



Beliefs and Attitudes of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) Learners Towards Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) Approach

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Abstract

Background and Aim: Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) has emerged as one of the outstanding approaches in language education, emphasizing interaction and practical communication. To perform well, one must be actively involved, regularly given feedback, and well-informed. In some cases, language learning has to be experienced authentically to be able to familiarize and fully perform it. This study explores the beliefs and attitudes of first-year EFL students of Nakhon Phanom University, Thailand towards the CLT approach, providing insights into its effectiveness and acceptance among new learners. Understanding these perceptions is critical for enhancing language instruction and fostering a more engaging learning environment. The purpose of this study was to investigate the perceptions and attitudes of EFL learners and to find out if there is a significant relationship between the learners' beliefs and the attitude of the EFL learners towards the CLT approach.

Materials and Methods: This study was conducted using a descriptive correlative research design. The data collection took place at Nakhon University, Thailand. The respondents of this study were first-year education students from the English Department. A survey questionnaire through Google Forms was used to gather the data. For data analysis, mean, frequency distribution, and Pearson Correlation Coefficient (r) were employed.

Results: Findings indicated that EFL learners recognized the application of the CLT approach in the class which is similar to their attitude towards the CLT approach that garnered a moderate response of "agree". The moderate results imply that there is still room for improvement. The study found a positive correlation that proved the significant relationship between the beliefs and attitudes of the EFL learners towards the CLT approach at a 0.5 significance level. The result of the study aligned with the study of Mehta, N.K. (2015) stating that integrating the CLT approach in language teaching encourages language learners to learn better. In addition, the CLT approach plays an integral part in the language learning process. Furthermore, beliefs and attitudes are the main indicators in language learning; however, due to limited variables, future researchers can go further on other factors relating to the CLT approach.

Conclusion: Therefore, it is concluded that to make CLT even more effective, EFL teachers should integrate the activities in the classroom with real-life communication, making learning more engaging and enjoyable for students.

Keywords: Beliefs; Attitudes; Communicative Language Teaching Approach; Traditional

Introduction

There are various approaches we ought to employ in our teaching. Every learning experience our learners are employed with has to be planned well to come up with the best result. These learning experiences must be coherent with our learning objectives (Boon, 2011). What we show and teach them communicatively affects them psychologically (Fredrickson, 1998). In addition, the environment we train them in and the learning experiences that we employ in class play an important role in their learning process (Nadezhda, 2020). Better learning objectives in ELT are achieved if the learning experience is shaped through the application of an innovative teaching method that generates positive learning attitudes in the students and provides a conducive learning environment, especially in distance learning (Mahyoob, 2020). Learning objectives have better reflections when it's integrated with innovative teaching methods as a support to your teaching approach that would provide a positive learning attitude towards learning. (Mahyoob, 2020). Despite multiple learning strategies and approaches being employed, students' difficulties seem very inevitable online (Vorobel & Kim, 2012). The difficulties may have been occurring due to verbal and nonverbal language (Khalil et al., 2020). Many students believe that face-to-face learning interactions are comparatively easier and more efficient for achieving learning objectives than online





classes (Finkelstein, 2005). This belief causes some students to feel that it is academically unprofitable to engage with online lessons (Aronoff et al., 2017).

English as a Foreign Language (EFL) plays a significant role in Thailand's educational content, serving as one of the essential tools for international communication and academic advancement. This study examines the status and impact of EFL in Thailand, focusing on how it is integrated into educational practices and its influence on learners' proficiency and attitudes. Beliefs and attitudes toward EFL significantly affect the learning process, shaping students' motivation, engagement, and overall success. Understanding these factors is essential for developing effective teaching strategies that align with learners' perspectives and needs. Additionally, it explores the practical applications and strategies that future English teachers can use to enhance their teaching effectiveness. By investigating how beliefs and attitudes influence the learning process, this study provides valuable insights for educators to make better preparation for their students in a globalized world. It aims to offer practical approaches that address learners' concerns foster a positive learning environment, and most importantly contribute to the improvement of EFL education in Thailand.

English has been taught in Thailand for many years and no matter how hard students do their best in doing their part, their level of English Proficiency does not seem to show any major progress at all so the success of English Language Teaching (ELT) in Thailand remains limited. One of the main culprits for this deficiency has been the teaching styles of teachers that depend too much on traditional approaches (Noomura, 2013). This gap underscores the need for a deeper understanding of the challenges and opportunities within the Thai educational landscape. Addressing these challenges is crucial for the advancement of English language education in Thailand. Targeted interventions and research efforts are necessary to enhance the effectiveness of English language instruction and improve the overall educational experience for students.

Objectives

The objectives of this study were to investigate the beliefs and attitudes of EFL learners and to find out if there is a significant relationship between the beliefs and the attitudes of the EFL learners towards the CLT approach. The research questions that guided the study were the following:

1. What are the beliefs and attitudes of the first-year EFL learners of Nakhon Phanom University?
2. Is there a significant relationship between the beliefs and attitudes of first-year EFL learners towards the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach?
3. What is the implication of the analysis of the study?

Hypothesis: H_a : *There is a significant relationship between the beliefs and attitudes of the EFL learners towards the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach.*

Literature review

The communicative Language Teaching Approach (CLTA) is crucial in fostering academic emotions, language cognition, and language performance through behavior-based teaching. One key strategy within CLTA is content-based instruction (CBI), which focuses on teaching language through the content or information students will gain rather than specific linguistic goals. According to Richards and Rodgers (2014), CBI revolves around organizing teaching based on the content students will acquire, rather than on predetermined language objectives. Content in CBI typically pertains to the subject matter that individuals learn or communicate through language (Joo et al., 2014). In essence, Joo et al. (2014) affirmed that CBI allows students to grasp the target language through unrelated content.

Meanwhile, the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach emphasizes teaching methods that enhance learners' ability to communicate in a second language (Rahmawati, 2020). This approach signifies a shift in language teaching focus from linguistic structures to meeting learners' needs in developing communication skills (Wardana et al., 2022). Sato and Kleinsasser's study (1999) illustrated lecturers' positive reception of CLT principles, fostering positive teaching attributes that enhance English



teaching activities' effectiveness and significance. The learner-centric approach instills a sense of ownership in students and boosts their motivation.

In a CLT classroom, the teacher assumes multiple roles as an analyst, advisor, and group process manager (Richards & Rodgers, 2014). Furthermore, the teacher acts as a co-communicator guiding communicative activities with students (Intarapanich, 2013). This communicative teaching method's effectiveness is evident in immediate language performance improvements and long-term language habit formation among students (Wardana et al., 2022). While CLT doesn't neglect grammar learning, it suggests that understanding grammatical structures is enhanced when presented through various functional categories (Bax, 2003).

Another communicative-based approach discussed is Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT), which revolves around communicative and interactive tasks promoting meaningful communication and interaction among learners (Milarisa, 2019). TBLT utilizes tasks as the core teaching method, emphasizing a needs-based content selection approach, interactive language learning, authentic text integration, and learner-focused learning processes (Nunan, 2004). This method engages students in active learning, enhancing their enjoyment and motivation toward self-directed completion of tasks (Milarisa, 2019).

TBLT is known for its focus on meaningful and authentic communication in foreign language classrooms, which is particularly significant in online language learning settings (van der Zwaard & Bannink, 2016). Research shows that students' English speaking abilities significantly improved after implementing task-based language learning methods (Ellis, 2009). An integrative research agenda sensitive to the dynamic nature of task-based performance in discourse, acknowledging the interactive learning processes, is considered essential for TBLT advancement (Ellis, 2009).

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework mirrors the structure of the survey questionnaire, which is divided into 3 parts. Part 1 collects respondents' information to understand the background of the respondents like their gender and age. Part 2 explores the beliefs of the EFL learners; and, Part 3 explores the attitude of the EFL learners. By aligning the survey with this framework, the researcher aimed to comprehensively assess the beliefs and attitudes of EFL learners in guiding future improvements to enhance language education.

The conceptual framework used the IPO Model that presents the concepts of this study. The respondents' information, beliefs, and attitudes of the EFL learners are represented as inputs. The process begins with crafting a tailored survey questionnaire, making sure that it effectively captures the necessary data for the study's objectives. This was followed by a validation phase, the questionnaire was validated by at least 5 full-fledged master's degree holders and/or doctors whose field of specialization applies to this matter. Subsequently, permission was sought from respondents, providing a comprehensive explanation of the study's purpose and the confidentiality of their responses. After Google Forms was utilized, the survey was distributed to the target audience, prioritizing accessibility and user-friendliness. Upon completion of data collection, thorough analysis and interpretation were conducted, leveraging statistical methodologies to extract meaningful insights and draw conclusions aligned with the study's aims. The output of this process is the research study itself. It aimed at helping English teachers teaching strategies better. By looking closely at the data the researcher collected, it can be figured out what works and what doesn't, and use that knowledge to improve how we teach them. Additionally, it will raise awareness among school administrations and communities about the educational needs of our EFL learners and teachers in their learning and teaching activities. By sharing the findings and insights from the research, we can advocate for changes and improvements in educational policies and programs to better support EFL learners and teachers in their pursuit of education and brighter futures.



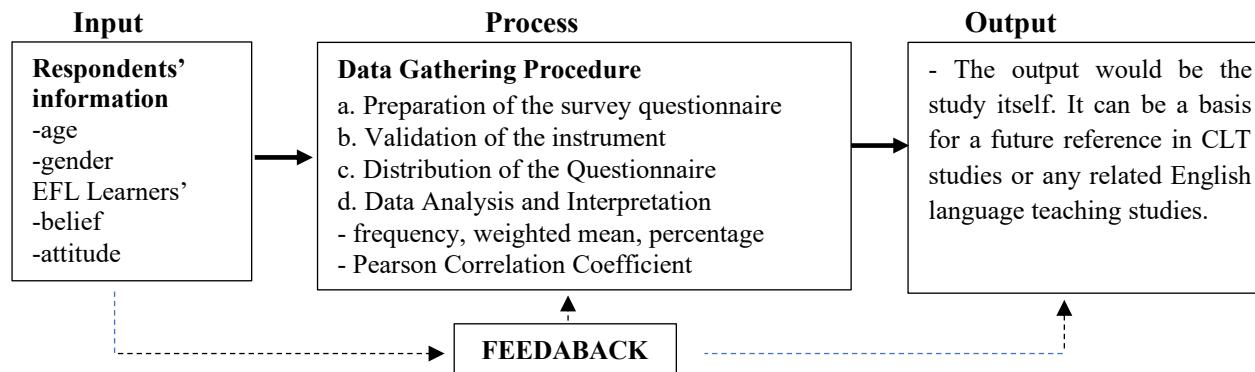


Figure 1 Conceptual Framework

Methodology

This study utilized a descriptive correlational research design. The purpose of this study was to investigate the perceptions and attitudes of EFL learners and to find out if there is a significant relationship between the learners' beliefs and their attitudes toward the CLT approach. Descriptive correlational design is well suited for this purpose as it allows for the examination of relationships between different variables, providing valuable insights into the dynamics of the CLT approach in teaching English language education at the university. Descriptive correlational design is used in research studies that aim to provide static pictures of situations as well as establish the relationship between different variables (McBurney & White, 2009).

Participant of the Study

The data collection took place at Nakhon University, Thailand. The respondents of this study were first-year education students from the English Department, a total number of 46 students, 14 males and 32 females. The participants were selected using a purposive sampling technique. The purposive sampling technique is a type of non-probability sampling that is most effective when one needs to study a certain cultural domain with experts within. The inherent bias of the method contributes to its efficiency, and the method stays strong even when tested against random probability sampling. Choosing the purposive sample is fundamental to the quality of data gathered; thus, the reliability and competence of the informant must be ensured (Dolores, M. 2007).

Data Gathering Procedure

The research instrument used by the researcher to gather the needed data was the self-made questionnaire the researcher prepared to collect the students' beliefs and attitudes towards the CLT approach in the class. It consisted of one 3 parts; personal information, beliefs of the EFL learners (10 items), and attitude of the EFL learners (10 items). After sending the questionnaires to three experts for instrument validation, the questionnaire was distributed to the participants through Google Forms with the help of a Likert scale. The Likert Scale is a type of rating scale used in questionnaires to measure people's attitudes and opinions (Likert, R. 1932). Respondents had to choose from a range of possible responses expressing their level of agreement or disagreement with the specified statement. The Likert scale consisted of 5 scales: 5- strongly agree, 4- agree, 3- neutral, 2- disagree, and 1- strongly disagree. After the administration and collection of the responses, the data were gathered and recorded. The data analysis and interpretation involved the utilization of appropriate statistical methods to gather the best result for the study. The data in this study was computed and analyzed using the frequency, weighted mean, and mean percentage. The data collected were tallied and tabulated using Microsoft Excel, and statistical applications to facilitate analysis and interpretation of the findings. The mean and weighted mean were employed to further enhance the analysis and completeness of the data. The Jamovi Application was used for computations and analyses.

**Sub-problem no. 1**

To determine the beliefs and attitudes of the learners, frequency counts, percentage distribution, and weighted mean were employed as the primary analytical techniques within the study.

Sub-problem no. 2

To determine the significant relationship between the beliefs and attitudes of the EFL learners, data were collected through the questionnaire, and the Pearson Correlation Coefficient (r) was employed.

Sub-problem no. 3

To determine the implications of the result of the study, the researcher formulates a synthesis from the data gathered from problems 1 and 2.

Results**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 18-19 years old indicating 43.5 percent and 45.7 percent respectively.

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

Table 2 Survey Results of the EFL Students' Beliefs Towards CLTA

Survey Results of the EFL Students' Beliefs Towards CLTA	WM	DE
1. I believe that teaching in the university is a communicative-based approach.	4.30	A
2. I believe my English teacher creates communicative activities to let us interact with our classmates in English.	4.72	SA
3. I believe my English teacher designed the activities open for trial and error.	4.57	SA
4. I believe my English teacher does not require us to use perfect grammar when performing our activities.	4.04	A
5. I believe my English teacher gives clear and easy-to-understand instructions when giving activities.	4.39	A
6. I believe my English teacher designs a friendly environment so we can speak freely and be open to improvement.	4.54	SA
7. I believe my English teacher designs activities that are fun and engaging.	4.37	A
8. I believe my English teacher allows us to use our mobile devices to translate difficult English words.	4.33	A





Survey Results of the EFL Students' Beliefs Towards CLTA		WM	DE
9. I believe my teacher allows us to speak other languages when brainstorming with our classmates.		4.48	A
10. I believe my English teacher repeats the instructions whenever we don't understand their instructions.		4.52	SA
Total		4.43	A

Legend: WM= Weighted Mean DE: Descriptive Equivalent

1.00-1.50 (SD – Strongly Disagree) 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, item number 2, “*I believe my English teacher creates communicative activities to let us interact with our classmates in English*” got the highest mean of 4.72 which is “*Strongly Agree*”, while item number 4 “*I believe my English teacher does not require us to use perfect grammar when performing our activities*”, got the lowest mean of 4.04, which only got an equivalent of “*Agree*”. This finding implies that EFL students recognize the application of the CLT Approach in the class through various activities to help them better their speaking and listening skills.

To determine the EFL learners' attitudes towards the Communicative Language Teaching Approach, a survey questionnaire was administered and the result is displayed in Table 3.

Table 3 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 to focus 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 to design the activities realistically.		4.20	A
5. I like to speak to my English teacher when doing 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.		4.30	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 to participate in CLT approach activities.		4.22	A
Total		4.19	A

Legend: WM= Weighted Mean DE: Descriptive Equivalent

1.00-1.50 (SD – Strongly Disagree) 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 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 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 with the teacher.

To determine the significant relationship between EFL learners' beliefs and attitudes toward Communicative Language Teaching Approach, the 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.

Table 4 The Pearson Correlation of the Values of the Students' Beliefs and Attitudes towards CLT Approach.

	Beliefs of the EFL Students	Attitude of the EFL Students
Beliefs of the EFL Students	Pearson's r	—
	df	—
	p-value	—
	N	—
Attitude of the EFL Students	Pearson's r	1.000
	df	8
	p-value	<.001
	N	10

The table presents a detailed statistical analysis of the correlation of the beliefs and attitudes of EFL students, it shows a positive correlation with Pearson's r value of 1.000. This indicates an exceptionally strong relationship between the variables in this study. The result suggests that as one variable increases, the other variable also increases consistently. The p-value is reported as less than .001, underscoring the statistical significance of the results. The data provides a good argument on the strength and significance of the relationship between the variables – beliefs and attitudes of EFL students toward the communicative language teaching approach.

Discussion

The objectives of this study were to investigate the perceptions and attitudes of EFL learners and to find out if there was a significant relationship between the learners' beliefs and the attitude of the EFL learners towards the CLT approach and its implications. The study aimed to investigate the beliefs and attitudes of EFL learners towards the CLT approach and to find out if there was a significant relationship between the learners' beliefs and their attitudes towards the CLT approach. Most of the respondents were females earning 69.6 % of the total population and 30.4 percent for males. Their ages range from 18-21 years old. It also shows that most of the student's age are 18-19 years old indicating 43.5 percent and 45.7 percent respectively.

The analysis concluded that EFL learners believe that their English teacher creates communicative activities to let them interact with their classmates in English. According to Richards and Rodgers (2014), the communicative teaching approach revolves around organizing teaching based on the content students will acquire, rather than on predetermined language objectives. Content in CLTA typically pertains to the subject matter that individuals learn or communicate through language (Joo et al., 2014). In essence, Joo et al. (2014) affirmed that communicative teaching allows students to grasp the target language through unrelated content.

Meanwhile, the CLT approach emphasizes teaching methods that enhance learners' ability to communicate in a second language (Rahmawati, 2020). In line with the results of the survey questionnaires,



the analysis concluded that EFL learners appreciate the opportunities where they can interact with their classmates and the teacher in the class. It implies that interaction between their peers or classmates, and teachers allows them to learn better and meaningfully. Thus, in a CLT classroom, the teacher assumes multiple roles as an analyst, advisor, and group process manager (Richards & Rodgers, 2014).

The second objective of the current study was to investigate if there was a significant relationship between EFL learners' beliefs and their attitudes toward the CLT approach. The findings revealed a strong positive and significant correlation between these two variables, suggesting that learners who held more favorable attitudes toward the CLT approach also developed stronger beliefs in its effectiveness. Although attitudes and self-efficacy are key predictors of behavior in language acquisition (MacFarlane & Woolfson, 2013), research on this topic remains limited. For instance, unlike the current study, Dwyer and Fus (2002) found an inverse relationship between self-efficacy for public speaking and communicative attitudes.

The third objective of the study forms a concept for implications. As the results showed moderated responses to their beliefs and attitudes, therefore more interactive CLT approach for future activities is to be adopted. To achieve an even more effective CLT learning environment, it is recommended to design an interactive learning environment. The positive correlation also provides an insightful indicator to keep on providing meaningful and fun CLTA activities to keep learners motivated (Wanich, W. 2014).

Conclusion

It was therefore concluded that EFL learners were given learning experiences that were designed interactively with their classmates using the English language. Furthermore, the result of the study indicated a strong positive relationship between the beliefs and attitudes of EFL learners toward the communicative language teaching approach. It implies that when students have positive beliefs towards the CLT approach, a positive attitude follows (Wanich, 2014)

Recommendation

The strong positive correlation between EFL students' beliefs and attitudes highlighted the benefits of using the CLT approach. As CLT focuses on real-life communication, designing learning more engaging and enjoyable for students. By using activities that promote more interaction, collaboration, and practical language use, teachers can boost students' attitudes toward learning English. This improved attitude can lead to better speaking and listening results. In the study of Mehta (2015), he also mentioned that teaching activities based on communicative language teaching encourage the learners to use the target language. This implies that providing more engaging activities in English classes allows EFL learners to capture more learning in a meaningful way. In addition, Wanich, (2014) found that students get highly motivated when they are taught through a communicative language teaching approach. She also recommended that learners could improve their self-confidence when engaged in communicative learning activities. To make CLT even more effective, teachers may adapt lessons to meet students' needs and cultural backgrounds. This can include using relevant topics, incorporating technology for communication, and giving regular feedback. Training teachers on CLT methods can also help them apply these strategies successfully. By focusing on making learning interactive and enjoyable, CLT can improve both students' attitudes and their academic achievements in EFL English classes. The results may have provided the CLT approach a positive impact on teaching, however, due to the limited variables used, future researchers could dwell deeper on other factors relating to the communicative language teaching approach (Ajzen, 2007; Eagly & Chaiken, 2007; MacFarlane & Woolfson, 2013).

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