก็พูดว่า สอนให้เด็กอ่านเยอะๆ ได้เห็นโครงสร้างประโยคเยอะๆ แล้วมันจะจำแล้วก็ไหลไปเอง. (Some said that grammar rules could be acquired through extensive reading. They are exposed on many sentence structures, and grammar rules can be naturally acquired) คือบางตัวมันก็ไหล บางตัวมันก็ไม่ไหล (Some rules can be naturally acquired, but some can't.) แต่ grammar บางอย่างมันก็จำเป็นนะคะ ที่จะต้องสอนนะ. (Some grammar rules need to be taught.) ถ้าให้ครูเลือกได้ ภาษาอังกฤษทั้งหมด ครูชอบสอน grammar. (If I can choose, I want to teach only grammar rules. อาจจะสอนแบบ teacher center ด้วย (I probably use teacher-centered approach as well.) เพราะ grammar ของเด็กนี้เด็กเขาอยากรู้นี่อหามา โดยเฉพาะเลย (It is because learners want to know about grammar rules).

Teacher A stressed that her students were interested in grammar rules because they wanted to go to higher education. And entrance examinations to higher education used the multiple-choice format, testing learners' writing, reading, vocabulary, and grammar. Speaking and listening skills are not tested in any entrance examination at any level in Thailand. She told students that they had to remember a particular grammar exercise because it was always on the exam. The following excerpt shows how she told her students about the importance of the grammatical exercise.

ครูให้เวลานักเรียนสามนาทีนะคะ (The teacher gives you 3 minutes) เต็มคำให้ ถูกต้องแก้ไขของตัวเองให้ถูก (to correct all your mistakes) จดลงไปในห้องสมุด เก็บไว้ดูเป็นแบบอย่าง (Copy them in your notebook for later review) ข้อสอบออกทุกปีเลยไอ้หน้านั้นนะ แต่อาจจะเปลี่ยนชื่อจาก มนัสเป็นมนิด (This page (page 66) has always been in the final exam, but the name is changed) รูปประโยคจะเหมือนกัน (The same sentence structure will be used) เชลลอกเก็บไว้ดู (You copy for later review)

It seemed to be Teacher A, who gave the importance of grammar to students by telling them to memorize it for the exam. Teacher A used another 35 percent of the observed time in observation 2 and 52 percent of the observed time in observation 3 was

used in answering comprehension questions. Learners were asked to read and answer these questions at home. During class time, Teacher A called on them to answer one by one in order of their seating. Learners answered by either reading the answers aloud, or writing them on the blackboard. Teacher A told the class if the answers were right or wrong. If the answers were wrong, the teacher called on the next learner to answer. Learners were expected to listen carefully to the correct answers Teacher A gave, and correct their own answers. However, students did not pay attention and correct their answers which upset Teacher A when she found out later. These students tended to pay attention more when it was their turn, and they tried to find the answer before they were called. They also tried to practice pronunciation. They did so because they did not want to get a reprimand from the teacher. These students struggled very hard in order to please their teacher.

Across the three observations of Teacher A's class, about 32 percent of the total observed time was used in learners reading a phrase or a sentence one by one. This activity took the longest amount of the total observed time in Teacher A's three observations. About 21 percent of the total observed time was used in learners repeating after the teacher. And another 11 percent of the total observed time was used in learners reading a phrase or sentence one by one. These two activities did not help improving learners' communicative competence. It also did not help them to have positive attitudes toward English because it was not interesting. Learners did not have a chance to be creative in using the language. Teacher A corrected their repetition and reading aloud although the pronunciation sounded correct. This made learners very cautious about speaking English, and afraid to speak English for fear that they would make mistakes.

Good language learners should not be afraid to take risks in producing the target language in order to make themselves understood.

Teacher A used about 18 percent of the total observed time in translation and 16 percent in teaching grammar. This was a typical example of a grammar-translation approach. This class was made up of three major groups of activities 1) grammar and translation (34 %); 2) learners repeating after teacher or reading one by one (32 %); and 3) learners answering question one by one (33 %). These three groups were all whole class activities and took almost all the class time (99%). Pair work or group work activities were not practiced in this class. Learners in class A had few chances to do individual work (.9%) in which they answered the comprehension questions or copied the answers from the blackboard to their books. No laughter was ever heard from this class, only the teacher's complaints for not finishing the homework, not bringing textbooks to class, not paying attention in class, changing seats, or using perfume. Class was very quiet and tense especially when she complained.

Teacher A had the knowledge, ability and experience to apply a learner-centered approach or communicative language teaching in her English class. She had been trained since her college years to teach communicatively from the best teacher education program in the country. She might be the only English teacher in the country who participated in teacher training in communicative language teaching frequently about 7-8 times a year. However, she did not want to change. Teacher A believed that learners were studying English to pass entrance examinations which focused on grammar skills, reading skills, writing skills and vocabularies. She deliberately focused on only skills included on the exam. This was not surprising at all. Some leading schools in Thailand

ignored the learning reform and announced clearly that they taught their learners to pass the entrance examination. Many students went to those schools but there was a limit on enrollment. Teacher A had no more motivation to improve her teaching for the reform. She reported that she was very tired with her heavy teaching load, and ready for early retirement in a few years. Grammar translation seemed to fit very well with her heavy teaching load because it was the easiest way to teach English.

8.1.1b Teacher B's class

Table 8.2 shows that in observation 1, Teacher B used about 77 percent of the observed time in teaching grammar (future tense). According to the one-day conference for a learner-centered approach, integration with other related subjects should be included in the teaching of all subjects. Teacher B related the rules of future tense with weather forecasts. Teacher B tried to show how a future tense could be meaningfully used in the context. However, she discussed at length the details of weather forecasting in Thai. She wanted to show that future tense was also used in native language weather forecasts. However, because of the lack of eliciting skills, she ended up with many weather forecasts in Thai which did not show the feature of future tense. She kept asking students to produce more sentences hoping that one would show the feature of future tense. As a result, 77 percent of observation 1 was spent on this activity. For learners, they were confused and did not understand what she expected. There was no difference between English class and social science class; as a result, an outspoken student reminded her that they were in English class not social science class. She was not happy with that reminder and told learners that according to the learning reform, she needed to relate English with

other subjects. In the conference, English teachers were not told that integrating four language skills could accomplish that requirement.

In observation 2, she used 29 percent of class time in teaching pronunciation. Learners practiced pronouncing the final sounds /l/ and /n/ in minimal pairs such as *will-win*, *bill-bin*. Teacher A knew how to teach pronunciation to young learners. This activity seemed to be successful; as a result, most learners could distinguish the differences between the two final sounds.

Then she spent about 24 percent of the observed time in observation 2 asking learners questions. Normally, well-qualified teachers ask questions that they and their learners do not know the answers to in order to elicit more discussion. Less qualified teachers ask questions to which they know the answers, and the learners do not know the answer. Surprisingly, Teacher B asked questions and she and her students already knew the answers. For example, she asked questions in Thai about the location of famous provinces in Thailand. Obviously, learners had possessed this knowledge from their life experience or from their social science class. They could answer and they answered in Thai as well. She could have developed communicative activities making use of learners' existing background knowledge.

Like Teacher A, Teacher B used a lot of class time having students repeat after her and calling on students to answer her questions one by one. She used about 32 percent of observation 3 on learners repeating after her. Like Teacher A, she focused on the accuracy of the sound. However, what was different was that Teacher A used repeating after her as a way to practice the correct pronunciation of new vocabulary. However, Teacher B could not indicate the pedagogical purposes. For example, in

observation 2 on February 14, she asked her learners to repeat these two sentences “Valentine’s Day is the day of love”, and “Valentine’s Day is on the 14 of February” after her (Round 1). Then the students were told to write these sentences down in their notebooks (copying from the board outside the room) (Round 2). Then one of these sentences was used again in a sentence scramble (Round 3). The students were asked to repeat this sentence after her again (Round 4). Finally, they had to write the sentence down in their notebook again (Round 5). Altogether she used the first 15 minutes of the observed time in repeating these two sentences 5 times. She argued that learners needed to repeat many times so that they could remember. All learners knew how to pronounce Valentine’s Day. They knew when Valentine’s Day was. They gave red roses and hearts to their friends even before the observation. Therefore, there was no point in repeating after her 7 times, and writing this sentence in their notebooks. She could have used these 15 minutes for other more meaningful activities such as writing a Valentines’ card for their loved ones in English. Repetition was used continually in observation 3; learners repeated a song after her line by line for 10 minutes for the chance to actually sing the song along with the tape for about one minute, and sing along with her for about 6 minutes. Learners did not have a chance to sing by themselves in chorus. Learners were not motivated to sing although Teacher B tried to push them to sing. Teacher B did not have the ability to sing on key. It would have been better if learners had sung along with the tape three to four times. Definitely, they enjoyed the singing more, and learning could have been facilitated.

Teacher B knew that group work enhanced language learning. In observation 3, she planned to have a listening activity of a weather forecast, but learners could not make

sense of what they listened to because it was too difficult in terms of dense information and speed, and she did not provide sufficient information for her learners before listening. Moreover, learners had only one chance to listen to the tape because she could not rewind the tape to the right spot. She wasted much class time in rewinding the tape searching for the weather forecast she had just played, but unsuccessfully (about half an hour which was not included in the calculation of the observed time). Teacher B called this listening activity a group work activity because before playing the tape, learners were asked to sit in groups of five to six and listen to the tape of the weather forecast. She argued that learners could have shared their information they had learned from listening. This means that learners copied each other if they could not get information from the tape. Copying is not interaction. She did not realize that in group work, learners had the need to interact in their group in order to give or get information, or to get the work done. In her case, learners did not have the need to give or get information from each other in the group. They all got information from the tape. This activity could be adjusted so that learners have the need to communicate.

Teacher B did use a variety of teaching techniques. She used singing, listening and matching activities, sentence scrabble, TPR, etc. These were pedagogical activities allowing learners to practice language skills needed for the communicative activities. They also helped in creating a learning environment for young learners. The overall learning environment of class B was not as tense as Teacher A's class. The students had a chance to sing, and act sometimes. The introduction of a special topic such as Valentine's Day, and 'weather forecast' with the use of word cards interested the students. However, due to the use of unrelated activities, problems in handling and

managing the class, the lack of deep understanding of the purposes of teaching techniques and the lack of knowledge of communicative activities, she could not use each activity effectively. She could not accomplish the teaching goal of each activity. Learners did not have a chance to practice in pedagogical activities as they were supposed to. Her learners might have been able to improve their language skills better if she had understood teaching techniques better. Teacher B still could not understand why her students could not read or write, and did not realize that the problem was the lack of opportunities for her students to develop to their optimal potential. I was not sure if Teacher A's grammar translation class was more helpful in developing second language skills, at least grammatical and pronunciation skills.

Teacher B used only 3 teaching techniques in observation 1, namely teaching grammar, translation, and listening activity. In observation 2, she used 9 teaching techniques: translation, teacher reading aloud, pronunciation practice, Total Physical Response (TPR), learners repeating after teacher, learners answering a question one by one, individual work, learners working with group, and choral activity. There was a big difference between observation 1 and 2. Why did she use more teaching techniques in observation 2? Teacher B told me that before observation 1, she was not sure if I would observe her; therefore, she did not prepare her lesson for the observation. After observation 1, I assured her that I definitely would come for observations 2 and 3. As a result, Teacher B prepared 9 teaching techniques for the observations.

8.1.1c Teacher C's class

Teacher C planned to teach her students how to give directions. Before the first observation, it was clear that all needed vocabulary, expressions, and songs relating to telling directions had been taught to the students. Table 8.2 shows that Teacher C used 40 percent of observation 1 in singing in chorus. The songs were about direction and turning. She used these as a way to review all vocabulary concerning directions as mentioned before. Learners sang and acted to the song. They were very energetic and highly involved.

Teacher C used 39 percent of the time of observation 1 in learners working with a group. She used Total Physical Response (TPR) again. In this activity, a student in the group gave a short command to the other members. The rest of the group acted according to the instruction given, namely *turn left, turn right, turn around, and go straight*. Learners were having fun in this activity. They were very involved in the activity. Laughter and native language discussion could be heard occasionally.

Table 8.2 showed that Teacher C used about 15 percent of observation 1 in translation although all the 4-5 expressions had been pre-taught, and reviewed in the TPR and singing. It can be concluded that observation 1 was used in reviewing what learners had known before.

In observation 2, she used 81 percent of the observed time, and another 32 percent of observation 3 in TPR. Definitely, drill and controlled practice activities like TPR still have a place in language classes. They serve as pre-communicative activities which provide learners with the warm up skills for more communicative language tasks (Littlewood, 1981). TPR is an effective way to teach young learners because it is

focused on meanings and response is limited to physical movement. It is a receptive activity to which learners do not need to give any verbal response. It is appropriate for teaching simple verbs. However, TPR is not supposed to be used more than 15 minutes three or four times a week at the beginning level (Richard-Amato, 1988). If it is used extensively, there is the danger that learners get the impression that the purpose of learning English is to give commands. Table 8.2 shows that Teacher C used about 27 percent of all the observed time in three observations for translation. She translated the vocabulary, sentences and expressions used in giving directions.

About 19 percent of the total observed time was used in choral activities where learners sang songs and responded to the lyrics of the songs. Teacher C used songs to teach vocabulary necessary for giving directions. This was an excellent idea. Lyrics were filled with meaningful input relating to the topic of giving directions. At the same time, they could move their bodies to the lyrics of the songs. Learners were all highly motivated in singing and acting. This choral activity could be considered a TPR activity as mentioned before. The difference was that in choral activity all students of the class sang together in chorus and reacted together in chorus. At this point, Teacher C had used TPR much too often as suggested by Richard-Amato (1988). The amount and frequency may not be the most serious problem. The issue is that TPR is just a pre communicative activity. It is supposed to be followed by communicative activities where learners extend their short commands to longer stretches beyond sentence or phrase level. And Teacher C did not have any communicative activity for her students during these three observations.

It was clear from the first observation that her students knew all the vocabulary, and they could give and follow directions correctly. Observations 2 and 3 showed that

these learners did not have the chance to develop beyond basic short phrases in total physical response. They did not have a chance to interact in pair work or group work where they could have created the language freely, and where they could have used English to perform speech acts, or to communicate ideas. Almost all the time in observations 2 and 3 was used in TPR, which was not needed.

In observation 3, Teacher C tried to use drilled language in communication. She asked the students to give the directions from the school to places around the area. However without any situations, settings and roles, it turned into a translation activity where she asked in Thai, and students translated into English. She spent about 25 percent of three observations in translation of words about places and directions that learners already knew. There were no communicative activities which allowed them to integrate their understanding with language skills such as reading, listening, speaking and writing.

Teacher C called on three students to give directions from her instructions. There was no need nor purpose for these students to ask directions for places they had known already. Teacher C needed to reduce drill activities, and provide more communicative activities such as role-play, information gap, etc. For instance, two students have similar maps. Student A has information on how to get to the hospital, but Student B does not. Then Student B asks Student A for the directions. Then Student B has the information that Student A does not have. This way, both have the chance to give and get information.

The learning environment in class C was suitable for communicative classrooms. Class was not limited to sitting in a common classroom scene. Class was both inside and outside the classroom, under a tree, or on the floor. Students moved around doing the

activities. The noise of this class sometimes was very loud when students were very involved in the games. Laughter and smiles from the students could be heard and seen most of the time.

Similar to Teacher B, Teacher C also was not trained sufficiently during the pre-service and in-service programs. In Teacher C's case, she had some foundation in teaching methodology. She had already prepared her students systematically in pedagogical activities. What she needed was confidence, and communicative language activities. There have been many commercial communicative activities about giving directions so that Teacher C could get one easily if she were guided to the right resource. Using a map can be an option. Two learners have similar maps, for example a map of a town. Each of them has partial information about the town. In order to finish their tasks, they must ask for information that the other possesses. This way, they exchange their information through direction and names of places. They negotiate for meaning when they cannot hear clearly or they want to make sure if what they hear is correct or if they want the other to repeat the information again. They interact as people actually do in real lives. Unfortunately, class C learners did not have a chance.

It can be concluded that based on classroom interaction patterns in the three classrooms, these three teachers did not implement communicative language teaching in their classrooms. Teacher A used the grammar translation approach. She used only whole class activities in all three observations. She taught grammar explicitly. She read the reading passage aloud, and learners were asked to repeat after her. She translated the reading passage phrase by phrase into Thai. Learners were asked to answer the comprehensive questions one by one. Learners were completely controlled in terms of

when and what they spoke. They did not have a chance to use language to communicate to each other.

Like Teacher A's class, Teacher B's class was not communicative. She taught grammar explicitly. Repetition after the teacher was used extensively. Learners were called to answer questions. However, learners in class B had a chance to work with a group activity such as a sentence scramble and choral activity. However, these activities did not require learners to communicate with each other, but they helped to create learning environment.

Teacher C used the least amount of whole class activity. She used learners working with group the most among the three teachers. Learners were engaged most of the time in TPR and singing in unison. However, Teacher C's class was not communicative because the language used in TPR was limited to physical movement rather than verbal response. Learners did not have a chance to use language to communicate freely and creatively with each other.

Table 8.2. Activities Used in the Three Classes: A, B, and C:

Duration (in minutes) and percentage of observed time per activity. (T= Teacher, C= Class, L= Learner, G= Groups)

← Whole class activity →													
T	T > C grammar	T > C translation	T > C read	T > C Prn.	T > C TPR	C repeat after T	L read one by one	L answer one by one	Choral	L > G/C	Ind. Wk	Gr. Wk	Total (Min)
	I	II	III	IV	V	VI	VII	VIII	IX	X	XI	XII	XIII
TA:													
1	0.7	11.3(37%)	.7	0	0	13.1 (43%)	3.9	0.7	0	0	0	0	30.5
2	12.4(40.0%)	.9	0	0	0	2.8	2.7	10.4 (35%)	0	0	1.0	0	29.8
3	3.3	6.5(15.5%)	0	0	0	5.7	4.6	21.9 (52%)	0	0	0	0	42.0
Total	15.7%	18.3%		.8%	0%	21.0%	11.0%	32.2%	0%	0%	1%	0%	100%
TB :													
1	23.5 (77%)	1.4	5.6	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	30.5
2	0	2.4	1.8	9.1(29	1.5	4.5	0	7.4 (24%)	2.7	5.7(18.6%)	4.7	0	30.6
3	0.4	3.9	0	.7%)	0	10.3(32.5%)	0	1.6	6.1	0	0	0	31.8
Total	25.7%	8.2%	8.0%	9.8%	1.5%	16.40%	0%	9.7%	9.6%	6.1%	5%	0%	100%
TC:													
1	0	4.1 (15.1%)	0	.8	.5	0	0	0	10.9 (40.1)	10.8 (39.8%)	0	0	27.1
2	0	0	0	0	0	2.6	0	0	0.7	14.4 (81.1%)	0	0	17.7
3	.3	16.7	0	1.4	0	0	0	0	2.6	10.0 (32.4%)	0	0	30.7
Total	.3%	27.4%	0%	2.9%	.7%	3.3%	0%	0%	13.7%	46.6% TPR	0%	0%	100%

I= Teacher taught grammar to class

III= Teacher read aloud to class

V= Teacher used Total Physical Response with class.

VII= Learner read a phrase or a sentence aloud one by one.

IX= Class sang in choral

XI= Learner worked individually such as copying sentences

on blackboard.

II= Teacher translated English into Thai to class

IV= Teacher taught pronunciation to class

VI= Class repeated a phrase or a sentence after teacher in unison

VIII= Learner answered to teacher's question one by one.

X= Learner worked with group or class with central activity and predicted phrase or

sentence

XII= Learners worked in group work with unpredicted language

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8.1.2. Target Language Use in the Classrooms.

Table 8.3 shows the amount of use of target language and native language by the three teachers.

Table 8.3. Amount of Target Language (English) and Native Language (Thai) Used by Three Teachers (counting sentences or phrases both in English and Thai used by teachers in each observation)

Teacher A	Target language	Native language	Total
TA: 1	16 (5.63%)	268 (94.70%)	284
2	27 (11.69%)	204 (88.31%)	231
3	10 (5.35%)*	177 (94.65%)	187
Total	53 (7.55%)	649 (92.45%)	702 (100%)
TB: 1	17 (8.33%)	187 (91.67%)	204
2	114 (36.77%)*	196 (63.23%)	310
3	72 (26.18%)	203 (73.81%)	275
Total	203 (25.73%)	586 (74.27%)	789(100%)
TC: 1	39 (27.86%)	101 (72.14%)	140
2	16(17.36%)	119 (82.64%)	135
3	24 (8.66%)	253 (81.61%)	277
Total	79 (14.31%)	473 (85.68%)	552 (100%)

Teacher A used the least amount of target language in the classroom. Her speech in English ranged from 10 to 27 sentences. About 7 percent of her total oral production was in English.

Teacher B used the largest amount of target language in her classes. In general, she used English about 25 percent of her verbal statements in English in three observations. Her English speech ranged from 17-114 sentences. The range was very wide. Particularly in observation 2, she used English about 36 percent of her verbal statements. Recall that Teacher B also used varied language activities (9 activities) in observation 2. Before I met Teacher B in person in observation 1, she was not sure if I would really come. Therefore, she did not prepare sufficient learning activities and her English speaking in observation 1. After observation 1, she asked if I would come to

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observe her again. I reconfirmed with her that I would definitely come to the other two appointments. Teacher B, therefore, prepared both the language activities and English speaking for observation 2 extensively, but apparently this is not what she usually did. Her students could not change overnight in terms of understanding English. They could not understand even the simple English she used. She normally spoke her prepared English sentences 4-5 times and finally provided the translations. In observation 2, Teacher B was very exhausted with the 9 activities and the 4-5 repetitions of all her prepared English sentences. As a result, in observation 3, she reduced both the activities and English language use.

Teacher C used some English in her class. The English speech used in three observations ranged from 16 to 39 sentences or phrases. Overall, she used English about 14 percent of all speech in her class.

The percentage of target language used by the three teachers did not relate to the sequence of observations. Most of the target language used by these three teachers was limited. Target language was used in many situations with many purposes. Table 6 shows the number of English expressions used for different purposes by the three teachers.

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Table 8.4. Speech Acts Used by Three Teachers. (counted by speech acts)

Teachers	Giving command	Giving information	Asking questions	Greeting and leave taking	Giving confirmation	Giving compliment
TA: 1	16	4	0	0	0	0
2	12	4	11	0	0	0
3	8	1	1	0	0	0
Total	36 (63%)	9 (15%)	12(21%)	0	0	0
TB: 1	4	5	0	0	6	2
2	49	34	27	1	0	3
3	30	17	16	3	0	6
Total	83 (40%)	56 (27%)	43 (21%)	4	6	11
TC: 1	32	1	2	3	1	0
2	9	0	1	5	0	1
3	11	2	8	0	0	1
Total	52 (67%)	3	11(14%)	8(10%)	1	2

Overall these three teachers mostly used English to give commands, ask questions and give information. Giving commands was the most popular among these speech acts. Teacher A used 36 English commands (63%). Teacher B gave 83 English commands (40%), and Teacher C gave 52 English commands (67%). Most of the commands were short and simple, for example, *look, sit down, stand up, listen, etc.* The most common commands among these three teachers were: *repeat after me, and open your book, sit down, stand up.* These three teachers also used the target language to ask questions; Teacher A used 12 sentences (21 %), Teacher B 43 sentences (21%) and Teacher C 11 sentences (14 %).

Teacher A used the least amount of English, and at the same time the least variety of speech acts. She gave commands, gave information and asked questions in English, but she did not greet students at all because she taught this class the whole day. She did not give confirmations or any compliments to her students. She did not give

compliments even in the native language although most of her students were very attentive.

Teacher A admitted that she used very little English in her teaching. She used more of the native language in English class. She used Thai to explain and give translations. She explained that if she used more English, her students could not understand. When asked why she used very little target language, she explained that teaching something new was already difficult for learners to understand; if she used English to explain it, her students would not be able to understand anything. Teacher A was confident about her ability in speaking English. She said that she did not have any problem in speaking English in class to her students if she wanted to. She suggested the idea of teaching in the native language first, and English later to help her students understand better. However, Teacher A did not do so in any of my three observations.

Teacher B used the most English in her classes compared to the other two teachers. She used it for a wider range of purposes. She used English to give commands (83 sentences), give information (56 sentences), and ask for information (43 sentences). She also used English to give compliments (11 sentences), give confirmation (6 sentences), and greet and take leave (4 sentences). Teacher B gave her students 11 compliments ('good' was the only compliment used) in three observations. Compliments helped learners to feel that they had accomplished something with English which encouraged and motivated them to do better.

Teacher B said that according to the curriculum of 1996, English teachers should speak English to familiarize students with the language. However, like Teacher A, Teacher B believed that learners could not understand if she used English all the time.

Apparently, her students really could not understand her. Teacher B explained that during her college years in teaching English, she never used English in teaching practice, and all of her Thai instructors used Thai in teaching and communicating with students. She reported that the main reason for not using English most of the time was due to her level of English proficiency and her lack of confidence. She normally switched to Thai when she faced difficulties in maintaining the English language. Most of the difficulties were not being able to find the right word in English to express the ideas. She also switched to Thai when she was not very confident that what she was speaking was correct. She said that she usually practiced speaking English before she actually used it. She sometimes practiced through listening to commercial tapes, and reading. This confirmed the explanation given before about her increase in target language use and language activities in observation 2.

Her preparation both in terms of target language use and language activities was good. The issue was whether she consistently did so in her normal teaching career. Apparently, her students were not accustomed to her English use and activities. When asked if she had a lesson plan for all these three observations, she did not have one. She explained that she was experienced, and her lesson plans were very familiar to her.

Teacher C used some English mostly in giving commands about directions (52 sentences), asking questions (11 sentences), and greeting and leave taking (8 sentences). Teacher C reported that she had not been attentive to improve her English skills during her college years; as a result, she had low English proficiency. She did not use English very much in teaching. In her opinion, she needed extra help in pronunciation, vocabulary, listening, and speaking. Teacher C's English proficiency was lower than that

of the other two teachers; therefore, she had a hard time speaking or pronouncing English correctly. For example, she could not differentiate between /r/ and /l/, so she said *light* instead of *right*. She could not pronounce consonant clusters and final sounds correctly, for example she said *stead* instead *straight*. Learners seemed to imitate all her mistakes.

8.1.3. Summary of Findings of Research Question 2

In conclusion, based on the data of participation patterns and the limited use of English in the classrooms, these three teachers did not apply communicative language teaching in their classes. This finding confirmed that CLT has been only in the written goals of teaching English, and changes have existed only in the written English curriculum (Naksuk, 1984; Namphet, 1986, Sawadwadee, 1991).

All three teachers used many whole class activities. Teachers B and C used students with groups; however, they were all drill-like activities wherein the whole group of students used a central activity. Language use was still highly guided and controlled. None of them used pair work or group work or communicative activities where learners used English communicatively. Basically, Teacher A used the grammar and translation approach while Teachers B and C did use some drill-like activities, especially Teacher C. Teacher B used considerably more drill activities, but not successfully to improve language development. Learners in class C practiced enough language skills needed for the communicative activities. However, none of her learners were developed to the point of learning a second language where they could use language to communicate freely and authentically. How much time should be devoted to pedagogical practice? According to Norman et al (1987), the ratio of guided /controlled practice to free practice in a class

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should be 40%-60%. In these three classes, this ratio was not accomplished. The guided or controlled activities took 100 %.

Teachers' use of English in these three classes was not high. The highest percentage of English use was about 25 percent of all utterances by Teacher B. The lowest was about 7 percent of all utterances by Teacher A. None of these three teachers used English more than 50 percent of all sentences in the classrooms. All of them used English mostly in giving basic commands, asking for information, and providing information.

8.2. Research Question 3: What facilitated or hindered teachers in using a learner-centered approach?

All three teachers in their interviews mentioned a lot of problems hindering them from being learner-centered teachers. They were:

Low Standard of Teacher Education. Teachers B and C who graduated from teacher education institutes reported that during their college years as students of teaching English, they were not trained sufficiently. As a result, they were not qualified in terms of language proficiency or teaching methodology. The medium of instruction during their college years was Thai, except when they had a foreign instructor, which was quite rare. Teachers believed that they would have had better English proficiency if English had been used as the medium of instruction. Teacher C further explained that her phonetics class had been conducted in lecture style emphasizing the articulation of sounds without actually practicing them. Language skill classes focused more on reading and writing skills. Speaking and listening skills were not emphasized at all. All three

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teachers admitted that they were not confident in speaking English, and found it difficult to communicate in English. Teacher C admitted that she could not understand the training sessions which had been conducted in English by native speakers.

Teachers B and C stressed that lecture was the common format in delivering teaching methodology and language skills at their teacher education institutions. Teacher C specifically explained that the teaching methodology class did not focus on teaching practice, but the theoretical knowledge of various teaching methods. Both agreed that during their practicum, teacher instructors observed their teaching without requiring the use of English in classrooms. Teachers B and C argued that pre-service English teachers need to be trained better by providing them more teaching practice and opportunities to be exposed to English. They also believed that if they had been encouraged to use English in those days, they would have had better English proficiency. And this view was shared by Teacher A as well. They would have been in a better position to implement a learner-centered approach if they had been properly trained by the teacher education institutions.

There have been many requests to improve teacher education programs especially teaching English as a foreign or a second language programs. Teacher education institutes have held seminars on measures to improve teacher education programs. However, it has not been reported to what extent those measures have been implemented.

Poor Knowledge of a Learner-Centered Approach. All three teachers complained that they were not certain about their knowledge of a learner-centered approach. They had received some knowledge about a learner-centered approach in lecture style from different sources which was not always compatible. Different

educators interpreted a learner-centered approach differently, and suggested different ways of implementing a learner-centered approach in the classrooms. Educators in the lectures and conference suggested ideas without actually implementing them in the classrooms. Teacher B disagreed with the way knowledge of the learning reform was delivered to teachers, and said “doing by talking is easier than doing by hands”. She meant that it is easy for these educators to talk about how to implement a learner-centered approach, but not to actually implement it. Teachers were confused, and could not put those theoretical ideas into practice.

Lack of Training for Teachers. All three teachers requested specific training for English in particular. They wanted to actually see how a learner-centered approach is used in teaching English. These three teachers suggested many interesting ideas for English teacher training. Teacher A and B suggested that in the preparation stage of each training, supervisors should survey teachers’ needs and interests so that the training could be specifically designed to meet them. This way, teachers would benefit the most from the training. Teachers’ needs and interests were never taken into consideration in the process of designing and presenting a training session. Both teachers reported that supervisors did not plan their work well enough; they organized a training session whenever budget was available. Training sessions always fell during school semesters, and students were left without any learning and teaching while teachers participated in training sessions. They suggested that training sessions should be held during school break when teachers are free from teaching, and have more energy and effort to participate in the training sessions.



All three teachers stressed that training sessions should have two major components: English proficiency improvement and teaching methodology. Teachers wanted to improve all their language skills such as pronunciation, speaking, listening reading and writing skills. Teacher A asked for conversation courses to improve impromptu speech. Teacher B who spoke the most English in class among the three admitted that she was not confident when speaking English. Before class, she took time to practice what she was going to use in class. Teacher C had the most difficult problems in English proficiency, especially pronunciation. Her young students imitated her pronunciation which could become a serious problem for the next English teachers of these students.

Teachers B and C definitely needed the knowledge of teaching methodology, especially Teacher B whose teaching activities did not achieve a communicative goal barely accomplished any teaching objective of each activity she used. Teacher C needed more knowledge in communicative language teaching, communicative activities or materials design.

Supervisor Qualifications. Teachers cannot improve their teaching quality if they do not have qualified supervisors in the areas. These three teachers reported that their supervisors needed to improve their knowledge and performance. In terms of knowledge, they explained that supervisors did not have high English proficiency, nor knowledge of teaching methodology. These teachers reported that supervisors made easy mistakes in terms of pronouncing easy English words during the training session. These errors caused teachers to mistrust their English proficiency. Moreover, supervisors were not able to provide the training without the creativity and hard working of local leading

teachers. Both Teachers A and B did not agree with using local English teachers in training sessions because these teachers already had a heavy teaching burden, and their English proficiency and knowledge of teaching methodology were not much different from theirs. They suggested better qualified training personnel for teaching methodology and English proficiency. They could be instructors or professors of TESOL or TEFL programs from leading universities in the country.

Teachers suggested that supervisors needed to do their jobs better by visiting teachers at schools on a regular basis, providing help and advice to teachers, and improving training sessions. All three reported that they never received help or support from supervisors on site. Teacher B reported that supervisors came to her when they wanted to collect some information for their portfolios for their promotion. After they finished their work, they never came again.

Amount of Administrative Support. All three teachers agreed that principals played a major role in learning reform because they were the most powerful agents in school. All decisions at schools are made by the principals, such as those regarding budget and teacher promotion. Teacher effectiveness highly depends on principals' interests and knowledge because they have the power to determine who will or will not be promoted in each academic year.

Most of the school budget is spent on painting buildings, building basketball fields, remodeling canteens, improving flower gardens, but not repairing teaching instruments in sound labs, or providing needed stationary for teachers. All sound lab instruments in these three schools had not worked for years. The three teachers reported that they did not have sufficient teaching supplies such as markers or paper for teaching

activities in class, and they sometimes had to use their personal funds to get the needed teaching supplies.

All teachers agreed that their principals could not help them academically because they did not have the academic knowledge. They did not understand the new curriculum of teaching English nor the learning reform because they never attended the conference or training. These principals never admitted that they did not have the ability to perform their work. Teachers B and C called their principals “dictators” who never listened to teachers’ opinions. Teacher B was asked not to express her opinion in a meeting. “I never talked to the principal,... it’s really the dark ages of my teaching career”, said Teacher B. Their principals were not concerned with how English should be taught only if the teachers were in the classrooms. Principals of these three schools had teachers who did not have knowledge of teaching English in grades 1-4 as in Teachers B and C’s schools. Also they did have English teachers teaching mathematics and science as in Teacher A’s situation. Teacher C explained that a physical education teacher who could not even pronounce ‘good morning’ was assigned to teach English. Teacher C was concerned about what learners could learn from him, and these learners would cause her many problems when she had to teach them English later in grades 5 and 6 English class.

Proficiency of Learners. These three teachers reported many problems from learners which inhibited them from applying a learner-centered approach. Many students had serious problems of low or no proficiency. They could not read, spell or write English. All blamed English teachers from grades 1-4 who did not teach English to these students during English classes. Teachers B and C had to begin teaching their students basic knowledge of English such as writing alphabet skills and spelling skills. This

hampered the progress of the class in general. At the same time, these teachers had to teach what they were supposed to teach in grades 5 and 6.

This situation burdened both the teachers and learners. For learners, English was not enjoyable because they were overwhelmed with new knowledge. Teachers B and C reported that many of their students had negative attitudes towards English. They thought that English was too difficult for them to understand. In the classroom, they were not attentive to what was taught, and they did not participate in the activities. They knew that they could pass to the upper class even if their English proficiency was low. According to the curriculum of 1996, the English grade is no longer taken into account for passing learners to the next level. Teacher B complained that she could not make any academic progress with her students.

Teacher A seemed not to pay attention to her students' proficiency although there were two students in her class who never participated in any activity, and whom she never called on to read or give the answers. However, she noticed that there was a relationship between native language proficiency and second language proficiency. The students who had problems in learning Thai also had problems in learning English. For example, learners who had problems in pronunciation in the mother tongue also had the same problem in English. Therefore, to improve learner's English proficiency, improvement in Thai language skills might also be needed.

Teacher's Problems

1. Teaching Load. Teaching loads seemed to be the most troublesome problem for teachers. In Teacher A's case, the problem was very serious as she was assigned to teach 8 subjects to a class. She spent considerable time in preparing subjects with which

she was not familiar such as mathematics and science. With the 25 hours a week of teaching, and other extra responsibilities such as the lunch project for students, and lab care taker, Teacher A reported having been overburdened for years. She had been trained in the best TESOL program in the country, and had a higher proficiency than the other two teachers. She had more than enough knowledge and capacity to change, but she did not want to change due to the heavy workload she had. She was ready for and looked forward to early retirement. The cry for reducing teachers' teaching load has been voiced many times, but it seems that the Ministry of Education has not provided more teachers to schools. The reason has always been due to the budget. Teacher A seemed to understand the situation, and accepted it by teaching as well as she could, and retiring when the time was right.

Teachers B and C had heavy teaching loads as well, about 22 hours a week, but they did not teach 8 subjects. Both Teachers B and C taught only English which helped reduce the amount of preparation because English had been their major and minor. At least they both had enough basic knowledge of English. With the heavy teaching load and extra responsibilities, these teachers did not have time for materials preparation. Teacher A relied heavily on the textbook. Teachers B and C did not, but most of the activities they used did not require much time for preparation. For example, Teacher C used TPR, which did not require any materials preparation.

2. Low Qualifications. Teachers B and C did not complain about their heavy teaching loads, but about their English proficiency and knowledge of teaching methodology. They wished to be trained more extensively and regularly on these two

skills. They believed that if they had enough knowledge of English proficiency and teaching methodology, they could teach better to help their learners.

3. Working Environment. These three teachers complained that all decision-making about their teaching problems resided with them individually. There was little chance of participating in professional dialogue with their colleagues. When they had problems, they solved them on their own, or sometimes they sought help or advice from friends from other schools. Teacher A did not want to get involved in any activity more than teaching to reach her early retirement. She seemed to be indifferent to any problems. Teachers B and C criticized other teachers in their schools for not doing their work well. Both thought that they worked in isolation. They could not ask help from their colleagues because they did not understand their work.

Chapter Nine

General Discussion and Proposed Plans

9.1. General Discussion

In Thailand, the learning reform has been the new educational policy for all teachers in the country since 1996. All teachers were educated about the learning reform regarding a learner-centered approach through three channels of knowledge from the Ministry of Education (MOE). This study attempted to find out the answers to these three major questions:

1. What were the conceptions of a learner-centered approach by policy makers, teacher training personnel and English teachers?
2. To what degree did teachers actually implement communicative language teaching in their classrooms?
3. What facilitated or hindered teachers in using a learner-centered approach?

What is the relationship between a learner-centered approach and communicative language teaching? In the area of second language learning, both a learner-centered approach and communicative language teaching focus on second language learners' needs and interests (Nunan 1985, Savignon 1983). A second language is learned in order to use it for communication. Learners' communicative competence is developed through language teaching where communicative tasks and activities such as pair work and group work are provided. This study attempted to examine the conceptions and the implementation of a learner-centered approach in the field of English as second/foreign language.

Four different research methods were used in this study: observations of three English teachers, interviews with teachers and supervisors, stimulated recall and document analysis. Three teachers in grades 5-6 from different metropolitan areas participated in this study. The selection was made based on their participation in communicative language teaching training, a conference and a lecture on a learner-centered approach from MOE before the study, a big class size of at least 30 students in a class, and willingness to participate in the study. Three consecutive observations, and an interview with stimulated recalled were conducted with the three teachers. All interactions in the classrooms and all comments of the teachers and the supervisors were recorded, transcribed, and analyzed.

It was found that policy makers, policy distributors, supervisors and teachers defined a learner-centered approach similarly, and they shared the similar goal of teaching and learning that was to develop learners to their optimal level. They all agreed that learning and teaching activities should be designed to meet learner's needs and interests. This definition was not different from the definition that has been widely accepted in western countries (Altman 1980, Knowles 1963, Nunan, 1988, 1989, Page & Thomas 1980). All share the same idea that a learner-centered approach is characterized by the attempt to meet individual learners' needs.

However, they all had different concepts regarding the application of the definition. They had different ways of the implementing a learner-centered approach in the classroom. The findings in section 7.1 showed that the Office of National Education Commission (ONEC), the policy makers, emphasized five major roles teachers should take in order to meet learners' differences. They should identify learners' needs, interests,

and knowledge, plan content and methods and analyze the curriculum, organize learning activities to serve learners' interests, evaluate learners progress, and help learners conclude and apply knowledge.

On the other hand, the Ministry of Education (MOE) had its own interpretation of a learner-centered approach and educated supervisors and teachers in the country through a lecture, a conference and a publication. In this interpretation, teachers did not take the same roles as suggested by the policy makers, but took the roles of facilitators who facilitated learners in the participatory process, and guided learners to learning centers such as libraries, parks, and provided a variety of teaching and learning methods. From this interpretation, teachers took fewer roles, and learners had to take more responsibility in their learning. This message has been conveyed to teachers and supervisors. Most supervisors and teachers in this study agreed that in a learner-centered approach, teachers act as facilitators, and learners need to seek knowledge on their own, summarize the learning, think and act all on their own.

What did these three English teachers think of a learner-centered approach? They all agreed that the ideas of a learner-centered approach suggested to them were not appropriate for teaching and learning English as a foreign language because learning centers in English were not available, and it was impossible for their learners to summarize the learning, think and act on their own in English. They all agreed that teaching and the practice of the four skills were still important for their learners.

The headline news in all leading newspapers of the country seems to reflect how other teachers taught after they received knowledge of a learner-centered approach through the three channels of MOE. The following excerpts were taken from the

headlines of the two major English newspapers in Thailand. In one incident, the student Council representing all students in the country gathered at the Parliament House to mark Children's Day. On this day, they reported the failure of the educational reform to the Prime Minister who was also the Minister of Education. These students reported what really happened in their classrooms after teachers were asked to become learner-centered teachers:

Teaching theory dismissed as 'bull'. Child-centered learning, once hailed as a radical new approach to education, was mocked on Saturday by the National Youth Council, who labeled it "buffalo-centered", or an ignorant system (The Nation, January 14, 2002).

New method of learning under fire. *Teachers 'abdicating their responsibility'.* The Education Ministry's new "child-centered" learning approach is under fire from students who say they will end up failing if teachers abdicate responsibility. If teachers pull out and leave everything to students, child-centered learning could foster "kwai –centered" (ignorant) learning instead, they said.

Hiranya Vivatdechakul, a Mattayom 5 student (grade 12) of St Francis Xavier Convent School, said she realized "kwai", or water buffalo, a common reference among Thais to something stupid, was a strong word to describe the learning concept. However, she said self-driven research and discussion was not the answer. Students needed teachers to guide and encourage them.

Anusorn Intarasaeng, a secondary student from Kalasin Pittayasan School, who acted as the chairman of the assembly, said teachers were leaving the burden of looking for knowledge to students. The concept allows students to focus on subjects they were interested in. However, Anusorn said teachers were assigning subjects to students and then leaving them to it (Bangkok Post, January 14, 2002).

Apparently, based on these headline news, teachers in other subjects in the country did follow what they were told in the conference that in a learner-centered approach, learners were supposed to seek knowledge, summarize the learning, think and act on their own. Teachers facilitated and guided them to sources of knowledge.

Teachers seemed to have been blamed for relinquishing their responsibilities and abandoning their students. However, to be fair, the public needed to see if teachers were ready in terms of their qualifications and how teachers were provided with knowledge and skills to change to a learner-centered approach.

Recall that most teachers were not been trained in a learner-centered approach after the reform. For example, in the case of English teachers, in early 1999 they were required to take an English proficiency exam with the content and level of the exam of grade 12. The results of the English teachers in the capital area ranged from 35-96 correct out of 100 (Kittiphumchai, 2001). This result was considered satisfactory (General Education Department, Ministry of Education, 1997). The result reflects that teachers with scores below 50 out of 100 need help and are not eligible to teach English to grade 5 and 6 pupils, especially when the content and difficulty of the test is at a level of grade 12. These teachers needed help, but they did not get it.

Basically, teachers had not been trained in a learner-centered approach even though they were going to teach in one. Society, in general, now condemns teachers for misinterpreting a learner-centered approach. However, it was unknown to the public that it was MOE who had provided the directions to the teachers. Otherwise, how could teachers in different parts of the country interpret a learner-centered approach in the same way? Moreover, teachers and supervisors in this study also had the same interpretation that learners took full responsibility for their own learning, and teachers just facilitated them.

The headlines should be a wake-up call for MOE to realize that the three channels (an hour lecture, a one-day conference and a publication of 21 teaching

methods) giving teachers knowledge of a learner-centered approach were not sufficient. The knowledge of a learner-centered approach provided by MOE was not correct. Their directions that learners take more responsibility in their learning, and teachers facilitate them have not been helpful in making positive educational changes. The reform was meant to improve the quality of education which, in turn, would improve the quality of lives. It was meant to “improve education so as to be attuned to economic and social change; create and strengthen knowledge” (Office of the Prime Minister and Ministry of Education, 2000 p. 1). However, what two students, Hiranya Vivatdechakul and Anusorn Intarasaeng, reported to the Prime Minister confirmed that the quality of education in general did not improve but rather it deteriorated.

How did these three teachers actually teach English in their classrooms? These English teachers did not appear to know how to teach in a learner-centered approach. In their opinions, what was provided in the lecture and the conference of a learner-centered approach was not appropriate for teaching English. They never experienced how a learner-centered approach is applied in teaching English. As a result, they kept their old teaching behaviors. They taught what they knew and what made them feel confident.

Two characteristics of communicative language teaching were used to analyze teachers’ teaching behaviors: classroom interaction patterns, and the use of target language in the classroom. Based on the patterns in the observation data, the three teachers were highly teacher centered, and not communicative, especially Teacher A, who used 99 percent of class time in whole class activities. She heavily emphasized repetition, grammar, translation, vocabulary and answering comprehension questions. She admitted to teaching English in order for students to pass the exam. This finding is

compatible with studies by Burnaby and Sun (1989), Li (1999) and Vacharaskunee (2000). It confirms Gorsuch's (2000) finding that the entrance examination has a negative wash-back effect on teaching English as a foreign language. Teacher A will focus only on what is on the exam. Teachers B and C are less teacher-centered because of their effort to decrease whole class activities, and increase more students working with groups such as in Total Physical Response, and choral activities such as singing. However, they were trained to use only drill activities not communicative activities; as a result, there were no communicative activities or communicative tasks as suggested by Savignon (1990), Long and Crookes (1992). Unfortunately, Teacher B was not able to use drill activities effectively; as a result, her students did not really practice any skills as they could have. In these three classes interaction, negotiation, and uninterrupted communication which are important for developing communicative competence (Long & Robinson, 1998; Pica, 1996; Pica & Doughty 1985; Polio & Gass, 1998; Varonis & Gass, 1985).

The use of the target language in these three classes was not high. The avoidance was due to teachers' low English proficiency, lack of confidence, and learners' low proficiency. What inhibited these teachers from using communicative language teaching in their classes? They reported many common problems of English teachers in English as foreign language situations such as China (Burnaby & Sun, 1989), South Korea (Li, 1999), and another report on Thailand (Vacharaskunee, 2000). The teachers reported these additional problems: standards of teacher education, knowledge of a learner-centered approach provided, lack of training for teachers, supervisor qualifications,

amount of administrative support, and proficiency of learners. They specified their personal problems such as teaching loads, qualifications and working environments.

The origins of these three teachers' problems can be traced to their pre-service education and training, in-service training and support such as moral, academic and administrative support. If the pre-service education and training had provided teachers with sufficient knowledge both in terms of teaching methodology and language proficiency, and if the in-service training and support had been available for them including training with local highly qualified supervisors and principals, they would have been able to change more effectively and smoothly.

From the interviews with teachers, principals were not perceived as qualified to help teachers academically. Teachers will get better academic support if they have principals with outstanding academic knowledge and experience. From the interviews with supervisors, almost all supervisors were underqualified in terms of language proficiency and knowledge of teaching methodology. During the training for English teachers, teachers were trained with only drill activities, or the pre-communicative activities. They took learners' roles and were provided with varieties of unrelated pedagogical activities which did not systematically develop learners to the optimal stage where learners use language freely and communicatively. They never experienced as a teacher how to design teaching activities or combine them to develop a specific language skill to the point where learners could communicate authentically. They did not have a chance to actually teach and get candid feedback on their teaching performances. They also did not get suggestions to improve their performance. None of the supervisors in this study had ever given any candid feedback to teachers for fear that they would not get

any cooperation from teachers, or would not be liked by them. Another problem was that supervisors did not have a commitment to improve their performance. At least three out of five supervisors interviewed in this study had other sideline jobs which used almost all of their time and effectiveness.

9.2. Proposed Plans for Improvement

It seems that the traditional system of giving knowledge of communicative language teaching to English teachers has been unsuccessful and ineffective. So far the learning culture for teachers has been limited to the training sessions provided once every a few years by the Ministry of Education through the incompetent provincial and district supervisors. All of the training sessions have been conducted in a short period of 2-5 days in hotels in big cities which can provide conference rooms, room and board for teachers and trainers. Definitely, it takes a tremendous budget excluding traveling expenses for each teacher and trainer. And budget has always been the common explanation for not giving training to teachers. The problem is not only insufficient budget, but also not having competent supervisors or teacher trainers to help English teachers.

It seems that the adoption of communicative language teaching has caused many problems. The feasibility of communicative language teaching has been questioned. Definitely, communicative language teaching is possible and feasible for Thailand. However, it needs to be coordinated and structured on a national level. MOE should have the major responsibility of bringing together specialists, instructors, professors and institutions to help English teachers. In-service and pre-service education need changes.

The following are proposed plans to help English teachers to change to communicative English teachers:

I. Modifications of Master's Degree for English Teachers and Supervisors. The following are major components of the degree:

1. One year of an English proficiency improvement program, and an intensive teaching methodology program including coursework on Needs Analysis, Teaching Methodology, Materials Design and Adjustment, Teaching Four Language Skills, Testing and Evaluating, Classroom Problems and Solutions. Both programs use English as the medium of instruction with the focus on actual practice and use.
2. Three months of teaching practice in actual situations with extensive discussion and candid feedback for improvement from teacher trainers.
3. Half a year of training other teachers (weekend training to English teachers from a school cluster of about 6-8 teachers for consecutive 8 - 12 weeks. Therefore, they train teachers at least from two school clusters)
4. Three months of following up on teachers at schools during the weekdays (three days a week).
5. These teachers will work as major teacher trainers in the area. They are no longer responsible for routine classroom teaching, but for training teachers.
6. After these teachers finish the degree, their job description as the trainer is as follows:

- a. Training: During the weekends, give 8-10 training sessions to teachers from a school cluster in the area. The training session will be held at any meeting room at any school in order to save money. During weekdays, three days a week, observe teachers in their actual teaching situations.
- b. Materials designing for teachers (Materials, tools, and academic resources are fully available).
- c. Provide consulting when teachers need help.
- d. Organize other activities where teachers can improve their teaching skills and language skills such as English language camps for teachers, trips to accepted schools, talks or seminars.
- e. Evaluate the program annually.

II. Adjustment of Pre-Service Program. Pre-service teacher programs need significant changes to suit teachers' English teaching situations after graduation. Teacher education institutes should improve their curricula by focusing more on actual use and practice in addition to theoretical knowledge, reducing non-interactive teaching styles such as lectures and increasing task- based instruction. The following courses should be provided in pre-service programs: Teaching English as a Second or Foreign Language, Materials Designs, Needs Analysis, Teaching Speaking Skills, Teaching Listening Skills, Teaching Writing Skills, Teaching Reading Skills, Testing, Phonetics, Classroom Research, Program Evaluation, and Practicum. In addition, English proficiency courses

particularly focusing on authentic speaking and listening skills must be part of the curriculum. Last, but not least, English must be used as the medium of instruction.

III. Adjustment of Entrance Examinations. Entrance Examinations need changes. Many schools in Thailand claim openly that they teach to pass the entrance examination which tests memorization of discrete points. English teachers such as Teacher A explain that they need to focus on grammar rules and vocabulary memorization because their learners want to go on to higher education. And the entrance examinations for English at all levels focus on reading, writing, and grammar. Speaking and listening skills are not tested at any level on the entrance examination. Thai learners' communicative competence is low compared to other Asian nations. If the goal of learning reform to improve Thai learners to be able to compete in the new economic world is meant to be accomplished, communicative language teaching should be implemented in schools. Entrance examinations at all levels should test communicative competence through writing skills so that learners will pay more attention to their communicative competence.

IV. English grades in elementary school. The English grades should be taken into account when passing students to the next level. After the reform, the new policy allowed learners who could not pass an English course to move to the next level. This policy has caused serious problems for English teaching in general because learners do not see the importance of learning English. In classrooms, they do not pay attention to English teaching and learning.

9.3. Conclusion

The changes in teaching approach from a teacher-centered to a learner-centered one have been the written policy of language teaching for all levels in Thailand. Teachers cannot apply this knowledge in their classrooms. English teachers in this study still teach the way they were familiar with because the information concerning a learner-centered approach differed according to its source which confused them. Teachers have been provided with theoretical knowledge of a learner-centered approach which has not been effective. Teachers have not been trained to teach the way they were expected to teach. They reported many problems such as a lack of administrative support, learner problems and teacher problems such as inadequate English proficiency. Therefore, to accomplish the goal of educational reform, it is a must for the Ministry of Education to give the needed help to teachers who are the most important element of educational reform.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1

Table3.1. Schedule for Getting Permission Before the Observations and Interviews with Teachers and Supervisors (2001)

Week/Date	Organization	Purpose	People
W1(15-21Jan)	Ministry of Education	Getting information about plan and policy of teaching English	Jan15 -met supervisor 1 at Supervision and Educational Standard Development office, office of the national primary education mission, -met supervisor of English subject section at curriculum & instruction development dept. -met supervisor of policy and planning division Jan17-Interviewed Supervisor 1
W2 (22 Jan)	Provincial Primary Education Office	Getting permission to go to schools and meet teachers in Bangkok.	-met the director of the office to get the permission to go to schools -met supervisor 2, and set appointment to interview her.
W2 (23-26)	School A	Getting permission from the principal to meet teachers	-met the principal -met Teacher A and set appointments for observations and interviews
W3 (29Jan)	Provincial Primary Education Office	Getting information about teacher training in the province	-met the director of the office -met supervisor 3 who is in charge of teacher training in the province, and set the appointment time for interviews
W3 (29 Jan-3Feb)	District Primary Education Office	Getting permission to go to schools and meet the teachers	-met the directors of district primary education office and got the permission. -met supervisor 4 who's in charge of teacher training for teachers in the districts, and set appointment time for interviews -called Teachers B and C on the phone to set appointments for observation and interviews. -met principals to get permission to collect data.

APPENDIX 2

Table 3.4. Schedule for Observations of Three Teachers and Interviews with Three Teachers and Five Supervisors (2001)

Week/date	Organization	Purposes
W1 (5Feb-9Feb)	School A	Observed Teacher A Feb 5 (2.00-3.00 pm) Feb 6 (2.00-3.00pm) Feb 7 (2.00-3.00pm) Interviewed Teacher A Feb 7 (3.00-4.30 pm)
W2 (12Feb-16 Feb)	School B	Observed Teacher B Feb 12 (8.30-9.30am) Feb 14 (9.30-10.30 am) Feb 15 (12.30-1.30pm)
	School C.	Observed Teacher C Feb 13 (2.30-3.30pm) Feb 14 (12.30-1.30pm) Feb 16 (8.30 – 9.30 am)
W3 (19Feb-23 Feb)	School C	Interviewed Teacher C Feb19 (10.30-12.00am)
	Provincial primary education office	Interview Supervisor 3 Feb19 (1.30 – 3.30 pm)
	School B	Interview Teacher B Feb20 (1.00-3.00pm)

W7 (19Mar-23Mar)	Provincial primary education office	Follow-up interviewed Supervisor 3 Mar 23 (9.00-11.00am)
W9 (2Apr-6Apr)	District primary education offices	Interviewed Supervisor 4 Apr2 (9.00-12.00 am)
	District primary education offices	Interviewed Supervisor 5 Tue 3 (4.00-5.00 pm) Follow up interview Supervisor 5 Thu 5 (10.00-12.00 am)
	Provincial primary education office	Interviewed Supervisor 3
W10 (23 Apr-27Apr)	Provincial primary education office National primary education offices	Apr 4 (10.00-11.30 am) Interviewed Supervisor 1 Apr 27 (3.00-3.30pm)
W11 (30 Apr-5 May)	Bangkok Metropolitan primary education offices	Interviewed Supervisor 2 Apr 30 (2.00-3.00pm)

APPENDIX 3

Exercises used by Teacher A taken from Ministry of Education (1998) *English is Fun* (Book 4). Kurusapa Printing House.

Exercise 4.1. Vocabulary list 1

- | | | |
|-------------------|-------------------|-----------------|
| 1. Aunt | 2. Cousin | 3. Family |
| 4. Grand-child | 5. Grand children | 6. Grand father |
| 7. Grand mother | 8. Husband. | 9. Uncle |
| 10. Wife | 11. Primary | 12. Centimeter |
| 13. Weight, Weigh | 14. Retire | 15. Sure |
| 16. Older | 17. About | |

Exercise 4.2. Vocabulary list 2

- | | | |
|----------------|-------------------------|---------------|
| 1. Age | 2. Buddhist | 3. Christian |
| 4. Dress maker | 5. Government official. | 6. Height |
| 7. Hobby | 8. Muslim | 9. Occupation |
| 10. Religion | 11. Secondary | 12. Surname |
| 13. Telephone | 14. Weight. | 15. Future |

Exercise 4.3. Cloze Test.

Manus Rakdee is 12 _____ old. He is a _____. He _____ 45 kilograms, and is _____ centimeters tall. He lives at _____ in _____. His _____ number is 234567. He is in the _____ grade at _____ school. His _____ is Arnath. He is _____ government officer. His mother is a _____. _____ is Surang. Manus likes to swim, _____, and _____ football. He wants _____ a soldier.

Exercise 4.4. Reading passage

Next month, some people are going to have birthday party, and I am going to go. I'm going to wear my best clothes. I want to eat a lot of cake and ice cream. I think I am going to have a good time. Whose birthday party am I going to go? Guess. This man was 55 when I had my first birthday. My father and uncles look like him. He played with my father when he was a little boy. His wife is my grand mother, and I am his grand son. Whose birthday party am I going to go to? Guess.

The man is the son of may aunt and uncle. I like to call him an older brother. But he is not my brother. Whose party am I going to go to? Guess.

Exercise 4.5. Application form

1. Last name, first name: _____
2. Sex: Boy Girl
3. Religion: Buddhist Christian Muslim Others
4. Age: _____
5. Height: _____ CM.
6. Address: _____
7. Telephone number: _____
8. Hobbies: _____
9. Future occupation: _____
10. Primary school: _____ Grade: _____
11. Secondary school: _____
12. Father's name: _____ Occupation: _____
13. Mother's name: _____ Occupation: _____

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