



‘I use active learning, but my class is not always active’: Secondary School English Teachers’ Perceptions of Active Learning

Pantakan Chanchaloem^{1*} Saowaluck Tepsuriwong²

พันธกานต์ ชาญเฉลิม¹ เสาวลักษณ์ เทพสุริวงศ์²

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Abstract

Active learning is highly appreciated as effective learning and it has been encouraged worldwide. This study aims at investigating secondary school English teachers’ perception and implementation of active learning in their situations. The participants were 10 secondary school English teachers in the northeast of Thailand who reported in the online survey that they were familiar with active learning and were willing to participate in the study. They were interviewed for in-depth information about active learning in their point of views and their practice. The interview results were analyzed for themes. Salient cases were also reported and discussed. The findings revealed both similarities and differences of the participants’ personal interpretation of what active learning is and is not. Most of them viewed that active learning covered both physical and cognitive aspects of learning suggesting that active learning is not always observable. Most of them also expressed concern that their classes were not always active. The teachers’ perceptions and implementation of active learning displayed complex and multifaceted aspects of active learning that required more careful attention in both teacher education and teachers’ professional community.

Keywords: perceptions, implementation, active learning

บทคัดย่อ

Active learning เป็นรูปแบบการเรียนรู้ที่มีประสิทธิภาพ เป็นที่ยอมรับ และถูกนำไปใช้โดยแพร่หลายทั่วโลก งานวิจัย ขึ้นนี้มุ่งเน้นที่จะศึกษาเกี่ยวกับความเชี่ยวชาญของครูผู้สอนในรายวิชาภาษาอังกฤษระดับมัธยมศึกษาและการประยุกต์ใช้ active learning ในบริบทของตัวครูผู้สอนเอง กลุ่มตัวอย่างได้แก่ ครูผู้สอนในรายวิชาภาษาอังกฤษระดับมัธยมศึกษาในภาค

^{1*} คณะศิลปศาสตร์ มหาวิทยาลัยเทคโนโลยีพระจอมเกล้าธนบุรี

School of Liberal Arts, King Mongkut’s University of Technology Thonburi,

E-mail: lonjohn200@gmail.com

² คณะศิลปศาสตร์ มหาวิทยาลัยเทคโนโลยีพระจอมเกล้าธนบุรี

School of Liberal Arts, King Mongkut’s University of Technology Thonburi, E-mail

E-mail: saowaluck.tep@kmutt.ac.th

* Corresponding author e-mail: lonjohn200@gmail.com

ตะวันออกเฉียงเหนือ จำนวน 10 ท่าน ซึ่งระบุคุณสมบัติไว้ในแบบสำรวจว่ามีความคุ้นเคยกับ active learning รวมทั้งมีความประยุกต์ที่จะให้ความร่วมมือในการวิจัย โดยผู้จัดได้ทำการสัมภาษณ์กลุ่มตัวอย่างเพื่อเก็บข้อมูลเชิงลึกเกี่ยวกับ active learning รวมทั้งมุมมองต่าง ๆ และการประยุกต์ใช้อีกด้วย ข้อมูลจากการสัมภาษณ์ได้ถูกนำมาวิเคราะห์เพื่อจัดหมวดหมู่ตามสาระ ก่อนจะนำมาเสนอและอภิปราย ผลการวิจัยพบว่ารูปแบบการตีความและความเข้าใจของครูผู้สอนที่มีต่อ active learning มีทั้งความคล้ายคลึงและความแตกต่าง โดยส่วนมากมองว่า active learning นั้นครอบคลุมทั้งเชิงการภาพและด้านองค์ความรู้ของรูปแบบการเรียนรู้ ซึ่งไม่สามารถสังเกตได้ในบริบททั่วไป นอกจากนั้น ครูผู้สอนยังให้ความเห็นว่าการเรียนการสอนในชั้นเรียนจริงนั้นไม่สามารถทำให้ active ได้ตลอด ข้อมูลเกี่ยวกับความเข้าใจและการประยุกต์ใช้ active learning ของครูผู้สอนนั้น แสดงให้เห็นถึงความซับซ้อน และรูปแบบที่หลากหลายของตัวนิยามดังกล่าว ซึ่งจำเป็นต้องใช้ความใส่ใจทั้งจากครูผู้สอนและจากชุมชนวิชาชีพครู ด้วยเช่นกัน

คำสำคัญ: ความเข้าใจ การประยุกต์ใช้ การจัดการเรียนการสอนแบบ active learning

Introduction

Northeast of Thailand is also known as “Isaan” (*e-sam*). Basically, people recognize this region as the place with agricultural abundance. In terms of education, Northeast has a greater number of schools than any regions with the total of 933 schools of different sizes ranging from extra-large to very small schools. All of them, however, must respond to policies of the Ministry of Education. According to the Office of the Basic Education Commission 2020 (OBEC), one of the main educational policies is to increase national competitiveness by developing language skills. Moreover, the ministry also put huge emphasis on student-centered approach and “active learning”. Every, school, therefore, apply active learning as one of their guiding principles. As active learning is a broad concept, it is interesting to investigate how teachers in different schools in this region interpret the term and apply it in their context. The significance of this study would be on insightful information on how active learning is perceived, implemented, and could be further promoted.

Literature Reviews

Active learning

Active learning is the vast theoretical term which covers various aspects in education. There were many theorists who came up with different interpretation and definitions of this term itself. Some of them even further explained its characteristics as well as the involved features. For example, Bowell & Eison (1991) defined it as “as instructional activities involving students in doing things and thinking about what they are doing”. This definition accounts for any activities that students are physically and mentally act. McKinney (2007) gave examples of techniques where students do more than simply listen to a lecture such as discovering, processing, and applying information in his definition of active learning. Some definitions go beyond the action of doing things to cover levels of engagement in the learning process. Fern, et al (1993), for example, explained that “all learning is, in some sense, active but

active learning refers to the level of engagement by the student in the instructional process". To them, degree of activeness is considered from the level of engagement. This suggests a continuum in the degree of active learning. Some learning activities can be more active than others depending on levels of students' engagement. The higher levels of engagement suggest a highly active learning activity. Carson (1995) introduced an alternative aspect for considering active learning. He extended the definition of active learning to an effort to make learning 'authentic'. In the same line of argument, Allen & Tanner (2003) highlighted issues on authentic nature of active learning by suggesting the use of 'scientific inquiry' as the heart of active learning process. They defined active learning as "attempts to model the methods and mindsets which are at the heart of scientific inquiry, and to provide opportunities for students to connect abstract ideas to their real-world applications and acquire useful skills, and in so doing gain knowledge that persists beyond the course experience in which it was acquired. These definitions of active learning mirror a subtle and fluid nature of the term. Noticeably, examples of activities proposed in include a wild range of any actions that engage learners, and it is often contrasted to a traditional knowledge transfer instruction where students passively receive information from the instructor. The term active learning itself is broad which has no consensus about its true definition as mentioned by Drew and Mackie (2011). The openness of this term leads to diverse interpretation in the definitions, characteristics, or even the applications and contribution.

1) Nature of active learning

Active learning in general requires learners to be motivated, engaged, and interacted throughout the learning process (Bonwell & Sutherland, 1996). Engagement is the willingness and effort that learners contribute to the learning process and the desired learning outcomes. Engagement could occur in 3 different aspects of behavioral cognitive, and emotional domains (Trowler, 2010). Behavioral engagement is focusing on students' behaviors, and they could be explicitly observed from their actions, participation, and behavioral expressions (Wimpenny & Savin-Baden, 2013). Emotional engagement targets at feelings, motivation to learn and other affective domains which include learners' emotions attached to the learning activities or their connection towards the contents. Cognitive engagement is related to the mental process that the learners invested in the learning activity such as their thinking or the thought process employed to understand the contents. Engagement reflects active learning and prevents boredom, passiveness, and improper motivation. (Rimm-Kaufman et al., 2015). In active learning, learners need to be a learning agent who plays active roles physically, cognitively, and emotionally. The term is, therefore, closely related to learner-centeredness. In a progressive active learning classroom, students can be autonomous learners making decision and monitoring their own learning. In a less progressive class, learners may do experiential learning or discovery learning. In other forms of active learning class, learners may study in teacher-led activities where teachers use different forms of activities to engage them. Teachers and learners, therefore, could have different roles in active learning. Nata and Tungsirivat (2017) also suggests the following teacher's roles for active learning classroom. The roles include provide

freedom for students to select the contents they want to study and act as a facilitator, create the learning atmosphere in class to encourage students to collaborate with their friends and perform a self-evaluation process, provide some challenges with dynamic teaching techniques to motivate students consistently, avoid predetermination and discrimination in the classroom (instead, try to become rational and be flexible), and introduce supportive learning materials to support students' learning. The relationship between teachers and students is totally different from general classroom setting. Students tend to be more involved in the learning process, whereas teachers become the supporters instead.

2) Activities used in active learning classroom

The activities under the umbrella of active learning may involve different forms of instruction that is related to different cognitive processes (Prince & Felder, 2006). The activities generally aim to promote thinking skills among learners. Here are the examples of some active learning activities: 1) *Role Playing*: Students relate content to their personal experiences and develop critical thinking skills by portraying different roles, 2) *Discussions*: Students talk about the given topics in different aspects such as pros and cons with justification, 3) *Presentation*: The process of presenting something which students are the main person who verbally report on what they are showing. Presentation helps students enhance speaking, reading, writing, and listening skills, and 4) *Questions and answers*: This activity requires students to response by finding their answer which can enhance comprehension in contents.

3) Challenges of using active learning

Some researchers claim that there are many barriers to active learning (Crews et. al., 2011). Some of them is related to the process of teaching and some is about the physical settings of the class itself. The first challenge is time constraint. The process of learning and teaching in active learning classroom requires much time than regular lesson. The next issue is class sizes. Many students in class can slow down the process of learning. The next point, which is about the lack of resources and equipment, can cause difficulty in performing teaching in active learning classroom. Insufficient resources exhibit barrier that limits the choice in designing activities. Different studies were proceeded in the specific groups of participants and contexts. Several studies mainly focused on benefits of active learning in various contexts (Youpensuk & Laiprasertporn, 2018, Yuusuk, 2020, Allsop. et. al, 2020). However, there are no studies that focusing on exploring the exact definitions or characteristics of active learning. The non-existence of common definition of active learning exhibits vagueness among the understanding of the term itself. The complexity of active learning displays neither comprehensive body of research nor empirical statement in the literatures (Page, 1990). What we know about active learning itself has been assumed from different theories that researchers viewed as the features of active learning.

Significant purpose

To investigate secondary school English teachers' perceptions and implementations of active learning in their situations

Methods

Research design

This qualitative study employed an in-depth interview as the main instrument for data collection to explore perceptions and understanding of teachers' concepts about active learning which is subjective and context dependent. The in-depth interview design also allowed the researcher to present the information in cases to dig deeply and tap into the situation of each school context.

Research instrument

The main instrument for collecting data of this study was a semi-structured interview with 30-40 minutes in length. The researchers conducted a one-on-one interview with the participants to aggregate in-depth information and illustrate clear samples of interesting cases of active learning used in their schools.

Participants

The participants of this study included 10 in-service teachers from secondary/high schools in the Northeast region of Thailand recruited through an online survey which was used to screen participants who posited themselves as being 'familiar with active learning' and having direct experience using it in their situation survey. The main criteria for participant selection included "being an English language teacher in the public school in Northeastern region of Thailand", "currently teaching in the secondary level", and "having at least one-year teaching experience. There were teachers who had one year of experience, and some teachers with five or more years of experience. Most teachers in the list obtained a degree in education (B.Ed.) and some teachers were from other related fields with a graduate diploma in the teaching profession. Each selected participant's name and identity was concealed and replaced with alphabetical letters from A to J.

Table 1: Participants

Order	Gender and Age	Education	School Size	Years of teaching Experience
A	Female (24)	B.Ed. English	Medium	1
B	Female (24)	B.Ed. English	Extra-Large	1
C	Female (24)	B.Ed. English	Extra-Large	1
D	Female (28)	B.Ed. English	Extra-Large	5
E	Male (38)	B.A. English and Graduate Diploma (Teaching Profession)	Large	9
F	Female (52)	B.Ed. English	Small	26
G	Female (47)	B.Ed. English	Small	24
H	Female (50)	B.Ed. English	Small	25
I	Female (49)	B.Ed. English	Medium	25
J	Female (60)	B.A. English and Graduate Diploma (Teaching Profession)	Medium	36

Data collection and analysis

The interview took place to obtain in-depth information. During the process, participants had the right to decline or discontinue their participation on this research anytime. Apart from that, the researcher also contacted the participants for clarification of the unclear messages and issues. The data obtained was transcribed and grouped into themes based on perceptions and implementation of active learning.

Results

1. Perceptions towards active learning

All the participants defined active learning by starting with a dictionary style definition and clarified what it is by explaining some characteristics of active learning.

1.1) Definitions of active learning

All ten secondary school English teachers have similar understandings of active learning. The participants defined active learning in two major aspects: “process” and “lessons or activities”. Eight participants referred to active learning as a process covering both learning and teaching aspects of active learning. These participants explained that active learning is a teaching process that involved techniques used to encourage students to get involved with the lesson as well as establish interactions and collaboration among them.

For those who defined active learning as a learning process, they explained the term focusing on how students receive chances to explore knowledge, experience things, construct their understanding, and create their own learning objectives. The descriptions of the process covered how lessons should be taught and learned, and how students and teachers should act. The “how” process pointed out what they thought active learning should be like and its characteristics such as:

“It is the process that **creates energetic atmosphere** as well as establishes students’ involvement. Students **will work together and deliver effective end products of their learning in the class.**”

(Participant I)

This information provided clearer pictures of the active learning that participants perceived.

Noticeably, there were two teachers who defined active learning as “products” or “lessons or activities”. This group of participants focused on techniques, activities or teaching styles that help make learners become active. Even though the definitions seemed to lie on a different polar of a process-product continuum, the participants’ perceptions of active learning shared several ‘active’ characteristics of learning by doing and encouraging learners to be an active agent in the learning activities as seen in the extracts below:

*“...I would say the **process of learning by doing** which tends to learn from directly doing that thing... It needs participation from students. Moreover, students will have chances to explore the knowledge by themselves. It is not only sitting and learning passively. It **needs thinking, analysis, and reflection** towards contents **They were emphasized in learner-centeredness in learning as well as the experiential learning.** It needs thinking, analysis, and reflection towards contents.”*

(Participant A)

1.2) What active learning is “NOT”?

To gain more insights into the definitions of active learning, the participants were requested to provide a counter argument for their explanation illustrating what active learning is not. The summary of the participants’ explanations is shown in table below.

Table 2: What active leaning is not

A	The learning that is passive ; students only sitting and listening to the lecturer .
B	The lesson that students only sitting and listening to teacher talks like the traditional teaching in old time.
C	The traditional teaching that students only seating without interacting .
D	Only lecturing without interaction among students.
E	The traditional lecture . the teacher is the main doer and narrator, without interaction and other stuff.
F	Traditional lecturing is considered not active learning.
G	The teaching that teachers are writing on the board and assign students to write down what they have seen without interaction or movement .
H	Teaching that uses only writing on the board without using games or activities .
I	The passive learning that requires listening, writing, and submission of the paper works without interaction or movement . Mostly, it is individual.
J	Teacher-centered teaching with less involvement of students.

It could be seen that the participants related what active learning is not with traditional styles of teaching and its oppositions of ‘passive learning’ and a teacher-centered teaching. Other dominant concepts are teaching without interaction and movement, passive learning and activities that are related to lecturing and listening to teachers or writing on the board. The participants’ explanations of what is not learning reflect the association between active learning and a non-traditional style of teaching and learning. Interaction and physical movement seemed to be the key features of active learning.

1.3) Characteristics of active learning

All 10 participants’ descriptions of active learning covered five main aspects including general features, roles of teachers, roles of students, materials used, and activities used.

1.3.1 General features

Two common characteristics ‘active participation’ and the ‘self-agency’ were identified from the participants’ responses. Active participation covered both mental and physical aspects. The participants explained that active participation is required in active learning. This characteristic is

related to learning by doing where students directly experienced things during the learning activities. In an active learning class, the activities generally require students to “collaborate” with their friends during the process along with the application of knowledge about the content they had learned. Some activities even require students to run or move to different spots as teachers believed it was the good way to establish activeness in the lesson. For the cognitive aspect of active learning, the participants’ explanations cover the cognitive focuses of learning which mentioning that thinking and reflection are required in the process. Apart from that, teachers also need to support or facilitate students’ learning by creating energetic learning atmosphere and students’ involvement. The more students feel they are involved, the more active the lessons could be.

“It is the process that creates energetic atmosphere as well as establishes **students’ involvement**.....(Participant I)

For self-agency, the feature displays the position of students as the main center of the lesson. The active learning itself generally focuses on students as the “center” of the classroom which provides them more freedom to explore and understand things. It also covers the process of knowledge construction which students display their understanding towards the contents from their point of view. However, the process of their learning still follows teachers’ guidance.

“The teaching and learning that **allows students to experience things by themselves**, mostly... Having process that provides opportunities for learners to explore knowledge.”
(Participant H)

“The teaching and learning process emphasized in students’ involvement... to **give opportunities to get involved and decide what they want to learn**.”
(Participant J)

As they become more involved with the lesson, students will also obtain chances to select the contents they would like to learn based on their personal interests. In active learning classroom, the roles of teachers and students are found different from the traditional classroom.

1.3.2 Roles of teachers and students

All 10 participants indicated that teachers themselves are targeting at providing equal chances for students and guide them to the right path before letting them proceed things by themselves. They suggested eight different roles which totally different from traditional classroom teaching including facilitator, monitor, guiding person, coach, manager, explainer, counselor, and supporter. Apart from that, the participants’ explanation about the students’ roles was in line with that of the teachers. For students, they become more active and more involved in learning and teaching. The active learning itself generally focuses on students as the “center” of the classroom. Their roles in this position were to participate in activities, collaborate with their classmates, construct, and explore the knowledge mainly by themselves, and sometimes design the learning tasks and share to their classmates.

However, the process of their learning still follows teachers' guidance. All the participants referred to students as the main agents using the terms doers, participants, or actors.

1.3.3 Materials used

The participants suggested that the materials used in active learning classroom were not specific. Participant D, for example, stated that the materials for active learning classroom were the online and computerized stuff. Participant J had stated that the materials for active learning lesson would be the authentic one. Participant J provided the example as she referred to the activity about drug labels. She assigned students to bring their own drug labels which were authentic, so that she could expand the content more.

The main teaching is similar to guiding students to something **without too many texts and lecturing**..... The **materials** for active learning activities could be the “**Online media, computerized materials, pictures**”..... it makes the lesson more interesting which attracts students to pay more attention. (Participant D)

Participant H further stated that the materials used in active learning classroom should support self-directed learning.

The materials used in active learning classroom must be **supportive, especially for self-directed learning**..... For example, using **word cards** to teach students first and let them categorize the words (Participant H)

1.3.4 Activities used

The suggested activities from all participants varied. The activities itself were mostly collaborative as students tended to work in groups or pairs. The common focus all activities in this was the “collaboration”. The activity used in active learning classroom required students to “collaborate” with their friends during the process along with the application of knowledge about the content they had learned. To establish this quality, participants had implicated different forms of “collaborative tasks” into their activities. The styles of activities came in various forms including project works, questions and answers, team game accomplishment, discussion, games, and categorization. Each activity would be modified to suit the focuses of the contents and skills. According to the participants, the skills included were four main skills such as listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Apart from that, in the lessons that designed for specific skills such as communication, presentation, and discussion.

For example, **teaching reading**, before we start, teacher will elicit students to the vocabulary. I use word cards and put it in the box along with its definition in Thai. After that, I will pick one of them and let them guess its meaning first and assign them to find the meaning of those words in group. When they have finished, **each group will present the definitions they got**. After finished everything in this part, I will give them summary of all words before moving to the main reading part. (Participant F)

2. Implementation of active learning

The participants had similar ideas towards active learning as they stated that active learning itself was “good” for the lesson, especially in language teaching. This point made them used active learning in their teaching as it made the lesson more fun and enjoyable for students.

It is **good** because it helps to **grab students' attention while learning**.....

(Participant B)

Personally, I think it is broad and flexible which is helpful for me to design the interesting techniques. It has more positivity than what I expected.

(Participant D)

2.1) Implemented subjects

All 10 participants stated that they had applied active learning into their teaching. They integrated active learning into the different English subjects. The participants gave examples of the courses or the subjects that they implemented active learning. The subjects varied from compulsory courses to elective courses. Seven participants mentioned that they implemented active learning in the compulsory course that they were responsible for. Participants C, D, E, and I specified that the compulsory course that they applied active learning with was Basic English. Apart from that, four participants including B, E, G, and H referred to their Advanced English which targeted at different skills such as speaking, writing, or reading. The participants (A and G) also mentioned English for specific purposes, and “English for communication”. The subject itself was related to the specific skills for communication in target language.

I normally use active learning for “**English for Communication**”

(Participant A)

This revealed that the kind of courses that the participants used active learning with varied a lot. It could be a course at any level ranging from basic to advanced and it could be a course of any focused (skills, communication, or ESP).

2.2) Parts of the lesson

There were three major stages in this teaching which were introduction, presentation, and activity. The introduction was the first stage which included warm up, elicitation, or introducing

topics. The presentation stage included teaching of vocabulary and structures. The activity stage included the process when students performed activity as well as the production and reflection of something. All 10 participants decided to implement active learning to their teaching in different stages of the lesson. Majority of participants applied active learning to both teaching and activity parts. Meanwhile, some participants were decided to use active learning with only one stage on teaching instead. The introduction, or known as the elicitation and warm-up process, involved introducing the students to the topic of the content. In this part, participants decided to employ active learning to motivate students before teaching as well as create energetic atmosphere for them. There were three participants reported using active learning in this stage which were F, I, and H.

I used active learning because I wanted to **motivate students**, especially for those who attended afternoon classesThe **introduction** and activity parts. I would like to make it fun for them, so that they would want to come to class. (Participant F)

The second stage was the presentation which included the teaching process. The teaching in presentation generally involved grammar, structures, and vocabulary. The contents of teaching usually related to the activity as students would apply what they learned to perform tasks. The process of teaching, as mentioned earlier, allowed students to get involved and interact with their classmates. There were three participants who implemented active learning to the teaching parts which were A, C, and I.

I used it during the presentation which included **vocabulary teaching and structural explanation**. (Participant A)

“Students will work together and **deliver effective end products** of their learning in the class.” (Participant I)

The next stage was about activity which majority of participants explained that they used active learning in this stage. The activity stage included different tasks that students will perform as well as the production which they need to create something. The activity stage usually ending with the reflection of what they have got in class. The activities that employed active learning usually proceeded in the form of collaborative tasks which students had to collaborate with their classmates or group members. In some extents, students could design their learning and tasks and shared it. Some activities had set up the small competition to motivate students such as questions and answers, or team game accomplishment. There were eight participants including A, C, D, E, F, G, I, and J who stated about this point.

2.3) How active are the lessons?

The responses indicated various information which addressed how participant implement the active learning to their lesson. They implied that their lessons were “active” but not 100 percent. Five participants addressed that their lesson were 60-80 percent active. Another five participants implied that their lessons were not fully active without stating percentage. However, no one stated that their lessons were not active. Participant A, C, G, I, and J provided information that indicated how active are their lessons which revealed as 60-80 percent. This percentile indicated that the lessons of these five participants were highly active and frequently used in most of the lessons. Majority of their teaching and activities contained the features that motivated students to learn and stay active, and some of the activities were even proceeded to 100 percent.

There were many factors that affect the consistency of teaching as well. However, I still tried to use it with every session of advanced English. **It could be around 80 percent in average.....Some activities could proceed 100 percent** of active learning..... It really depends on how much you want your students to deal with.

(Participant G)

Apart from that, another five participants including B, D, E, F, and H implied that their lessons were not fully 100 percent active. Their statement did not reveal any percentile information that could indicate the level of activeness. These five participants did not give the percentile, but instead majority of them used the phrases “not every class”, “in some class”, “partly...” and “only in...” in their statement before saying that it was not 100 percent. This point indicated that the participants viewed level of activeness as something related to the consistency in teaching. They thought that if they could not use active learning to teach in every lesson, it would consider not fully 100 percent active.

Not every class, but quite frequent. Because it requires much time and effort in preparation..... I would say **not 100 percent fully active....**

(Participant D)

The participants had stated that their lessons were “active” but could not proceed to 100 percent fully active. Some participants explained this point by using percentile, and some participants also indicated by using the phrases. Apart from that, the level of activeness was found related to the consistency of teaching as some participants stated that they could not perform 100 percent active teaching because they could not use it to teach in every lesson.

Conclusion and Discussion

In conclusion, the active learning in this context was defined differently based on the information and experiences of participants in the field. The definitions itself are opposite of ‘passive learning’ and a

teacher-centered teaching which proceed without interaction and movement. The explanations of their responses reveal that interaction and physical movement seemed to be the key features of active learning. The results of this study further explain that all 10 participants perceived active learning as something that is “good” in terms of learning and teaching. According to that point, all the participants implemented active learning to their teaching in the actual classroom. The application of active learning was proceeded variously in different stages of teaching. However, they further stated that their class could not proceed to become fully active as they expected. What we should question is “how can we fill this hole” in order to deliver fully active teaching to the lessons.

The findings suggested that the personal understandings of all 10 participants are varied. The different descriptions of characteristics and implementation were explained as well as the issue about activeness. This variety reflects the constructive nature of ones’ personal meaning along with other issues including the effects towards implementation and the challenges of active learning itself.

1.) Diverse personal meanings of active learning

In overall, the participants’ definitions about active learning consist of the idea that totally related to “constructivism” and varied in different aspects. They implied that students would establish interaction which they can exchange and construct their knowledge and form the understanding of the concepts based on what they knew (Leu & Price-Rom, 2006). The process of knowledge construction can be found in activity part that students have to collaborate with their classmates to accomplish the given tasks. The variety of understanding leads to different meanings and issues. This point provides diverse practices that are based on the contexts and experiences of the practitioners themselves. However, all participants still agree upon the point that active learning is “good” in learning and “satisfied” with their use of active learning in class.

The participants define this term as something involves diverse characteristics that come against traditional teaching such as grammar translation or direct methods. The findings suggest several features that all 10 participants regularly mentioned such as learner-centered, active roles of students in class, direct experiencing, teachers as facilitators, and the interactions. However, even though they declared similar characteristics in general, the participants still had different focuses in defining process. Some participants targeted at the teaching that happened in class, and some focused on the way students learned and reacted. The descriptions of participants also reflect the underlying theories that shape the understanding such as constructivism, behaviorism, etc. All these factors diversify the meaning of active learning that were perceived. This point leads us to explore what influenced them. The defining process of participants is seemingly influenced by their experiences and background knowledge. As the term itself is opened for diverse interpretation, the understandings of teachers seem to be occurred from the views towards how the lessons are taught and managed which includes unique engagement, motivation, and interaction (Bonwell & Sutherland, 1996). The definitions from participants are found related to the information they have received when first learn about active learning as stated in the

responses. They tend to perceive the similar definitions since they were taught and formulate the ideas based on the experiences. However, for the effectiveness of active learning, they displayed different explanation of the results based on their own teaching contexts in the schools.

2.) How this diversity affects implementation?

The understandings of participants are found related to the real practice in their classes. Their concepts of thoughts provide them the overall pictures of the situations which lead to making their own decisions. For instance, the participants understood that active learning itself was “good” for the lesson, especially in language teaching, and this point makes them decided to use it in their lessons. The diversity of understandings and implementation is observable in how participants use active learning in class. Each of them formulated their own different solutions to set out effective implementation of active learning. As they perceived that the activities that happen inside the class require interaction, movement, involvement, and collaboration, the lessons that miss these features might be considered not active for them. Therefore, this thought encourages participants to make their lesson become more student-centered and encourage students to get involved with the process. This point resulted from the influenced of various understanding towards active learning itself which exhibit diverse practices.

The broad nature of active learning itself and variation of its understandings exhibit the rich resource for teacher development and education. The sharing session for teachers and practitioners provides opportunities to discuss and share ideas about active learning. Moreover, it also broadens the active learning perspectives and displays various ideas for teachers about active learning implementation and professional development. A sharing session about active learning itself could be proceeded as the preparation for novice teachers in the education program. Teachers can study this information to deliver active teaching in their contexts as well as formulating solutions to handle the similar problems explained in the study as well.

3.) Challenges of active learning

The implementation of active learning in general requires different conditions. This requirement sometimes exhibits difficulties in using active learning, especially in the specific contexts. Based on the findings, in the context of Northeast (Thailand), the use of active learning in real teaching contexts are facing major challenges including students’ proficiency, content difficulties, time constraints and attitudes towards English. All teachers aimed to perfect their teaching by trying to proceed 100 percent active class. However, these major factors created barriers that prevent the active process. The participants viewed students’ proficiency as the problematic issue for active learning, especially in the aspect of implementation. In active learning classroom, students must rely on themselves in their own learning process and application towards the obtained knowledge (Shroff, et. al., 2021). The differences in language proficiency are correlated to the issues that some students become unmotivated when they could not comprehend the lesson. This incident results as unmotivated students would be less willing to participate and cooperate with teachers as they felt uncomfortable (Scheyvens, et. al., 2008). When students are not

cooperated, the lessons will be more difficult to manage. It is difficult for teachers to be seen by students and manage to grab their attention back to the process (Petersen & Gorman, 2014).

“Majority of them feel uncomfortable with using L2 in teaching and trying to avoid participating some activities. it is because some of them **have weak fundamental skills in English**” (Participant A)

Students' differences in language ability. Weaker students need more attentiveness during teaching which can slow down the teaching process. (Participant I)

This problematic issue needs more patient and attention from the teachers to deal with. The participants further suggested that the level of contents is crucial for active learning lessons. The contents that appear too difficult can demotivate students and make the lessons become ineffective. Students become unmotivated when they cannot understand the lessons. On the other hands, if the target contents are too easy, there will be less improvement for students. Therefore, the unsupportive contents with inappropriate level of difficulty in active learning classroom will compromise the effectiveness of the lessons. Dealing with this issue requires full attention and carefulness from teachers which makes it challenging. The point about time constraints was also raised by the participants in findings. In active learning classroom, the activities used is important as it gives the lesson more engaged atmosphere. However, the length of activity in active learning classroom is considered the “time-consuming” process (Bonwell & Eison, 1991). The limitation in time directly affects the process of learning in class which teachers could not finish the lesson within the given class time. Another challenge which was perceived by the participants was about the “negative attitudes”. Based on the findings, students with negative attitudes in English language seem to be unwilling to cooperate with the teachers in active learning classroom (Scheyvens, et. al., 2008). This point likely to happen with weaker students as they think English is too difficult for them. When students feel that the lessons are impossible to get through, they will try to avoid cooperating with the class. It sets out negative views which directly affect the effectiveness of the process.

Implication

The major implication of this research will be explained in two aspects which are pedagogical implication and future research implication.

1. Pedagogical implication

The broad nature of active learning and variation of the participants' perceptions or understanding of the terms exhibit rich resources for teacher development and education. This could lead to a sharing session for teachers and practitioners which provides opportunities to discuss and share ideas about active learning.

2. Future research implication

The specification of this researcher was designed to provide results that are related to the research questions. The topic about active learning is vast on its own. Therefore, further research on this topic can be continued in the following areas which include:

2.1 By changing the area or region, the process of study could find different factors that influence perceptions towards active learning.

2.2 The action research which aims to investigate the effects of using active learning to enhance students' learning outcome. The study itself can be done in the longitudinal prospect in which students will be the participants who experience learning in active learning classroom.

Limitation

The specification of this study reveals a concern about the generalizability of the findings which were derived from the research in a specific setting and conditions. Moreover, the responses were based on their experiences and perceptions which were varied in different contexts. When the term "perception" was involved, it could mean that the information was sometimes "subjective" and "emotionally involved".

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