

Analysis of EFL Learners' Attitudes towards Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) Approach and Its Impact to their Academic Performance

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the attitudes of first-year EFL learners at the Faculty of Education, Nakhon Phanom University towards the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach and analyzes the relationship between the attitudes and their academic performance. The research revealed that a majority of the respondents value the interactive opportunities provided by CLT, suggesting that such interaction enhances their learning experience. However, a weak positive correlation (Pearson coefficient of 0.234, p-value of 0.488) between students' attitudes and academic performance indicates that while positive attitudes may contribute to improved outcomes, the association is not statistically significant. This finding highlights the importance of other influencing factors and suggests a room for further research needed to fully understand the complex relationship between attitudes and academic performances. The study emphasizes the potential of CLT to foster positive learning attitudes through interactive, culturally relevant, and technologically integrated teaching strategies, which may ultimately enhance both language proficiency and academic performance.

INTRODUCTION

The Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach has become a widely accepted method in teaching English as a Foreign Language (EFL). CLT emphasizes the use of real-life communication learning experience, focusing on students' ability to convey and understand meaning rather than just mastering grammatical rules. This approach encourages learners to participate in interactive activities such as role-plays, group discussions, and problem-solving tasks, making language learning more engaging and practical [1].

EFL learners' attitudes toward the CLT approach play a crucial role in its effectiveness. Positive attitudes often lead to greater motivation, participation, and ultimately, better academic performance. On the other hand, resistance or negative perceptions may hinder the learning process, causing students to struggle with the language and fail to reach their full potential. Understanding these attitudes is key to improving teaching strategies and enhancing language acquisition [2].

Research has shown that there is a significant correlation between the use of the CLT approach and improvements in students' academic performance. Students who embrace CLT tend to develop stronger communicative skills, which not only boosts their confidence but also their ability to perform well in exams and real-life situations. Therefore, analyzing learners' attitudes toward CLT and its effects on their academic performance is essential for educators looking to optimize their teaching methods and help students succeed in learning English [3].

In Thailand, the Office of the Basic Education Commission (OBEC) has incorporated CLT into its English language curriculum. This integration aims to improve English proficiency among students by emphasizing practical communication skills over rote memorization. While the OBEC system faces challenges such as large class sizes and varying levels of teacher proficiency in English, the adoption of CLT has shown promise in enhancing students' language skills. Teachers are encouraged to create more interactive and student-centered classrooms, which aligns with the principles of CLT [4].

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Research Questions

The objectives of this study was to analyze EFL learners' attitudes toward Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) and its impact to their academic performance.

1. What are attitudes of the EFL learners of Nakhon Phanom University?
2. Is there a significant relationship between the attitudes of the EFL learners towards the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach and their academic performance?
3. What are the implications of the result of the study?

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Communicative Language Teaching Approach

Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach has been widely researched and implemented as an effective method for teaching English as a Foreign Language (EFL). CLT focuses on the use of language in real-life situations, emphasizing communication over rote memorization of grammar rules. Several studies have highlighted the benefits of CLT in various educational contexts. For instance, Savignon (2002) points out that CLT encourages student interaction and meaningful communication, leading to a more engaging learning environment. Moreover, Littlewood (2014) supports the idea that CLT fosters greater student participation and helps build practical language skills. In Thailand, the integration of CLT in the Office of the Basic Education Commission (OBEC) system has also been studied, showing promising results in improving students' English proficiency (Choomthong, 2011).

The impact of the CLT approach on the academic performance of EFL learners has also been a subject of significant research. Studies across different countries have shown a positive correlation between the use of CLT and improvements in students' language skills. For example, research conducted in China demonstrated that students who had a favorable attitude towards CLT performed better in English assessments (Wang, 2010).

Comparison of CLT Approach in the Process

In Thailand, Choomthong (2011) observed that students involved in CLT-based activities under the OBEC system exhibited marked improvements in their communicative abilities compared to those taught using traditional methods. Similarly, studies in Korea have reported that CLT enhances students' confidence in using English, which translates into better academic performance overall (Kim, 2012).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter outlines the methodology employed in this descriptive study. It covers the following aspects: research design, sampling strategy, the researcher's role, participants, data sources, data collection process, instrumentation, data analysis, and ethical considerations.

This study employed a descriptive correlational research design to explore ESL learners' perceptions and attitudes, and to determine if there is a significant relationship between these learners' beliefs and their attitudes towards the CLT approach. This design is appropriate for this purpose because it facilitates the examination of relationships between various variables, offering valuable insights into the dynamics of the CLT approach in university-level English language education. Descriptive correlational design is utilized in research aimed at providing a snapshot of current conditions and identifying relationships among different variables [8].

Participants

The data were collected at Nakhon University in Thailand. The study involved 46 first-year education students from the English Department, including 14 males and 32 females. Participants were chosen using purposive sampling, a non-probability technique used to select individuals with specific knowledge or experience. This method is effective for both qualitative and quantitative research, despite its inherent bias compared to random sampling. Ensuring the reliability and competence of the selected participants is crucial for the quality of the data [9]

Instruments of the Study

The researcher used a custom-made questionnaire to collect data on students' attitudes towards the CLT approach. The questionnaire had 2 sections: personal information, and attitudes of EFL learners (10 questions).

Procedure

After validating the questionnaire with three experts, it was distributed to participants using Google Forms with a Likert scale. The Likert scale is a tool used in questionnaires to measure people's attitudes and opinions (Likert, R. 1932). Respondents selected from five options to show their level of agreement or disagreement with each statement: 5 – strongly agree, 4 – agree, 3 – neutral, 2 – disagree, 1 – strongly disagree. Once responses were collected, the data were recorded and analyzed using appropriate statistical methods. The analysis included computing frequency, mean, and mean percentage. Data were tallied and organized using statistical methods to aid in interpretation. The Jamovi application was used for these computations.

Sub-problem no. 1

To collect the personal information of the learners, the data was collected from the questionnaire.

Sub-problem no. 2

To find out the attitudes of the learners, frequency counts and percentage distributions were used.

Sub-problem no. 3

To determine if there is a significant relationship between learners' attitudes and their academic performance,

the Pearson Correlation Coefficient (r) was used.

Ethical Considerations

Adhering to ethical standards in research is crucial. It ensures that the study focuses on its true aims, such as acquiring knowledge, discovering truth, and minimizing errors, while also fostering important values like trust, accountability, mutual respect, and fairness. This study followed the ethical principles outlined in the Belmont Report (2020), which include respecting autonomy, beneficence and non-maleficence, justice, informed consent, confidentiality and data protection, integrity, and avoiding conflicts of interest [10].

RESULTS

This chapter presents the outcome of the qualitative analysis of the research questions answers. The results are presented based on the emergent themes, sub-themes, core ideas, and categorization.

Table 1: Gender and Age of the EFL Students

	Counts	Percent of Total
Gender		
Female	32	69.6 %
Male	14	30.4 %
Age		
21	1	2.2 %
20	4	8.7 %
19	20	43.5 %
18	21	45.7 %
Total	46	100%

Table 1 shows the ages and gender of the respondents. It indicates that most of the respondents are females earning 69.6 % of the total population and 30.4 percent for males. It also indicates that their ages range from 18-21 years old. It shows that most of the students age are from 18-19 years old indicating 43.5 percent and 45.7 percent respectively.

To determine the EFL learners’ attitudes towards Communicative Language Teaching Approach, survey questionnaire was administered and the result is displayed in Table 2.

Table 2: Survey Results of the EFL Students’ Attitudes towards CLTA

II. ATTITUDE OF THE EFL LEARNERS		WM	DE
1. I prefer communicative activities where I can express myself in class.		4.11	A
2. I prefer my English class focused on daily life activities.		4.37	A
3. I prefer my English teacher to be patient when doing class activities.		3.96	A
4. I prefer my English teacher designing the activities in a realistic manner.		4.2	A
5. I like to speak to my English teacher when doing the class activities.		4.09	A
6. I prefer the CLT approach over the traditional one.		4.15	A
7. I feel that CLT activities help me learn English more easily.		4.3	A
8. I feel that CLT activities are more enjoyable and easier.		4.13	A
9. I appreciate the opportunities where I can interact with classmates and the teacher in the class.		4.37	A
10. I feel motivated in participating in CLT approach activities.		4.22	A
Total		4.19	A

Legend: WM= Weighted Mean
1.00-1.50 (SD – Strongly Disagree)

DE: Descriptive Equivalent

1.51-2.50 (D – Disagree)

2.51-3.50 (N – Neutral)

3.51-4.50 (A – Agree)

4.51-5.00 (SA – Strongly Agree)

Among the items rated by the students, 2 items which are: item number 2, “*I prefer my English class focused on daily life activities*” and 9, “*I appreciate the opportunities where I can interact with classmates and the teacher in the class*” got the highest mean of 4.37, which is however only equivalent to “*Agree*” while the item number 3 “*I prefer my English teacher to be patient when doing class activities*”, got the lowest mean of 3.96 which is equivalent to “*Agree*”. The findings indicate that the EFL students recognize the integration of daily life activities, and frequent interaction with their peers and the teacher in their English class. It also indicates a close distance to the *median* which implies that there is still a room for improvements that can be employed through interventions, and more meaningful communicative activities to further their classroom interaction not only with their classmates but also to the teacher.

To determine the significant relationship between EFL learners’ attitudes towards Communicative Language Teaching Approach and their academic performance, Pearson Correlation Coefficient was employed at the 0.5 significance level to the result of the administered survey questionnaire on the EFL students’ beliefs and attitudes.

Correlation Matrix			
		EFL Students’ Attitudes towards CLTA	Mastery Test Score
EFL Students’ Attitudes towards CLTA		Pearson’s r	—
		df	—
		p-value	—
Mastery Test Score		Pearson’s r	0.234
		df	9
		p-value	0.488

The correlation matrix shows a weak positive link between EFL students’ attitudes towards CLT Approach and their test scores, with a correlation coefficient of 0.234. However, the p-value of 0.488 indicates that this relationship is not statistically significant. Therefore, we cannot conclude that students’ attitudes towards CLT Approach have a meaningful effect on their test scores based on this data.

DISCUSSION

This chapter provides a discussion of the themes from the analyzed data. The study aimed to investigate the perceptions and attitudes of ESL learners towards the CLT approach and to determine if there is a significant relationship between their attitudes and academic performance. The research questions guiding the study were: 1) What are the attitudes of first year EFL learners of Nakhon Phanom University? and 2) Is there a significant relationship between the attitudes towards the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach and their academic performance? The hypothesis was that there is a significant relationship between EFL learners’ attitudes towards CLT Approach and their academic performance.

The findings revealed that most respondents are female, making up 69.6% of the total, while males account for 30.4%. The students’ ages range from 18 to 21, with 43.5% being 18 years old and 45.7% being 19 years

old. The survey results indicated that students value the interactive opportunities provided by their teachers and peers, suggesting that such interaction enhances their learning experience. In a CLT classroom, teachers play multiple roles, including analyst, advisor, and group process manager [11].

The correlation matrix also revealed a weak positive relationship between EFL students' attitudes towards CLT approach and their academic performance with a Pearson correlation coefficient of 0.234. This suggests that while more positive attitudes might be slightly associated with higher test scores, the connection is weak. The p-value of 0.488 indicates that this association is not statistically significant, it means that the observed correlation may be due to random variation rather than a true effect [13]

These findings are consistent with some research suggesting that the link between attitudes and academic performance can be weak or indirect [14]. While positive attitudes towards learning approaches like CLT approach might contribute to better outcomes, other factors may play a more substantial role. This highlights the need for further investigation into additional variables that could influence this relationship and provide a clearer understanding of how attitudes impact academic achievement [15].

CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, while positive attitudes towards learning approaches, CLT can contribute to improved academic outcomes. The relationship between attitudes and performance in this study indicated a weak correlation which implies that there are other factors that supplements learning other than their attitude in the language teaching approach . As other factors might play a more significant role, underscoring the need for further research to explore additional variables that influence this connection and to better understand how attitudes impact academic achievement.

Incorporating activities that foster greater interaction, collaboration, and practical language use, teachers can enhance students' attitudes toward learning English. A positive shift in attitude can lead to improved speaking and listening skills. Teaching strategies grounded in communicative language teaching (CLT) motivate learners to actively use the target language[16] . Similarly, To further maximize the effectiveness of CLT, lessons should be tailored to align with students' needs and cultural contexts. This might involve using relevant topics, integrating technology for communication, and providing consistent feedback. Training educators in CLT techniques equips them to implement these strategies successfully. By prioritizing interactive and enjoyable learning experiences, CLT can significantly improve both students' attitudes and their academic performance in EFL [17] .

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