



The Effects of Communicative Language Teaching Approach on Chinese Listening-Speaking Skills of Grade Nine Thai Students

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to investigate whether the communicative language teaching (CLT) approach could improve the Chinese listening and speaking skills of Grade Nine Thai students, as well as their satisfaction with the approach. The study employed a quantitative design, and the CLT approach was implemented with 30 students. The pre-test and post-test were used to assess the students' performance before and after the intervention. The satisfaction questionnaire was given to the students after the experiment to find out how satisfied they were with the communicative language teaching approach. The mean score on the post-test was 162.00, which was higher than the mean score on the pre-test, which was 132.67. The data collected from the questionnaire showed that all the items were scored highly. The results of the study reflected that the students were happy and satisfied with the methodology used by the researcher. It is recommended that more research on the communicative language teaching approaches be conducted for different groups and grades of Thai students.

Keywords: *Communicative language teaching approach, Chinese listening and speaking skills, Grade nine Thai students*

1. Introduction

In the 21st century, globalization has become an irreversible trend, with increasingly frequent exchanges among countries in various aspects such as economy, culture, and technology. In this context, the importance of learning Chinese has become particularly prominent. According to the "2019 Report on the Development of Chinese International Education," the number of people learning Chinese worldwide has exceeded 120 million, covering more than 160 countries and regions. This indicates that Chinese is not only the official language of China but also an important tool for international communication.

The history of Chinese education in Thailand dates back to the 19th century, initially driven by the Chinese immigrant community. As relations between Thailand and China continued to develop, especially in the early 21st century, the Thai government gradually recognized the importance of learning Chinese and began to introduce Chinese courses in secondary schools and universities.

In 2018, Thailand and China signed the Cooperation Agreement on the Promotion of the Chinese Language, further enhancing their collaboration in Chinese language education. This agreement played a key role in advancing the development of Chinese teaching materials, improving teacher training, and fostering deeper cultural exchanges between the two nations. As a result, Chinese has become one of the most popular foreign language choices among Thai students.

Despite significant progress in Chinese education in Thailand, students still face various challenges in the learning process. According to statistics from the Thai Ministry of Education in 2019, approximately 30% of secondary students choose Chinese as their foreign language course, but the effectiveness of learning varies greatly. Research indicates that many students struggle with listening and speaking skills; very few studies were conducted on how Chinese listening and speaking skills can be taught and developed (Sukjairungwattana, 2023).

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In recent years, the communicative language teaching approach has gradually been introduced into Chinese classrooms as an effective method to enhance students' language application abilities. Teachers encourage students to use Chinese in real-life situations by designing authentic language activities, thereby improving their listening and speaking skills. Zhang (2020) applied a communicative approach to the Chinese language classroom teaching of the Confucius Institute at Valor University of Technology in India, targeting local Indian university students. Using a comparative analysis method, the final oral scores of students in experimental class A and control class B were used as a reference to objectively demonstrate the effectiveness and superiority of the communicative approach in improving the oral communication ability of Chinese beginners (non-native Chinese speakers). However, systematic research assessing the effectiveness of this teaching method in Chinese learning among Thai students remains scarce. Based on the above, the researcher resolved to conduct a classroom-based experiment in a Thai Chinese class and try to verify the feasibility and effectiveness of a communicative language teaching approach.

2. Objectives

- 1) To compare grade nine Thai students' Chinese listening and speaking scores before and after applying the communicative language teaching approach instruction.
- 2) To examine the students' satisfaction with learning Chinese listening and speaking through the communicative language teaching approach instruction.

3. Materials and Methods

The study utilized a quasi-experimental research design and a quantitative research methodology in which the researcher selected a sample of 30 students who were taught to listen and speak in Chinese through a communicative language teaching approach over four weeks. The effectiveness of the communicative language teaching approach was assessed by comparing students' scores on pre-test and post-test, and students' satisfaction was collected through a questionnaire. This study attempted to elucidate the effectiveness of the communicative language teaching approach compared to traditional teaching methods, emphasizing students' active participation and collaborative learning experiences. By posing specific research questions and employing an experimental design, this study analyzed the results of the intervention, assessed its practical implications, and contributed valuable insights to the field of language teaching and learning.

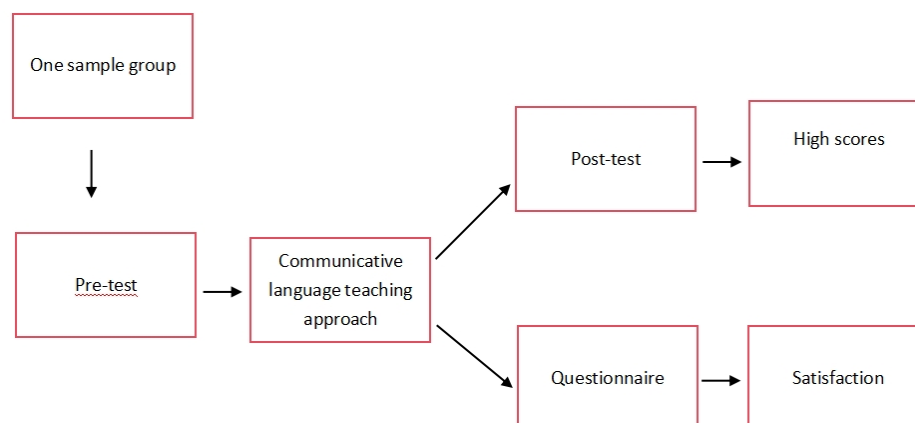


Figure 1 Conceptual Framework of the research



The intervention instrument for this study was the lesson plan, and the research instruments were the pre-test and post-test papers, and the student satisfaction questionnaire.

The lesson plan utilized a communicative language teaching approach, centered on daily life situations and a structured methodology that promoted active participation and understanding. The lesson plan began with an engaging introduction that captured students' interest and provided background about the dialogues designed for them to practice later. The presentation phase included a vocabulary preview to prepare students for the activities that follow. The practice phase focused on role-playing dialogues from various sources, followed by interactive activities such as discussions and role-plays related to the text. The production phase reinforced the students' listening and speaking skills by getting them to make dialogues in pairs and act them out. A variety of activities to cater for different learning styles and encouragement of group work were integral components. Assessment involved observation of participation and completion, while adaptation and reflection allowed adjustments to be made based on student performance and feedback.

The pre-test and post-test were selected from the official HSK Level 1 test paper. As the HSK is recognized as the most authoritative Chinese proficiency test worldwide, its exam papers are widely accepted as reliable assessment tools. Each HSK test is developed by a team of 10 professional Chinese language educators with a master's degree or higher and is then reviewed and evaluated by three professors holding doctoral degrees in Chinese before being officially approved for use. This rigorous process ensures the reliability of the HSK exams, supporting the validity of the pre-test and post-test used in this study. The total score was 200, with a passing score of 120. It was divided into two parts. The first part consisted of 5 picture judgment questions, 5 vocabulary picture multiple choice questions, and 10 situational conversation multiple choice questions. Part 2 consisted of 5 picture judgment questions, 5 vocabulary picture judgment questions, 5 conversation multiple choice questions, and 5 situational reading multiple choice questions.

The student satisfaction questionnaire used in the quantitative study involved 4 categories (classroom experiences, overall impression, teaching methods, and learning outcomes). A total of 30 questionnaires were distributed in this study, and the data obtained were computed using a fairly reliable computer program. The questionnaire consisted of 30 items, which the students were free to fill in the spaces and were asked to select the items that reflected their level of satisfaction (5 = Strongly Agree, 4 = Agree, 3 = Neutral, 2 = Disagree, 1 = Strongly Disagree).

All data obtained from the research instruments used were kept confidential. Participants' personal information and responses were collected and stored securely to ensure confidentiality. The study was conducted with the school's official approval. To protect participant privacy, all collected data will be permanently deleted within one year of the study's publication. This study got a certificate of approval from the Ethics Review Board of Rangsit University of COA.No.RSUERB2024-190.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Results

Data collection took place after the completion of the course. With prior approval from the school, students, and parents, the effectiveness of the communicative language teaching approach was assessed through two methods. First, a pre-test was conducted before the course began, followed by a post-test at the end. All 30 students completed the test papers, which were then graded by the researcher to determine their scores. Second, questionnaire data were gathered after the course. The questionnaire was distributed to the 30 students via a Line group, and they were given two days to complete it. The researcher then compiled and analyzed the responses to assess student feedback.

To analyze the pre-test and post-test results, the scores were input into a computer program, where t-tests, mean values, and standard deviations were calculated. The pre-test and post-test scores were then compared to assess changes in student performance. See Table 1.

**Table 1** Sampling T-test pre-test post-test scores

One Sample T-test								
	X	SD	P	t	Sig	MD	95% CI	
							Lower	Upper
Pre	132.67	33.39	0.525	-14.154	<0.001	29.33	120.20	145.14
Post	162.00	28.27	0.525	-14.154	<0.001	29.33	151.44	172.56

Table 1 analyzed the data of pre-test and post-test in detail to give us an idea of the statistical differences observed. The mean score (\bar{X}) of the pre-test was 132.67 with a standard deviation (SD) of 33.39. In comparison, the mean score (\bar{X}) of the post-test was 162.00 with a standard deviation (SD) of 28.27. The mean, as a central tendency measure, is widely used in statistical analysis to represent the average value of a data set. A lower standard deviation indicates that individual scores are more closely clustered around the mean, while a higher standard deviation suggests greater variability in scores. Since 28.27 was less than 33.39, it could be inferred that the distribution of post-test scores was more concentrated around the mean compared to the pre-test scores. This suggested that the students' post-test scores exhibited greater consistency and alignment with the post-test mean score. The mean difference (MD) between the two test scores was calculated to be 29.33, indicating a notable performance improvement.

For the questionnaire analysis, data were collected directly from respondents and examined using descriptive statistics, including mean and standard deviation. A 5-point Likert scale (ranging from 1 to 5) was used to interpret the responses. The score range interpretation was as follows: 4.80 - 5.00 = Very high (Strongly agree), 4.60 - 4.79 = High (Agree), 4.00 - 4.59 = Medium (Neutral), 3.00 - 3.99 = Low (Disagree), 1.00 - 2.99 = Lowest (Strongly disagree). See Table 2.

Table 2 Mean scores for four different categories of the Questionnaire

N	Mean	Level
CLASSROOM EXPERIENCES	4.89	Very high
OVERALL IMPRESSION	4.86	Very high
TEACHING METHODS	4.82	Very high
LEARNING OUTCOMES	4.75	High

Table 2 presented the mean scores for four different categories related to communicative language teaching approach: Classroom Experiences, Overall Impression, Teaching Methods, and Learning Outcomes. Each category was accompanied by a mean score and the corresponding level classification. The mean scores were categorized into a Very High level, which indicated that the respondents had very positive perceptions of the communicative language teaching approach in each of these areas. Specifically, the "Very High" level was applied to categories with mean scores close to or above 4.8. Three categories were rated as "Very High," which suggested that the communicative language teaching approach was highly effective across multiple

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aspects of the learning process. The Classroom Experiences category, with the highest mean, indicated that students found the classroom environment most beneficial, likely due to the interactive and engaging nature of the communicative language teaching approach. Overall Impression reinforced the positive feedback students gave regarding the teaching approach as a whole. Though the Learning Outcomes category received the lowest mean among the four, it still fell within the "High" category, signifying that students perceived substantial learning benefits from the approach.

By analyzing the pre-test and post-test scores, it was found that students' scores improved significantly, which indicated that the communicative language teaching approach had a positive impact on Chinese listening and speaking skills.

In addition, the questionnaire analysis showed that students were very satisfied with the communicative language teaching approach, which further proved the effectiveness of the communicative language teaching approach in enhancing students' learning experience.

4.2 Discussion

This study confirms that a communicative language teaching approach is an effective and appropriate approach for enhancing the Chinese listening and speaking skills of grade nine Thai students. The research yielded three key findings:

First, the communicative language teaching approach significantly improved the Chinese listening and speaking proficiency of grade nine Thai students. The comparison of pre-test and post-test results indicated a notable increase in scores, demonstrating that this method enhanced students' understanding of Chinese vocabulary and listening, and speaking. Concerning the impact of communicative language teaching approach on learning outcomes, Littlewood (2014) pointed out that the communicative language teaching approach emphasizes the practical use of language rather than merely focusing on grammatical rules, which helped improve students' language proficiency and learning outcomes. Additionally, Richards (2006) emphasized that a communicative language teaching approach enhanced language learning by incorporating activities and interactive exercises, allowing students to use language in authentic contexts effectively.

Secondly, the questionnaire of this study allowed us to understand that a communicative language teaching approach enhanced the classroom experience. Students felt a greater sense of engagement and achievement in the communicative language teaching approach learning environment. With real-world daily life situations, learners gain more opportunities for interaction, thereby boosting their interest and motivation in learning. The interactive nature of the communicative language teaching approach significantly increases students' participation and overall classroom experience. Brown (2007) argued that a communicative language teaching approach encouraged active student participation through group collaboration, role-playing, and interactive activities, which enhanced classroom engagement and created a dynamic learning environment. Similarly, Larsen-Freeman (2011) highlighted that the interactive nature of the communicative language teaching approach helped boost students' confidence and fluency in language use, making the classroom experience more engaging and effective.

Thirdly, the questionnaire of this study can be understood that the students had a high willingness to continue to improve their listening and speaking skills through a communicative language teaching approach, which can confirm that the communicative language teaching approach promoted students' motivation to learn. Dornyei (2001) proposed that a communicative language teaching approach fostered a more interactive and practical learning environment, which enhanced students' interest in language learning and, consequently, their motivation. Moreover, Skehan (1998) suggested that a communicative language teaching approach allowed students to engage in real-life language tasks, making learning more enjoyable and motivating than traditional lecture-based methods.

5. Conclusion



This study makes two major contributions to the scholarly discourse. First, it provides actionable insights into instructional strategies for optimizing Chinese language learning. The evidence-based findings provide educators with a structured framework for fostering students' intrinsic motivation and cognitive engagement. Second, this study also points out the challenges that subsequent researchers may encounter during implementation, thus providing valuable references for future related studies to avoid methodological pitfalls and optimize resource allocation.

Notably, increased motivation to learn was a significant finding. Students showed greater enthusiasm when participating in the classroom activities of the communicative language teaching approach, suggesting that the communicative language teaching approach was effective in bridging the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical language application. This increased motivation for learning seems to be intrinsically linked to the method's emphasis on contextual learning and peer interaction, which together promote knowledge retention and the development of transferable skills.

For schools, to maximize the benefits of the communicative language teaching approach, they should promote the communicative language teaching approach and encourage teachers to adopt it and integrate it into lesson planning. At the same time, schools should develop teacher training programs to equip teachers with the skills needed to design and deliver effective communicative language teaching approach. Textbooks and supplementary materials that are in line with the principles of communicative language teaching approach should be introduced, as well as digital resources to support students' independent learning should be allowed. Schools should establish a comprehensive assessment system, including both formative and summative assessment. The system should focus on the student's ability to apply the language in the completion of learning activities, rather than relying solely on traditional examinations.

For teachers, they play a crucial role in the effective implementation of the communicative language teaching approach. Textbooks and supplementary materials that are in line with the principles of the communicative language teaching approach should be introduced. To enhance student engagement and learning, teachers should design meaningful and engaging activities that are relevant to students' daily lives; for example, information retrieval activities, storytelling, and group discussions can make listening and speaking more interactive. In addition, classroom interaction should be prioritized to encourage cooperative learning where students work together to complete listening and speaking activities. In addition, teachers should stratify instruction according to different levels of proficiency and present appropriate challenges to all students. Finally, teachers should use diverse assessment methods, such as peer assessment and oral reports, to evaluate students' Chinese listening and speaking skills more comprehensively.

For students who are the direct beneficiaries of the communicative language teaching approach, their active participation is the key to the success of the communicative language teaching approach. To fully utilize this teaching method, students should actively participate in classroom activities, think critically, collaborate with peers, and take responsibility for their learning. It is also important to develop the habit of listening to and speaking Chinese outside the classroom. Students should listen to Chinese radio broadcasts, news reports, and short stories outside the classroom to improve their comprehension and expression skills. In addition, students should make use of digital resources, such as online listening and speaking platforms and electronic dictionaries, to improve their learning efficiency. Finally, effective communication and self-expression should be encouraged. Students should often share their perceptions with classmates and teachers to improve comprehension and spoken Chinese.

For future researchers, although the current study confirmed the effectiveness of communicative language teaching approach in improving Chinese listening and speaking proficiency, there were still many limitations, such as the fact that the study participants were all females, the sample size was small, a single grade level, and the students' Chinese language proficiency was relatively balanced. Future research should also explore other aspects of this teaching method. First, expanding the scope of the study to include students at different grade levels and from different educational backgrounds would help to gain a broader understanding of the applicability and long-term effects of the communicative language teaching approach.



Second, in-depth research on implementation strategies is needed to explore how activity design, classroom interaction, and assessment methods affect student learning outcomes. Third, the integration of modern technology with communicative language teaching approaches should be examined to determine how digital listening and speaking platforms and online collaboration tools can further enhance the effectiveness of this approach. Finally, researchers should analyze individual differences in student learning to develop more personalized instructional strategies that meet the needs of different learning styles and levels.

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