

A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF GRADE 6 STUDENTS' ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT AND MOTIVATION FOR LEARNING ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE UNDER COOPERATIVE TEACHING METHOD AND TRADITIONAL TEACHING METHOD AT WATBANGCHALONGNAI SCHOOL, SAMUT PRAKAN, THAILAND

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Abstract: The purpose of this study was to find if cooperative teaching methods in Watbangchalongnai School, Samut Prakan, Thailand, would enhance Grade 6 students' English academic achievement, measured by their abilities in grammar, reading comprehension, and vocabulary. The study also sought to measure students' motivation for learning English as a foreign language (EFL). For the purpose of the study, the researcher conducted an intervention experiment for 12 weeks, from December 2018 to March 2019, in which two intact Grade 6 groups were chosen, one as experimental group and the other as control group. During the experiment, subjects in the experimental group (39 students) attended classes based on cooperative teaching method. The control group (39 students), on the other hand, did not carry out any additional activities to traditional teaching method. To control as many variables as possible, the number of classes per week, duration of each class and components to be taught were all the same in both groups. In order to test the effectiveness of such strategy, two quantitative tools for data collection were used to compile the findings of the study. To begin with, a pre-test and a post-test were administered to measure students' academic achievement in learning EFL before and after the treatment. Afterwards, a questionnaire was distributed to both groups in order to measure students' motivation for learning EFL. The results of the independent samples *t*-test on a difference of academic achievement revealed a significant difference between the two groups. The sample means showed that subjects in the experimental group increased their academic achievement from the pre-test to the post-test significantly more than subjects in the control group. Results regarding motivation for learning EFL failed to reveal a significant difference between the two groups. The sample means showed that subjects in the experimental group demonstrated high mean scores on motivation for

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learning EFL, which were statistically similar to those shown by subjects in the control group. Based on the research findings, recommendations for students, teachers, administrators and future researchers are provided.

Keywords: Cooperative Teaching Method, Traditional Teaching Method, Academic Achievement, Motivation for Learning English as a Foreign Language, Grade 6 Students, Thailand.

Introduction

In the last ten years, the influence of the globalization on languages has increased enormously all over the world and all the countries are now trying to adapt rapidly (Stewart, 2012). Globalization has particularly hit the education, so nations are trying to do their best to cope with it and consequently trying to reshape their educational systems (Jackson, 2016). Moreover, English language has become the official language in terms of business in Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) community (Kirkpatrick, 2007; Sharifian, 2009). Certainly, English will become an official language within all 10 countries in ASEAN (Kirkpatrick, 2008). Therefore, there is a long way ahead for Thailand to bring a reliable educational system that will work and increase English fluency in the whole country (Bohwongprasert, 2017).

According to the Basic Education Core Curriculum B.E. 2551 (A.D. 2008) (The Ministry of Education of Thailand [MoE], 2008) every child is unique and schools must provide stimulating environment where students can grow mentally, emotionally and physically. When it comes to foreign languages, learning areas must enable learners to acquire an appreciation towards foreign languages for communication in different contexts, looking for valuable knowledge, engaging in livelihood and be life-long learners. Therefore, students will possess knowledge and understanding of stories and cultural diversity and will be able to share Thai traditions and culture globally. Nevertheless, educators must act as a role models, which allow students to be active participants and to let their curiosity direct their learning. After six years of primary education, students should become self-disciplined and accountable for pursuing further education at higher levels. It is, moreover, essential how a child learn how to learn at the very early stage (Mitra & Crawley, 2014).

Presently, Thai students are having difficulties to learn English (Chuanchasit & Prapphal, 2009). There are many factors which influence that (Yusica, 2014). However, it seems mostly because a lack of motivation for learning English and old-fashioned teaching methods (Dislen, 2013; Putry, 2015). As

for the researcher, he has noticed that traditional teaching method, which is based on rote learning, is introduced to the students at Watbangchalongnai School, Samut Prakan, Thailand, in Grade 6. Therefore, consequences are that readiness in English language is very low for a lot of students. Many of them are falling back academically and are not motivated to learn foreign languages, thus they cannot progress as some of their peers (Bohwongprasert, 2017). One of the reasons is that traditional teaching method is dull, and students' motivation for learning English is usually very low in that context (Dislen, 2013). Even though students are physically present they are mentally somewhere else. This has also been noticed by the researcher in the Grade 6 classrooms at Watbangchalongnai School, Samut Prakan, Thailand.

Cooperative teaching method has been used in many schools around the world (Johnson & Johnson, 1989; Kessler, 1992). Great number of scholars claim that cooperative teaching method is an effective approach for teaching foreign languages (Johnson & Johnson, 1989; Kagan 1990; Slavin, 1985). The implementation of cooperative teaching method (e.g. learning together, jigsaw and co-op-co-op) with high emphasis on student-centered teaching can improve and enhance child's learning processes, social skills, academic achievement and motivation for learning English, which will have a huge impact on students' development in the future (Johnson & Johnson, 1990; Kagan 1990; Slavin, 1985). Therefore, the researcher strongly believes that cooperative teaching method is an appropriate method for this study at Watbangchalongnai School, Samut Prakan, Thailand.

Research Objectives

The following objectives were investigated in this research.

1. To determine the Grade 6 students' academic achievement under the cooperative teaching method in EFL class at Watbangchalongnai School, Samut Prakan, Thailand.
2. To determine the Grade 6 students' academic achievement under traditional teaching method in EFL class at Watbangchalongnai School, Samut Prakan, Thailand.
3. To determine the level of Grade 6 students' motivation for learning EFL under cooperative teaching method in EFL class at Watbangchalongnai School, Samut Prakan, Thailand.
4. To determine the level of Grade 6 students' motivation for learning EFL under traditional teaching method in EFL class at Watbangchalongnai School, Samut Prakan, Thailand.
5. To determine if there is a significant difference in the difference in academic achievement from the pre-test to the post-test between Grade 6 students taught by cooperative teaching method and those taught by

traditional teaching method in EFL class at Watbangchalongnai School, Samut Prakan, Thailand.

6. To determine if there is a significant difference in motivation for learning EFL between Grade 6 students taught by cooperative teaching method and those taught by traditional teaching method in EFL class at Watbangchalongnai School, Samut Prakan, Thailand.

Theoretical Framework

This research was based on the five major learning theories: social development theory, cognitive development theory, cooperative learning theory, traditional learning theory and Gardner's (1985) theory of motivation.

Social development theory

According to the social development theory (Vygotsky, 1978), students' learning occurs through interaction with others. Social interaction is a fundamental factor for a cognitive development. In order to implement this theory, teachers should use cooperative teaching methods to make sure every student plays an active role in learning. According to this theory, classroom setting will allow students to sit in small groups where they can interact, cooperate and learn from one another. Classroom becomes a learning community. Thus, this theory supports the idea that students should learn in small groups and learn from each other. Traditional teaching methods are not promoting environments where teachers allow students to be active participant in their own education.

Cognitive development theory

Piaget's cognitive development theory (1936, as cited in Blake & Pope, 2008) talks about that cognitive development leads to learning. Piaget's idea is that learning and thinking both involve participation of the learner. Learner must be active in order to construct and reconstruct the knowledge. Knowledge cannot be just transmitted to the learner. Every learner must learn according to current stage. Learner cannot be taught something at the higher stage if he or she is not yet there (Garner, 2008). Teacher's job is to identify individual current cognitive level, strengths and weaknesses. Teacher work as a facilitator and encourage students to debate. This way is more meaningful for students and they learn more than just from the lectures (Lefa, 2014). This theory advocates that students must be active learners in order to learn more, which is important for realization of cooperative learning in the classroom.

Cooperative learning theory

The cooperative learning theory stresses the importance of social interdependence and peer-to-peer learning to achieve the same goal. The most

important factors of cooperative learning are face-to-face interaction, and individual and group accountability. Students in the classroom encourage, assist and discuss with each other (Johnson & Johnson, 1999).

Traditional learning theory

Best known as direct teaching approach model, which is teacher-focused, this theory emphasizes lectures as means of essential delivery of knowledge and promotes rote learning. There are different teacher-centered teaching approaches, such as direct instruction model (based on principles of precision teaching and behavior-change theory) and operant conditioning (based on learning through rewards and punishment for behavior). Regardless of the type of traditional learning, often they are conducive to students' lack of motivation, dissatisfaction and, what is the most considerable, students are not able to think by themselves (Beck, 2009).

Gardner's (1985) theory of motivation

Gardner's (1985) theory of motivation underlines the significance of observing, and modeling the behaviors, attitudes and emotional responses of others. Through observation and learning from others in the group, students could enhance learning and potentially their academic achievement, and hence their integrative and instrumental motivation levels increase. Integrative motivation is a passion for doing something that comes from within the person. On the other hand, under instrumental motivation, individuals are motivated when they are somehow rewarded, or they avoid punishment. Cooperative teaching method directly focuses on integrative motivation, in order to enhance integrative motivation, encouraging communication, groupwork and peer to peer feedback in the classroom (Gardner, 1985).

Conceptual Framework

Figure 1 shows the conceptual framework of this study, describing graphically the experimental group, who learned through cooperative teaching method, and the control group, who learned through traditional teaching method. In this study, the teaching methods served as the independent variables, while the students' academic achievement and motivation for learning English as a foreign language served as the dependent variables.

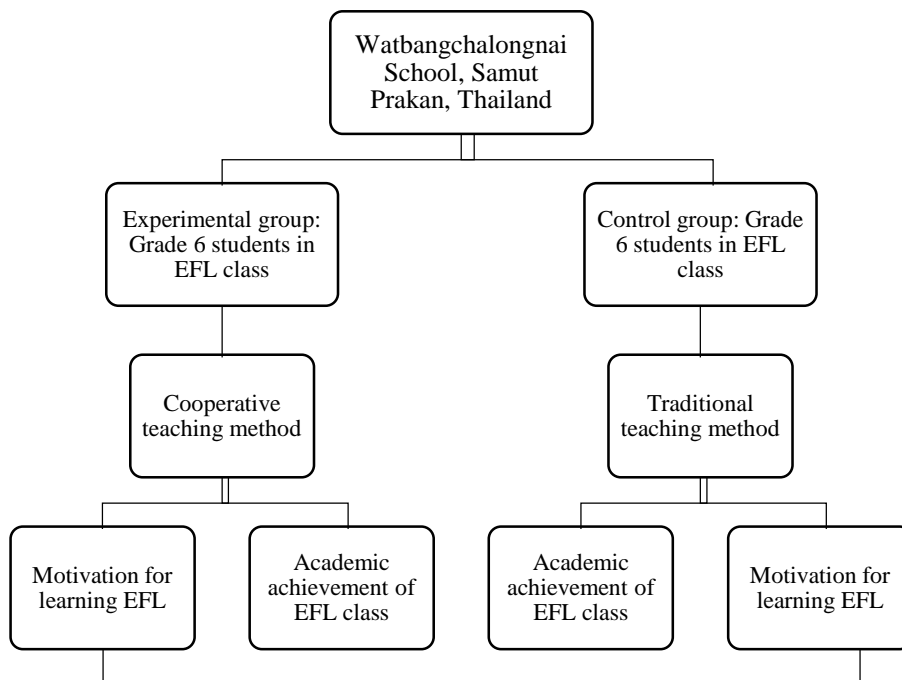


Figure 1. Conceptual framework.

Literature Review

Almashjari (2012) did a study to determine the effects of cooperative learning on EFL proficiency and motivation for learning EFL. The sample of the study were Grade 10 female students in New Developed High School in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. The study showed that cooperative learning had positive effect on students' achievement and motivation for learning EFL.

Quinn (2006) did a study in a science class and investigated the effects of cooperative learning on student motivation and student achievement in GED program school. After the implementation of cooperative learning, results showed that cooperative learning has positive effects on students' motivation and higher achievement.

In secondary schools in Bangladesh, Hossain and Tarmizi (2013) aimed to identify the effects of cooperative learning on student mathematics academic achievement and attitudes towards mathematics. There were 80 Grade 9 students involved in the study (40 from a girls' school and 40 from a boys' school). The study showed that cooperative learning had significant effects on students' academic achievement and attitudes towards mathematics.

Barham (2002) did a study to identify the effectiveness of using cooperative learning strategies in the mathematics classroom. There were 348 Grades 8 and 9 students involved in the classroom from two separate boys and girls' schools in Jordan, and also include female and male teachers. The researcher recognized that teachers who apply cooperative learning strategies tend to be highly motivated and enthusiastic to try new methods. The study showed that cooperative learning had positive effects on students, which gave students a chance to cooperate, interact and participate in the mathematic lesson.

Kitjaroonchai (2013) conducted a study to determine the levels of students' motivation for learning EFL in secondary and high school in Saraburi Province, Thailand. There were 266 students involved in the study. The study showed that students have high motivation for learning EFL, both integrative and instrumental motivation. In addition, students are slightly more instrumentally motivated.

The study conducted by Ning and Hornby (2014) investigated the impact of cooperative learning on the motivation of tertiary English learners. Students were from two randomly selected classes at a university in the north of China. Results suggested significant differences in favor of cooperative learning in improving intrinsic motivation, but no differences were found on other subscales of motivation.

Methodology/Procedure

Population and sample

The total population of this study consisted of all students currently enrolled in the Grade 6 at Watbangchalongnai School, Samut Prakan, Thailand. In the second semester of academic year 2018/2019, the total population was 188 students, divided into five classes. All the students were Thai nationals and had six years of experience learning English as a foreign language with foreign teachers. The researcher used a convenience sample for this study, and he chose two out of five Grade 6 classes, which was 76 students in total involved in this study. Three classes were left out of the research due to statistical significant difference in academic achievement.

Research instruments

The pre-test was used to collect data from sample students to identify their present academic achievement. The post-test, identical to the pre-test, was distributed to the students after the instruction, which took place for about 12 weeks (12 periods) to find out the knowledge obtained after the teaching. There is no standardized test for this subject. Therefore, the researcher created the pre-tests and post-tests.

The second instrument was an adjusted Gardner's (1985) Attitude/Motivation Test Battery (AMTB). The original AMTB measures five subscales. However, in this study it was used to measure integrative and instrumental motivation for second language learning. The researcher adapted this questionnaire (IISQ) from Kitjaroonchai (2013), who did a study on motivation towards English language of students in secondary high school in Saraburi Province, Thailand, focusing on ASEAN. To clearly identify the level of students' motivation towards English as foreign language researcher measured their integrative and instrumental motivation. Items 1, 2, 7, 8, 9, 13, 16, 17, 18 in the questionnaire measured integrative motivation, while Items 3, 4, 5, 6, 10, 11, 12, 14, 15, 19, 20 measured instrumental motivation. This questionnaire used a 5-point Likert scale. This scale consisted of 20 items on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*).

Findings

This section summarizes the findings obtained from the data collection and analysis. Findings are organized by research objectives.

Research Objective 1. Regarding this research objective, the following findings were obtained.

- Overall, Grade 6 students' academic achievement in the experimental group taught under cooperative teaching method was under the passing score in both pre-test and post-test, and it was interpreted as "needs improvement".
- The difference between the means from the pre-test to the post-test showed an increase of 32.65%.

Research Objective 2. Regarding this research objective, the following findings were obtained.

- Overall, Grade 6 students' academic achievement in the control group taught under traditional teaching method was under the passing score in both pre-test and post-test, and it was interpreted as "needs improvement".
- The difference between the means from the pre-test and the post-test showed an increase of 2.95%.

Research Objective 3. Regarding this research objective, the following findings were obtained.

- Overall, Grade 6 students' motivation for learning EFL in the experimental group taught under cooperative teaching method was interpreted as high.

Research Objective 4. Regarding this research objective, the following findings were obtained.

- Overall, Grade 6 students' motivation for learning EFL in the control group taught under traditional teaching method was interpreted as high.

Research Objective 5. Regarding this research objective, the following findings were obtained.

- The results of the independent samples *t*-test on the difference in academic achievement from the pre-test to the post-test revealed a significant difference between the two groups. The sample means show that subjects in the experimental group increased their academic achievement significantly more than subjects in the control group (for the experimental group, the increase was 32.65%; for the control group, the increase was 2.95%).

Research Objective 6. Regarding this research objective, the following findings were obtained.

- Results regarding motivation for learning EFL were analyzed using an independent samples *t*-test. This analysis failed to reveal a significant difference between the two groups. The sample means show that subjects in the experimental group demonstrated mean scores on motivation for learning EFL which were statistically similar to those shown by subjects in the control group.

Discussion

This section discusses the findings obtained from the current study, placing such findings in context of previous research. The discussion is presented and organized by variables and their values.

Cooperative teaching method and student academic achievement

Firstly, the research found that, overall students' academic achievement in experimental group was under the passing score and in the area that needs improvement. Reason for that could be lack of students' previous knowledge of English skills. This suggests that the difficulty of the tests could be the reason for poor overall students' performance. Furthermore, the researcher suggests that longer experimental period and more classes in one week could show a greater increase in academic achievement. However, there was an increase of 32.65% between pre-test and post-test scores. This result suggests that cooperative teaching method was somehow effective when teaching students EFL. That relates to Almashjari (2012), Quinn (2006), Hossain and Tarmizi (2013), and Barham (2002), who pointed out that the cooperative learning had positive effect on students' academic achievement.

Secondly, it was obvious that students in experimental group had more opportunity for English language usage than those in the control group. In fact, that resulted into higher satisfaction in the classroom based, on the researcher's observation. During the experimental period, students in the experimental group were positioned by the tables which faced one another. Therefore, students had opportunity to see and talk to all the members of the group.

Thirdly, from the researcher's experience, it was noticed that students in the experimental group built relationships much faster than those in the control group. Moreover, students who have not communicated much before the study, became much more confident.

Finally, it was also found that students in the experimental group shared their ideas and as a result solved the problem or completed the tasks faster and more accurate than those in the control group.

Traditional teaching method and student academic achievement

The research revealed that, overall students' academic achievement in control group was under passing score and in the area that needs improvement. This suggests that the difficulty of the tests could be the reason for poor overall students' performance. Moreover, there was increase of 2.95% between pre-test and post-test scores. This suggests that traditional teaching method was not effective when teaching students EFL. In addition, it indicates that students in control group were not as engaged in learning as those in experimental group. Main focus in control group was on the teacher. Moreover, students were working on tasks individually. In fact, the weaker students had difficulty performing the tasks due to lack of previous knowledge. Students in control group lacked social interaction and have not increased their confidence during the study. Finally, that relates to Johnson, Johnson and Smith (1991), who stated that learning occurs between teacher and the students, the students and environment and students themselves. Thus, students are the main focus as in the cooperative teaching method, and not the teacher as in the traditional teaching method. The teacher should work as a facilitator to help students learn actively.

Cooperative teaching method and motivation for learning EFL

The researcher found that the experimental group was highly motivated for learning EFL. That concludes that students like to learn English. That relates to Kitjaroonchai (2013) and Ning and Hornby (2014), whose studies showed that students have high motivation for learning EFL, when students work in small group, which is one the element of the cooperative teaching method.

However, three items from IIMQ (related to reading) were in the mean range under 3.50, which indicates as average in terms of students' motivation for learning EFL. This indicates that students are not interested into reading. That could suggest that students lack reading skills in English, therefore they are discouraged to read English literature.

Traditional teaching method and motivation for learning EFL

The researcher found that the control group was highly motivated for learning EFL. In addition, students' results showed a very high motivation for learning EFL on two items referring to students' future and English as an important skill for their careers. That indicates that students care. That is related to Anderson (2011) who stated that traditional teaching method works best if students are highly motivated for learning and academic achievement is strongly important for advancement. That suggest that students are motivated to learn English language despite the teaching method.

Recommendations

The recommendations of the study are intended to the students, teachers, school administrators at Watbangchalognai School, Samut Prakan, as well as to the future researchers who might be interested in conducting similar research studies.

Recommendation for students

This study suggests that cooperative teaching method helps students to learn more effectively and efficiently. Cooperative teaching enhanced relationship between peers and most importantly, carrying out this intervention increased their academic achievement and indicates that level of motivation for learning English as a foreign language is high. In addition, students could benefit from cooperative teaching method and enhance their social interdependence and peer-to-peer learning to achieve the same goal. Cooperative teaching method is an opportunity for student's face-to-face interactions, and individual and group accountability. Students in the classroom are encouraged to assist each other, which can increase leadership skills.

Recommendation for teachers

Teachers who are willing to implement cooperative teaching methods must be aware that this approach demands many hours for development of effective lesson plans before the actual lessons begin in order to achieve positive interdependence. When testing, teachers should know their students' proficiency level and design the tests accordingly. It is also recommended to run a pilot study for the test in order to show the validity and reliability of the tests. From the researcher's experience, students in Thailand are not confident

to share their opinions and their work with other classmates. Moreover, in most Thai programs the students' English proficiency is very low and they do not study English with foreigners on a daily basis. That makes it very complicated to achieve progress.

Recommendation for administrators

The findings of this study can be used for English classes at all grade levels at Watbangchalongnai School, Samut Prakan. Students showed a great appreciation towards cooperative teaching methods and prefer it over traditional teaching methods. Moreover, as an increase in academic achievement was found in experimental group, the implementation of this method is recommended for the study of EFL.

Recommendation for future researchers

Factors affecting this experiment were length of the study, students' passivity, students' English proficiency, lack of positive interdependence and lack of individual accountability. Future researchers should take this into consideration before they conduct their studies.

These variables could be significant to address in future studies in order to increase academic achievement. In addition, researcher could explore and make experiment in other subjects.

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