

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This chapter presents an overview of theories related to the research topic which includes: teaching oral communication; Total Physical Response (TPR) and the communicative approach; looking at learners' attitudes toward English language learning, the English classroom, and the English teacher; getting to know learners; investigating positive human relationship; building a relationship with the learners; grade and no-grade context in language learning; encouraging learners; and being culturally sensitive.

Teaching Oral Communication:

TPR and the Communicative Approach

The researchers Sato and Kleinsasser (1999) found in their study, **Communicative Language Teaching (CLT): Practical Understandings**, that oral communication is the teaching of language that can be used by learners in real life by using real-life situations. Thus, the teaching has a clear purpose. Learners are normally encouraged to speak in the target language so that they can communicate orally. Bowen and Madsen (1985), Finocchiaro (1989), Nunan (1991), Richards (1982), and Rivers (1983), all state that a lot of communication in the foreign language classroom can take place from the very beginning with nonverbal assistance. Rivers (1983) also says that it is not just very young children who learn through movement but adults do too. Certain modern approaches have found that response to a foreign language through movement is a very motivating beginning technique. Richards (1985) also claims that in child language learning, there is an ultimate relationship between language and the child's body, and that this can become a

model for adult learning. Therefore, they introduced TPR as a useful method to help beginning language learners. Its creator, James Asher (1977), concentrates on listening at the beginning level and deliberately delays speaking. The method used is based on commands accompanied by physical actions appropriate to those commands.

Finocchiaro gives further evidence from Robert Lado's experiment using a silent period before students are asked to produce language, after which, students produce utterances when they are ready. Lado found that when learners started to talk, they did so more fluently and with good pronunciation. Nunan (1991) mentions the relationship of successful first language acquisition and TPR. He relates that children received their initial input in the form of instructions couched in the imperative which required them to make a physical response, and felt that learning a foreign language at least should follow the same procedure. Moreover, Bowen and Madsen (1985) indicate that the advantages of this method include communicative focus and low anxiety level among learners. Davies (1996) also says that the method is designed to encourage learners to gain confidence and gradually to assume the initiative when ready to do so. Therefore, TPR is a useful methodology that helps learners to begin communicating in the very first lessons (see p.29). In the present study, this is considered appropriate to the learners needs.

It is, however never easy to help learners to speak a foreign language, especially when they lack confidence regarding their own language abilities. Bygate (1987) claims that helping learners speak in a foreign language is one of the most difficult aspects of learning. Because of this simple fact, good teachers obviously need to think of special strategies to help learners.

One way to help learners speak a foreign language is to increase their self-confidence. Mitchell (1994) suggests that to improve learners' confidence, a teacher should provide

positive, worthwhile and attainable objectives for the learners, with varied classroom activities.

Besides studying in the classroom, learners who are learning to speak a foreign language should have a chance to experience speaking in a real-life situation. Fried-Booth (1986) suggests that students be encouraged to speak English in a situation that is both challenging and real. Golebiowska (1990) suggests that, to make the classroom challenging and stimulating, learners be asked to perform tasks from real-life situations. Finocchiaro (1989) and Hartmann (1996) indicate that tasks should, moreover, be contextualized. The study of Sato and Kleinsosser (1999) also found that the teachers agree completely that simulated real-life situations should be used to teach conversational skills. Underwood (1987) gives an example that audio-visual aids like photos, books, magazines, music, letters, posters, and wall-charts can spark off learners' interests and build up an atmosphere which can help make them feel that the lesson has a great deal to do with life outside of the classroom. Consequently, the students will be brave enough to interact with speakers of other languages than their native language outside the classroom. Skehan (1998) describes communicative learners as confident and comfortable, as well as willing to take risks to communicate outside of the classroom. Such students are happy to engage in communication in real-life situations, without the support and guidance of the teacher.

One way to create such real-life situations is to invite a native speaker into the classroom. Mitchell (1994) talks about a school situation where a native speaker assistant is plausible, which he claims to be closer to a real situation:

The presence of other native speakers (e.g. such as a language assistant), greatly enhances the pupils' experience. In this way, the same words and phrases can be heard from two different voices, providing immediate reinforcement. Moreover, the range of language use may be similar as to when the teacher is working alone,

but the context will have changed. Instead of monologues, the pupil now hears conversations and dialogues between the teacher and the assistant (Mitchell 1994, p. 109).

However, if it is not possible to have such arrangement, he recommends inviting native speakers to the language class thus:

Any native speaker visitor to the language classroom can also be exploited. These visitors will probably not use precisely the language the teacher might want them to use, but nevertheless, they can help the pupils gain confidence in coping with such encounters (Mitchell 1994, p. 109).

Furthermore, Nunan (1988, p. 26) says that in a Communicative Approach "...class time should be spent, not on language drills or controlled practice leading towards communicative approach use, but in activities which require learners to do in class what they will have to do outside." Halliday makes this relevant statement:

The focus of 'communicative' is communication not between students or between student and text, but between the teacher and the wider social orientation of the student. The outcome is a provision that the tasks carried out in the classroom are authentic and meaningful to the real world of the recipients of the methodology (Halliday 1994, p.173).

Larsen-Freeman (1986) describes communicative approach in which the teacher's role is as a facilitator. Students work on all four skills from the very beginning. Oral communication is seen to take place through negotiation between speaker and listener. Students use the foreign language a great deal through communicative activities such as games and role-play in which they have many chances to communicate with each other and in which the materials are authentic. However, in such an approach, evaluation must not only focus on accuracy, but also on fluency. The teacher can informally evaluate students' performance in his/her role as an advisor or co-communicator. Errors of form are tolerated

because they are seen as a natural outcome of the development of communication skills. Indeed, students can have limited linguistic knowledge and still be successful communicators.

Since the aim of teaching oral communication is for learners to be able to communicate orally in the target language, successful learners as described by Bowen and Madsen (1985) are those who can communicate with native speakers of the target language who do not have teacher training or previous knowledge of the speaker's native language. Sato and Kleinsasser (1999) also conclude from their study that learners' motivation to continue language study is directly related to their success in actually learning to speak the language.

As has been shown, the Communicative Approach is focused on communication; it is student-centered, the teacher is a facilitator, and it takes place in a real-life situation. Brown (1994) believes that learners in a communicative classroom should be encouraged to deal with unrehearsed situations under the guidance of, but not control of, the teacher.

Looking at Students' Attitude toward English Learning, English Classroom and English Teacher

Most people enjoy doing things that they are good at (Heaton 1990, p.10). Likewise, they have positive attitudes toward things they like or things they want to do. "It is crucial to do something with a positive attitude because the whole educational process is deeply influenced by beliefs and attitudes" Wright (1987, p.10). Moreover, the teacher plays an important role in creating a positive or negative attitude in the classroom. Underwood (1987) suggests that learners' attitudes have probably been more influenced by the teachers

they had than by whether they actually wanted to learn English or not. Mackay (1992) claims that a positive attitude is one of the elements that promotes the spread of language.

According to the study of Richards (1994), learners often have preconceptions about their own abilities as language learners. For instance, they may feel “I’m not a good language learner,” or “I can’t pick up the language naturally,” or “I feel uncomfortable when I have to speak to a native speaker.” Moreover, the researcher mentions that these attitudes will influence the effort the learners make and the priority they set in learning the language.

The learner’s attitude toward the native speakers of the language is also another factor that influences learning. As Richards (1994) comments, attitudes may be affected by the past experiences of the learners or through other sources, such as the media. For instance, learners may like to study English with an American teacher because their parents had American friends.

Learning a new language is interesting and challenging for some learners while frightening for others. Scarcella (1986) claims that learning a second language can create such an emotional obstacle for many learners that they simply refuse to interact with native English speakers. However, a teacher can be a key person to switch a frustrating classroom into an enjoyable one. Therefore, the teacher will have to find ways to keep the class motivated. Moreover, Underwood (1987) suggests that we should think back to when we were students and in our favorite class and ask ourselves, “What made it so special?”

Getting to Know Students

“It is important to know the students that you are going to teach. To know the students includes understanding their personal characteristics, language background, socioeconomic

levels, and acculturation patterns,” (Scarcella 1986, p. 25). Underwood indicates that addressing learners by their names is one of the ways to get to know them. She gives an example of some advantages of calling learners by their names:

Being able to address students by name has considerable advantages both for the teacher and the students. From the teacher’s point of view, it avoids all kinds of confusion which might arise in identifying who should be responding; it generates a friendly relationship with the students; it is the natural way to attract somebody’s attention; it speeds up the organizing of pair and group work. From the students’ point of view, it produces a more secure atmosphere (Underwood 1987, p.25).

In sum, knowing learners by name, knowing their backgrounds and interests, knowing about their previous language-learning experiences and their attitudes toward English will enable the teacher to help the language student to learn more happily and effectively.

Investigating the Positive Human Relationship

It is essential in a teaching and learning context that teachers and learners have good relationships. Gordon (1974) states that an effective teaching and learning context occurs only when a special relationship between two persons exists. In other words, relationship is a bridge between teacher and learners. He also says that teaching materials and teaching methods are different in teaching different levels and different ages of students, however, a basic, but necessary, factor needed in teaching all ages is a relationship between teacher and learners.

A positive relationship will occur when two parties co-operate. Likewise, in order to build relationships with learners, a teacher needs to have special characteristics and qualities. This section will explore the importance of a positive human relationship and why

it is essential in an educational context, and also explore characteristics of a good teacher and qualities that teachers need in relationship building.

Munchana (1992) gives the following objectives of human relations in education context:

1. To create the classroom atmosphere that builds a good understanding in teaching and learning.
2. To create faith and good understanding between teachers and learners.
3. To create unity between teachers in doing the work together.
4. To build unity and good understanding between the teacher, school and home.
5. For success of a task that supports the school and community development.
6. To create success and development in life, society and the nation.

Since relationship building is an important variable in a classroom context that teachers in the present time should be aware of, the teachers need to have some particular qualities in order to have good relationships with their students.

Munchana (1992) cites the views of some scholars regarding a good teacher.

Thanu Sawaengsak (1983) mentioned 5 characteristics of a good teacher which are: has good relationship with students, has good etiquette, has good qualifications, has good manners, and of course, loves being a teacher.

Gilbert Hignet (1951) gives 10 characteristics of a good teacher, namely:

- (1) knows the subject very well;
- (2) likes the subject he/she is teaching;
- (3) likes his/her students;
- (4) knows the students;
- (5) shows generosity to the students;
- (6) knowledgeable;
- (7) has good sense of humor;

- (8) has good memory;
- (9) has hope in life; and
- (10) shows grace to the students.

Even though this is an old view, a positive human relationship is very crucial. Four out of the ten points mentioned indicate a positive human relationship, namely: the teacher likes the subject he/she is teaching; likes the students he/she is teaching; knows his/her students; and shows generosity to the students.

Furthermore, Munchana (1992) gives an example from a research conducted with students about their views of a good teacher and teachers that they want to have. The researcher, Paul Witty (1974) analyzed 12,000 letters from elementary and high school students. He compiled the following 11 characteristics of a good teacher, namely:

- (1) has a good attitude toward democracy;
- (2) shows kindness and cares for students individually;
- (3) has patience;
- (4) has a variety of interests;
- (5) has good manners;
- (6) has a good sense of humor;
- (7) performs well and is consistent;
- (8) cares about the students' problems;
- (9) shows flexibility;
- (10) accepts and gives compliments; and
- (11) searches for new teaching strategies.

According to Pamornboot (1986), a good teacher should not show anger or inflict corporal punishment, such as throwing chalk at students, hitting the students on their heads,

or hitting their hands with a big ruler. The more polite the teacher is the more he/she earns respect from students and their parents. Even though the students are not afraid of this kind of teacher, they do love, respect, and are in awe of him/her, and are impressed by his/her good manners and politeness. However, some teachers think that scolding students and being strict with them would make the students behave well. They think the students' behavior can be changed from the outside. However, Gordon (1974) believes that this would only result in the opposite of what the teachers expected. The teachers' criticism would create pressure on the students.

According to the above statement regarding a good teacher, from students' perspective as well as from a general standpoint, it could be concluded that a positive human relationship is a necessary factor in the classroom context.

After finding the characteristics of a teacher which are positively perceived, the teacher needs to have good strategies to build positive relationships with the learners. Munchana (1992) suggests a simple, but important strategy, which is, to remember the learner's name as the first step. Pamornboot (1986) states that remembering learners' names has many good benefits both related to mental attitude and discipline. Regarding mental benefits, the students are proud and think that they are special and the teacher loves them. They have hope, honor, and feel comfortable, so they do better in school. In terms of discipline, the students feel that they are under the teacher's control when the teacher calls their names correctly. It means that they should not misbehave because the teacher knows them well. It is like a signal telling the learner to 'Behave, I know you.' The teacher should not address students with other names or simply say 'Hey you!' This would create a gap between them. When the teacher has free time such as during a break, the teacher should talk to the students related to whatever issue that seems appropriate. The students will realize that the teacher

loves and cares about them. The teacher should talk with all the students, not only to a few of them that the teacher likes. The teacher should not think that his/her duty is only teaching and that after class, he/she does not have any responsibility to his/her students.

A good relationship between teacher and learners is observable. Gordon (1974) describes the 5 characteristics below:

1. Openness: they are open and honest to each other.
2. Hospitality: they are aware of each other's value and have concern for each other.
3. Freedom: they have freedom from each other and respect each other the way they are.
4. Independence: they are independent so that both grow and have self-development
5. Fulfillment: fulfill each other's needs.

In conclusion, a teacher should have appropriate strategies in order to create positive relationships with his/her students. When the relationship between them is good, their co-operation is strong, the teaching and learning situation is happy and effective. This leads them to achieve their goals.

Building Relationships with Students

The roles of teachers and students affect their relationship. Maintaining appropriate roles builds good relationships between them. Nunan (1989) explains that 'role' refers to the part that learners and teachers are expected to play in carrying out learning tasks as well as the social or interpersonal relationships between the participants. It is normally accepted that teachers automatically have power over the students. This necessarily creates some degree of distance in the relationships between them. The differences of age, interest, culture and level of knowledge result in the inequity of power and status. Wright (1987) claims that:

Many teachers believe that learners are obliged to respect them, simply because teachers hold a certain social role. The inherent power relationship is one of the most important factors enhancing teaching and learning; it is used as a means of enforcing group effort. Although social and psychological factors inherent to these roles are often hidden, the process of learning a language in the classroom is underpinned by this teacher/ learner relationship (p.16).

Buripakdee (1989) finds that teachers have a very powerful role that affects good human relationships with students. Underwood (1987) also states that to create a good relationship with learners, a teacher needs to make the learners feel that they are going to do something interesting and to enjoy their lessons. One simple way to build positive relationships in Thailand is to address learners by their nicknames.

It is, however, more complicated in a multi-cultural classroom for a teacher to build relationships with students. Olsen (1988) admits that the most puzzling and, indeed, unpleasant experience for language minority students is the relationship between them and their teachers. Likewise, in Thailand, the ethnic language students normally receive less care and attention from their teachers; prejudice and discrimination exclude them from many educational opportunities. The researcher's interviews with the language learners in this study indicated that their previous teachers allowed a big gap in their relationships with them. For example, the teachers ignored them or called them inappropriate names. The teachers also expected them to sit quietly, whether they understood what was being taught or not. Questions were allowed to be asked only after class time, even when the learners were bold enough to do so at the appropriate point. Richards (1994) also cites his observation that in some countries, it is regarded impolite to ask the teacher a question during class time. On the other hand, in western countries, for instance, the United States, teachers interact more freely with learners, and the learners raise questions if they do not understand (Olsen, 1988).

In sum, we have seen that teacher and learners' roles are related to the cultural beliefs and attitudes that they have about each other. Positive attitudes lead to successful teaching and learning. A teacher's caring, gentle attitude towards learners builds good relationships in whatever context.

Grade and No-Grade Context in Language Learning

In the field of education, the learning process is generally evaluated by examinations. Grades are given to learners as a measurement of their performances and, therefore, play an important role in evaluating both learners' and teachers' success. High or low distinction is judged by how well a student masters his/ her lessons. Consequently, learners normally invest considerable energy and time in order to do well on the examinations and to get good grades. They realize that good grades are a conduit for further education and future careers; the attainment of high grades is, therefore, a powerful motivator for students. On the other hand, discouragement is the opposite result for those who do not attain high grades.

Unfortunately, it is almost impossible to avoid the fear and tension that tests build in learners. Brown is very clear about this:

Tests have gotten a bad rap in recent years. And not without reason. More often than not, tests are seen by learners as dark clouds hanging over their heads, upsetting them with thunderous anxiety as they anticipate the lightning bolts of questions they don't know, and worst of all, a flood of disappointment if they don't make the grade (Brown 1994, p. 373).

No doubt, when competition is high, learners are forced to compare their performance with others. Many times this competition results in learners creating negative strategies, such as cheating, to be successful in examinations. Learners who invest a lot of effort, but get unsatisfactory results, often undergo a lot of suffering. This can also create a negative

attitude towards the subject and towards the teacher who teaches the class. "Some of the major hindrances to learning to use a language are the anxiety, tension, and face-saving silence that pervade many classrooms (Rivers 1983, p. 24). However, the most crucial feeling that can hinder learning is a negative attitude towards one's self in which learners feel guilty and disappointed. Sometimes, this may lead to other kind of failure in the future, thereby affecting their whole lives negatively.

Teaching and learning contexts generally aim for practical applications of knowledge, insights and skills gained. However, instructors often forget to consider how much the learners have really gained from what they have learned and how well they are able to apply their pedagogical theories to real life. Instead, the learners' success is likely to be measured merely in theoretical terms. Indeed, it is accepted automatically that learners who achieve good grades are successful, without considering what negative factors could also have been involved in the testing and grading process.

This study emphasizes the natural no-grade context in successful language teaching and claims that, instead of focusing on making good grades, learners would both make more progress toward language mastery and enjoy the learning process more when anxiety over grades has been reduced. This no-grade context is assumed in this research to make the learning experience more meaningful and rewarding for everyone.

One strategy for avoiding the mentioned problems is the use of *informal* testing. Brown (1994) mentions formal and informal tests. He describes an informal test as unplanned assessments that are made as a course moves along toward its goal. "Informal testing ranges from simple interviews (performance being rated with +, √, -, or a brief narrative comment) to short quizzes... can even constitute a relatively painless 'installment plan' evaluation" (p. 357). This is also referred to as a *formative* evaluation, which means

assessing students in the process of forming their competencies and skills, with the goal of helping them to continue the growth process. A teacher's success is shown by how well his/her students' advance toward the goal as well as by what the next step in the learning progress might be.

Another strategy for allowing enjoyable learning to take place is to give learners the freedom to experiment in the classroom. If learners can try things out, i.e. 'test' their own hypotheses about language, without feeling that their overall competence is being judged, they will find the learning atmosphere more enjoyable. Brown gives the following example:

In the same way, say, tournament tennis players must have the freedom to practice their skills with no complications for their final placement- before the tournament itself begins, so also must your learners have ample opportunities to "play" with language in your classroom without being formally graded (1994, p. 376).

Instead of relying on examination, the most crucial factor in determining whether a learner embarks on a task at all, how much energy he devotes to it, and how long he perseveres, is his/her motivation. Motivation plays a role in all kinds of learning, and encompasses the individual's drive, need for achievement and success, curiosity, and desire for stimulation and new experiences. Gardner noted (in Bowen and Madsen, 1985) that motivation is more important than intelligence and aptitude in learning a foreign language. Indeed, Littlewood (1984) claims that aptitude and motivation (based on favorable attitudes) are the factors which have predicted success most regularly in various research studies.

Two of the most important aspects of motivation for second language learning are the communicative need for a second language and the learners' attitudes toward the second language community. If a learner has a positive attitude toward the native speakers of the

second language, his/her motivation to communicate will be reinforced. Littlewood (1984) also states that it is probable that such an attitude relates more directly to learning as it is experienced in the classroom. This is likewise true for the learner's image of the language, classroom, and teacher. Successful learners developed favorable attitudes as the course progressed, and in turn, these attitudes encouraged more success.

On the contrary, if a negative attitude toward a foreign culture exists, there may be strong internal barriers against learning its language. Likewise, failure may produce negative attitudes, which will in turn, breed further failure.

Rivers (1983) suggests that when we capture the learners' initial motivation, focus it, and direct it into satisfying, ego-enhancing learning experiences, this satisfaction motivates the learners to further learning along the same lines. She concludes that motivation increases as the learner experiences success in using what he or she has learned. Bowen and Madsen (1985) support Rivers' view by claiming that learning is significantly enhanced when the learner sees that what is being studied is relevant to his/her personal life.

Encouraging Students

In a multi-cultural classroom, students normally find it frustrating to interact with each other and thus to participate in classroom activities (Scarcella, 1986). It is therefore the teacher's responsibility to provide encouragement to learners to practice speaking. Wright (1989) supports the conception that a teacher normally wishes to give learners an opportunity to do something in a context full of encouragement. Davies (1996) states that usually students will be encouraged to communicate in an everyday situation. Therefore, to be encouraged, students need a familiar environment that is both comfortable and

enjoyable within the classroom. Underwood (1987) adds that every opportunity should be taken to give encouragement to students who are making a real effort, and not just to those who are most successful. In this context, Scarcella (1986) suggests solutions that may help to overcome the problems, some of which are cited below:

1. Create a supportive, non-threatening classroom environment.
2. Give the students sufficient positive reinforcement by complimenting them on their conversational abilities. This will make them feel successful and encourage them to communicate. If students believe that their efforts to communicate have been successful, they will feel good about participating in future speaking situations. Each speaking experience is influenced by previous experiences. Thus, the students' participation increases if their previous interactions were successful.
3. Provide students with models they can relate to. For instance, ask a good student to answer first, then ask another student similar question.
4. Use low risk activities.
5. Create speaking activities at the students' approximate level of English proficiency.

Wright (1987, pp. 52-53) also suggests some strategies to help create the maximum condition in which learning can take place and through which students can be motivated.

1. Giving learners plenty of encouragement for their efforts
2. Learning the name of the learners quickly
3. Being warm, friendly and open with the learners
4. Adopting positive attitude toward learners by praising and encouraging them
5. Establishing an interesting learning atmosphere

6. Involving the learners in classroom activities so that they can communicate, e.g. through group work
7. Giving positive feedback on assignments
8. Encouraging pride in achievement
9. Organizing learning groups which entail teacher-learner relationship and learner-learner relationship, i.e. seating arrangement

It is generally agreed that learners will be encouraged when they feel comfortable in the classroom. Both the classroom atmosphere and the teacher's understanding play a great role in motivating the learners to learn the target language.

Being Culturally Sensitive

Wright (1987) states that learners' cultural beliefs about learning a second language influence their motivation in a positive and negative way. If one's culture values an activity, then it is likely that there will be positive motivation. "To understand learners, teachers need to know their home culture," Scarcella (1986, p.27) claims. According to Scarcella, there are many instinctive factors involved in teaching minority students. For instance, the teacher should appreciate cultural diversity, i.e. he/she needs to understand the students' cultural backgrounds and to respect them. Moreover, the teacher should reduce prejudice among students and between the teacher and the students by implementing policies, procedures and activities that are explicitly designed to avoid bias. MacKay (1992) states that:

...both teacher's and students' classroom behavior are affected by their cultural background. It is therefore quite likely that you (the teacher) and your students will have different views concerning your roles and what should occur in a classroom. To deal with these differences: First, it is important for you to gain an understanding of your students' expectation regarding classroom behavior.

Second, you should take measures to clarify your own views as to the appropriate role of teachers and students (p. 51).

In the present study, the students are from a variety of ethnic groups and regions of Thailand. Therefore, the class is multi-cultural. The teacher needs to be aware of each group's culture because it affects teaching and learning. On the other hand, the teacher and students share an essential objective, and that is, the Christian impulse to spread the Word of God. This factor is of inestimable value in overcoming all the other troubling factors.

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