

# Implementing Cooperative Learning to Enhance Oral Communication Skills in English for Tourism Program: A Case Study of Thai Students

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**Abstract**—This research aimed to compare the oral communication skill of the students before and after using the Cooperative Learning approach, to investigate the students' attitudes toward this approach, and to determine how they work in the group. The target group was a class of 26 tourism students who study English for tourism at a private university in south of Thailand. There were two types of research instruments. The first type used was the treatment instrument, which consisted of 5 lesson plans, using Cooperative Learning approach. The second type used for collecting data was pretest and posttest, questionnaire, and semi-interview in order to answer three research questions. The data were analyzed by using mean, standard deviation, and percentage. The results showed that the students were developed after using this method and most of them provided positive attitudes toward Cooperative learning approach.

**Keywords**—Cooperative learning, tourism program, oral communication skill

## I. INTRODUCTION

Currently, English has become the most important international language that is used by people around the world. As a result, this changing context, in particular the emergence of ASEAN community in 2015, constructs greater demands for the Thai workforce to develop reasonable English language skills, especially in business communication. Currently, there is a sense of urgency to train their graduates in order to get them ready for the ASEAN community in the future or at least to keep their jobs within their own countries. Various businesses call for effective communication. As tourism is the main income earner of Thailand which continues to increase, the need of English is obvious. Therefore, the students who are studying in this field should be trained to use the target language, which is English.

In Thailand, the students have been taught English since kindergarten level but the majorities do not show high English ability. In addition, they gradually lose their interest when they cannot use it. The National Institute of Education Testing Service (NIETS) announced result from the 2010 Ordinary National Education (O-net) of Grade 12 that the

majority of student failed in the English subject with an average of the less than 19.22 from the total score of 100. Also, as reported by New York Times, Education First Company ranked ability level of English of 54 countries where English is not their mother tongue. The result showed that Thailand is ranked fifty-three (Thairat, 2012/November/4). As a result, it indicates that learning and teaching English should be developed in order to help students get better in English. The problems of students always face in learning are: a) a lack of opportunity to use English in their daily lives, b) a lack of responsibility for their own learning, c) being passive learners, d) being too shy to speak English with classmates, and e) unchallenging English lessons (Biyaem, 1997 as cited in Wiriyachitra, 2002).

In Thailand, teaching and learning English as a foreign language in non-English speaking countries still embrace the traditional classroom with the teacher-centered approach (Wiriyachitra, 2002). As a result, this means that the students have little interaction not only between the teacher and students but also between students and students. As well as tourism students, the majority of students majoring in tourism did not show high English ability in their field. The important skill of this program is oral communication skill but the students still do not meet the standard. Therefore, cooperative learning is an alternative teaching method which is selected to develop students' oral communication skill.

Therefore, this study took place at Tapee University, which produces graduates in tourism major, is located at Surat Thani Province, where there are has a number of famous places and events that attract tourists to visit and tourism in the Province is a multi-million dollar business with world-renowned attraction. According to the report of the Quality Assurance Division's Quality Audit in 2009-2012, it reported that the students could not serve the needs of their employers in terms of English speaking ability required in the workplace.

The study attempts to answer the following research questions:

1. Is there any improvement in terms of oral communication skills based on cooperative learning?
2. What are the attitudes of students toward cooperative learning?
3. How do they manage their responsibility in the group?

It is significant for Thai Universities to have information about the use of cooperative learning to raise motivation of students with limited English. Moreover, the study is significant to Tapee University, which produces graduates in the Tourism major; a way to help students improve their English would be identified and adopted. In addition, for the researcher as a teacher of English and other who have the same career at Tapee University and other universities.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

### A. *Growing of Tourism in Thailand*

In Thailand, the main economic influence is tourism industry because of its power to produce more incomes for the local municipalities and the country (Sangkaworn & Mujtaba, 2010; Chancharat, 2011). According to the statistic of tourists during 2009-2013, it shows the visitors around the world who come to travel in Thailand increases continuously each year (Tourism Authority of Thailand). As a result, the industry has provided job chances for people of every generation, experience, and education (Sangkaworn & Mujtaba, 2010; Sukamolson & Anantasate 2011; Maliwan & Mujtaba, 2012).

### B. *What is Cooperative Learning?*

The cooperative learning (CL) is defined as a classification of instructional approaches which conduct small groups of students to encourage teammate communication and for studying academic subjects (Tuan, 2010). The way to success when the teachers would like to conduct cooperative learning in the classroom is five key elements; positive interdependence; face-to-face promotive interaction; individual accountability; interpersonal and small-group social skill; Group processing.

## III. METHODOLOGY

### A. *Research Participants and Research Tools*

Define abbreviations and acronyms the first time they are used in the text, even after they have been defined in the abstract. Abbreviations such as IEEE, SI, MKS, CGS, sc, dc, and rms do not have to be defined. Do not use abbreviations in the title or heads unless they are unavoidable. The instrument of this study includes:

#### a) Questionnaire

The questionnaire gathers students' attitudes on cooperative learning approach, contains 26 items which is adopted by Lin, 2005. The questionnaire is conducted at the end of the course.

#### b) Pretest and Posttest

Pretest and posttest is employed to collect students' outcome before and after learning with this approach. The pretest is drawing out from the fourth session of first module to

ask students to simulate on topic tourist guide and tourists in order to introduce the interesting place at Surat Thani. For the posttest, the simulation is chosen again and evaluates them by speaking rating scale.

#### c) Semi-interview

Semi-interview contains 11 items in order to get strategy of group process. In addition the semi-interview is conducted at the end of the course with discussing in group.

### B. *Data collection*

In order to maintain the validity of this qualitative research, this researcher employs multiple data collection method. The triangulation method, which used multiple source for gathering data, including questionnaire, semi-interview, questionnaire, pretest, and posttest, is conducted in this study to gather as much as data as possible about benefits, students' attitude, and group process. Through interviewing the students, the researcher collect more detailed information on implementation of cooperative learning approach, on the group process of students. Through, questionnaire, the researcher gathers descriptive data for conducting a reliable participants' reflection on cooperative learning. Also through, pretest and posttest, the researcher investigates students' outcome on the teaching method.

### C. *Data analysis*

After completing all interviews, doing pretest-posttest, and administering the questionnaire to the participants, the researcher carefully transcribed the data in order to categorize the findings. Additionally, the data are translated into English by the researcher.

The data analysis started after the first interview and the questionnaire have been completed. The interview instrument is developed to obtain process of group work toward cooperative learning implementation in their English classroom, and the qualitative responses from the interview instruments are categorized into different themes to best answer the research questions 1, 2, and 3. The questionnaire is developed to gather supportive data, and the result of the survey is analyzed by SPSS to calculate in frequency, percent, and mean to further support this qualitative study. In sum, the data analysis is regarded as an important element to help the researcher identify category themes and patterns emerging from the interviews, pretest posttest, and questionnaire.

## IV. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

To answer the first research question pretest and posttest were used to find the result. According to Table 1, the results show a significant difference between two means in the pre-test and post-test. It means that there was a significant increase in pre-test (prior to the treatment) to post-test (after the treatment).

Table 1 Comparing mean values between pre-test and post-test scores

**Paired Samples Statistics**

	Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1 Posttest	12.32	25	1.376	.275
Pretest	5.68	25	.988	.198

To answer the second question, questionnaire and semi-interview were used to collect the data. The overall participants have positive attitude toward CL approach, the students agreed that CL enhance students’ oral communication skills, made interesting classroom atmosphere, promote class interactions, learning motivation, and students’ self-respect.

The finding of third research questionnaire, the students have the similar procedures to divided their duties in the group which it is followed their preference and aptitude ability. Moreover, if the members do not understand the tasks to complete the group goad they will help each other to explain as well

**V. CONCLUSION**

The findings of this investigate showed that the CL approach significantly contributed to the English learning in terms of oral communication skills of the tourism students at South of Thai University in Thailand. First of all, although the CL approach was an absolutely new learning style for all student participants, the result demonstrated that it was useful to students’ English learning because it provided students with an authentic atmosphere in which to develop their communicative skill and to enhance their learning motivation. Beside the exhaustive and meaningful interaction of the CL approach not only helped students develop their self-respect and interpersonal skills, but provided them with more chance to train their oral communication skills. In addition, the method open the way for students to create their own working style in their group as well.

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