
Stories of Exploratory Action Research in Thailand

Edited by Richard Smith,
Rachanee Dersingh
and Sonthida Keyuravong

www.britishcouncil.org



Contents

Introduction	4
Richard Smith, Rachanee Dersingh and Sonthida Keyuravong	
Part I. Student engagement	18
Chapter 1 Helping students with vocabulary recall and engagement by using chants and songs Prapassara Daoruang	19
Chapter 2 Reducing conflict and encouraging respect in my English classroom Faisa Wantaha	26
Chapter 3 How I developed my teaching to promote my students' engagement in English classes Wilai Phanchanokkul	36
Chapter 4 Finding out what my students think about my teaching Ananthita Sparrow	45
Chapter 5 How to enhance my students' confidence in using and retaining English vocabulary Penchan Kongpet	53
Chapter 6 Exploring and enhancing paragraph writing and motivation for secondary school students Nonglak Kanthamat	58
Chapter 7 Creating a positive learning environment through interactive activities Krittaporn Nukliang	67
Chapter 8 Improving vocabulary skills through interactive classroom activities Nurfareeda Waemamu	76
Part II. Pronunciation and speaking	85
Chapter 9 Helping my students pronounce words correctly Pimpisa Thungjan	86
Chapter 10 Enhancing students' recognition and pronunciation of final consonant sounds in English Pheerapol Muprasert	93
Chapter 11 My first journey into Exploratory Action Research: Enhancing long vowel awareness Juthapad Benjapong	99
Chapter 12 How can I improve students' confidence in speaking class? Autsawapol Muedthong	109

Chapter 13	How can I inspire confidence in my students to communicate in English? Salinee Bowonrattanapat	116
Chapter 14	Preparing my students for impromptu speaking Kanokrat Uicheng	125
Chapter 15	Boosting students' confidence in English speaking Pornchanok Chamnanaksorn	134
Chapter 16	Encouraging students to engage in conversations Prapassara Daoruang	145
Chapter 17	Enhancing complete-sentence conversations in lower secondary English Shane Smithtiwin	151
Chapter 18	Enhancing student engagement in speaking activities Faisa Wantaha	159
Part III. Reading and writing		169
Chapter 19	Addressing students' challenges in recognising uppercase and lowercase letters Atikah Alilateh	170
Chapter 20	Promoting recognition of the English alphabet through routines Jeerawan Pujjare Panya	178
Chapter 21	How to enhance student engagement in reading lessons? Damkerng Mungthanya	187
Chapter 22	Secondary school students' difficulties in summary writing in English Kanchanokchon Woodeson	194
Chapter 23	How can I improve my students' writing skills in English? Palida Chaiyapho	201
Chapter 24	Write on: A teacher's journey to enhancing writing skills Sukhuman Janputtipong	209
Chapter 25	Practising conjunctive adverbs in story-writing tasks Sirawit Srikheaw	216
Chapter 26	Empowering paragraph writing: Integrating ChatGPT to enhance skills and reduce anxiety in EFL classrooms Nonglak Kanthamat	228
Chapter 27	Developing students' writing skills through pictorial writing Pitchaya Yasadayan	236
Chapter 28	Enhancing students' use of verb tenses in their writing Sumittra Jaiklam	245
Chapter 29	How can I improve my students' writing skills? Thanyasiri Sittirach	255

Introduction

Richard Smith, Rachanee Dersingh
and Sonthida Keyuravong

Background

English language teachers face various challenges in their classrooms, such as dealing with students' apparent lack of engagement, or weaknesses in particular areas of language proficiency. However, one-off in-service training, when available, is often perceived as inappropriate to their particular local conditions, and teachers can become demotivated by the overwhelming nature of the problems they face. As has been shown in various contexts worldwide (see Camtree, n.d.), one way to empower teachers to address challenging issues is to equip them with the knowledge and skills to engage in Exploratory Action Research (EAR) in their own classrooms (see Smith & Rebolledo, 2022). Engaging in this form of teacher-research can enable teachers to develop well-focused reflective thinking, explore and analyse the root causes of problems in their classrooms, and plan and evaluate appropriate solutions.

Nevertheless, in Thailand as in many other contexts, classroom research is often perceived as an overly academic and inaccessible activity, even though the Ministry of Education has

introduced initiatives requiring teachers to identify classroom challenges and develop evidence-based solutions. Training in classroom research remains limited, is typically short-term if it exists at all, and lacks long-term support structures. The EAR-Thailand programme was therefore set up to explore how this gap can be filled in a practical way.

In order to effectively develop classroom research skills, experience has shown that teachers need to engage in a full EAR cycle and receive ongoing mentoring from an experienced classroom research practitioner. However, in Thailand as elsewhere, there are still relatively few teachers and teacher educators with expertise in *mentoring* EAR, which restricts opportunities of engaging teachers in classroom research effectively and on a wide scale. The EAR-Thailand programme, which has now been running for four years and has plans to expand in the future, has been developing an innovative approach in this important area of mentor development, with a positive potential impact on the sustainability of teacher-research in Thai public education and beyond.



The beginnings of Exploratory Action Research (EAR) in Thailand

In 2022, the School of Liberal Arts at King Mongkut's University Thonburi Thailand (KMUTT) and British Council Thailand launched a pilot project to assist schoolteachers in doing classroom research, calling the project at that time 'Mentor Development for Exploratory Action Research' (MDEAR). In this, they drew inspiration in particular, from the British Council's Champion Teachers projects in Latin America.¹

The project team adopted the Exploratory Action Research approach to teacher-research due to its proven feasibility and usefulness for busy schoolteachers.

In this approach, teachers first engage in a period of *exploring* a problematic or puzzling classroom situation, thus coming to a deeper understanding, which then informs a subsequent action phase or phases. Research is explained to teachers in a jargon-free, down-to-earth way, with the use of plentiful examples (see Smith & Rebolledo, 2018).

Out of 21 teachers from all over Thailand who embarked on the pilot programme, 18 completed it, and 12 submitted written reports. All of these reports can be read in a book edited by Anne Burns (Burns, 2023), who noted that EAR 'is an inspiring and motivating way for teachers to become familiar with research' (p. 8), valued 'particularly for its ability to introduce teachers to research gradually and to mentor them as they begin to explore their personal classroom issues' (p. 9).

¹ See, for example, www.britishcouncil.pe/en/education/champion-teachers



Book of reports from the pilot (2022) programme (Burns, 2023)

In-depth interviews carried out with seven of these pilot programme participants and reported by Dersingh and Vuong (2024) also showed that the process enhanced teachers' confidence, making them more comfortable in conducting research into their own teaching practices. It also improved their critical thinking skills by encouraging them to reflect more deeply on their teaching methods, and strengthened their ability to address classroom issues more effectively, in place of making broad assumptions. Indeed, there was a noticeable positive shift in these teachers' attitudes towards conducting classroom research. Before their involvement in EAR, most of the teachers had viewed research as a highly formalised, academic process, which seems to have discouraged them from engaging in research.

In addition to changing attitudes towards research, the 2022 EAR programme exposed teachers to qualitative research methods, an area with which they had previously been unfamiliar. However, they experienced challenges in designing effective instruments for data collection, and this showed the importance of continuous support and training. The interviews reported by Dersingh and Vuong (2024) also showed that EAR's impact extended beyond research practices to teaching methods, promoting an overall shift towards more student-centred approaches.

Lack of time and time management emerged as the most significant challenges facing participants in the pilot programme. The timeline of the project was tight, and it required teachers to balance research activities with their existing workload. Although teachers were enthusiastic about EAR, their enthusiasm was limited by their busy schedules. Indeed, the exploratory phase of EAR, in which participants collected data to better understand classroom problems or puzzles, was considered quite time-consuming overall and was reported to require significant support from mentors. Again, this suggested to programme organisers that EAR's success, in the beginning stages, relies heavily on mentorship and institutional support. It also suggested that future EAR projects or similar programmes should take teachers' time constraints into account by offering flexible timelines and additional support to help teachers fully participate without feeling overwhelmed (Dersingh & Vuong, 2024).

By the end of the 2022 pilot programme, it was evident to scheme organisers that local teachers were relying heavily on their international mentors for guidance and support. While this collaboration had been valuable, it created a dependency that could limit the long-term success of the programme. Thus, developing local mentorship became a priority for 2023, in order to ensure long-term sustainability.

Mentoring for Exploratory Action Research

The 2022 pilot project adopted a simple structure where international mentors guided local teachers through online webinars and mentoring sessions. For the following year (2023), KMUTT, British Council Thailand, and the Equitable Education Fund (EEF) collaborated to organise the second Exploratory Action Research Teacher and Educator Development programme for English language teaching in Thailand. The programme (now called 'EAR-Thailand' for short) aimed to support the continuing professional development (CPD) of two key target groups:

1. English language teachers at the primary and secondary levels, equipping them with knowledge and skills in EAR
2. Mentor teachers, who would not only develop EAR skills but also mentoring skills to provide long-term support and extend the impact of the programme.

For the first time, then, the development of Thai mentors was to be explicitly focused upon, with the benefit of insights from another British Council programme, the Action Research Mentoring Scheme (ARMS) in India and Nepal.² The 2023 EAR-Thailand programme was designed and

implemented by the KMUTT team in consultation with Richard Smith of the University of Warwick, who helped select a team of seven experienced mentor teachers ('Lead Mentors') from five countries: India (2 mentors), Israel, Nepal (2 mentors), Spain and Uzbekistan. All of them were active members of MenTRnet³ – an international association which had been recently set up by Smith to support teacher-research mentoring. He and the Lead Mentors worked closely with KMUTT to help design the curriculum, plan training activities, and provide mentoring both for the teachers and for the Thai mentor teachers selected for the programme in 2023.

The project model evolved to incorporate local mentors who would eventually be expected to take on leadership roles.

Compared to the structure in 2022, an additional layer was therefore introduced: local mentor teachers (MTs), with international experts as lead mentors (LMs) training two MTs each to guide schoolteachers (STs) from across Thailand in conducting EAR. At the same time, Lead Mentors would mentor some schoolteachers (three each) directly (see Figure 1).

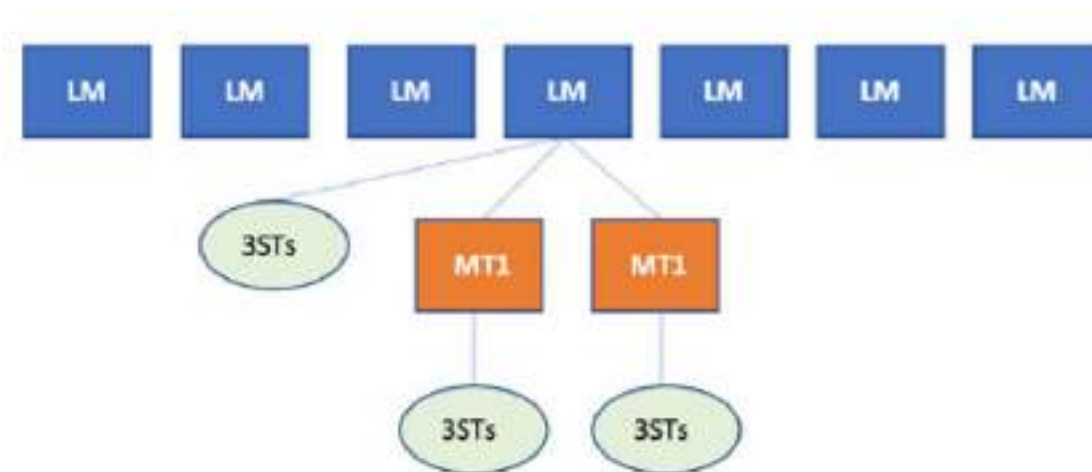


Figure 1: EAR-Thailand programme model 2023

² See www.britishcouncil.in/programmes/english/research-publications/arms

³ mentrnet.net

The programme ran from July 2023 to March 2024, beginning with 63 English language schoolteachers (STs) and 14 Thai Mentor Teachers, under the guidance of the seven Lead Mentors. The two groups were trained in parallel online: teachers attended webinars based on material in Smith and Rebollo (2018), followed by mentoring sessions with their assigned mentor (either a Lead Mentor or a Thai Mentor Teacher). These individualised sessions provided guidance, enabled questions to be answered, and helped teachers implement each step of their research projects.

The Thai Mentor Teachers themselves were supported with webinars based on the guiding framework in Smith (2020). Mentor Teachers also worked closely with international Lead Mentors, receiving ongoing support from them in mentoring their assigned teachers. The way that the LMs themselves mentored STs was intended to serve as a model for their MTs on how to mentor, and MTs were sometimes invited to observe LMs' mentoring conversations with STs. LMs themselves met together on a monthly basis, and this enabled them to share valuable insights into how to support mentoring and mentor development in the Thai context.

Overall, the training for MTs and STs consisted of the following:

- online training in mentoring for the 14 MTs – six webinars by Richard Smith (once a month from July to October 2023)
- online training for the 63 schoolteachers to do EAR – five webinars by Sonthida Keyuravong (from August 2023 to January 2024)
- online mentoring of STs throughout the ten-month programme
- regular LM–MT online meetings for consultation.

By the end of this 2023 programme:

- 34 teachers had successfully completed a research project
- 33 teachers presented their research findings at an online EAR Sharing Session: 'Teachers' Stories of Exploratory Action Research' on 16 March 2024
- 27 teachers submitted written research reports for feedback, of which 17 have been selected for editing and publication here.



According to end-of-project questionnaire-based evaluation and the teachers' reflections in this book, the 2023 programme had a positive impact, particularly in the following areas:

- *Stronger teacher–student relationships:* Many teachers reported that they now listened to and paid more attention to students' needs and feelings, while their specific research findings led to more effective teaching practices, in turn also fostering better relationships between teachers and students.
- *Improved perceptions of classroom research:* Teachers developed a more positive attitude towards classroom research, viewing it now as more manageable, with a greater understanding of its value in improving teaching practices.
- *Enhanced problem-solving abilities:* Teachers now felt they were able to tackle classroom challenges on the basis of evidence they could collect.
- *Building a teacher research community:* The project helped lay the foundations for a community of teacher-researchers in Thailand, promoting sustainable CPD.

Final evaluation also showed that almost all of the 34 teachers who successfully completed the programme felt their research skills had become 'good' or 'excellent' in a wide range of areas, including abilities to: analyse their own teaching; identify strengths in their teaching; use issues and problems that arise in the classroom as research topics; select and design tools to collect data for research; analyse data; summarise data; and use data to plan improvement in their teaching.

Managing a programme of this scale also came with its fair share of challenges. One major issue, as in the pilot (2022) programme, was time management. Participants were already juggling their regular responsibilities, and mentoring or conducting EAR added another layer to their workload. The programme's reliance on online meetings posed additional challenges, especially for participants co-ordinating with Lead Mentors in different time zones. Unexpected issues such as sudden changes in job roles or personal circumstances also made it difficult for some participants to stay on track. To help overcome these obstacles, the organisers introduced the concept of 'accountable flexibility', an approach that enabled participants to suggest changes (for example, with regard to deadlines) while ensuring their responsibilities were met.

This balance between flexibility and accountability proved to be crucial for maintaining the programme's progress and achieving its goals.

Expanding EAR-mentoring and mentor development

One challenge in 2023 was the dropout rate, which made it difficult for some new Thai mentors to practise and refine their mentoring skills. In 2022, the dropout rate had been about 25 per cent, but this figure nearly doubled to 46 per cent in 2023. It is possible that some of the new mentors found it difficult to motivate their mentees and/or reassure them about the workload involved, but there were also many legitimate personal challenges reported by participants who felt unable to continue.

To address this, our selection process for 2024 became stricter; we interviewed and selected individuals based on their sense of responsibility and commitment. We also decided to reassure Mentor Teachers repeatedly that they could call on scheme organisers to get in touch with teachers who were facing difficulties, to share the load of persuading participants to stay. As a result, the dropout rate decreased to 13 per cent in 2024, with 40 out of 46 originally selected participants managing to complete the programme. While this is a great improvement, we hope to increase the completion rate even further in the coming years.

The aim of the programme in 2024 continued to be to develop both teacher-researchers and mentors of teacher-research (with a focus on Exploratory Action Research) in Thailand.

Additional support for the 2024 programme came from the Regional English Language Office (RELO), US Embassy Thailand, and the Office of the Basic Education Commission (OBEC) in the Thai Ministry of Education.

Sustainability through mentor development continued to be a key objective of the programme. In 2024, even greater effort was put into developing local mentors to help guide teachers, with less direct support for mentoring teachers from the international Lead Mentors, who took on more of a role in mentoring local mentors.

The programme in 2024 therefore introduced an additional layer (see Figure 2). Local mentors trained in 2023 (referred to as 'MT1s' in the diagram) began training a new batch of 18 local mentor trainees ('MT2s'). This step prepared MT1s to transition into Lead Mentor roles in the future, further supporting the project's sustainability intentions.

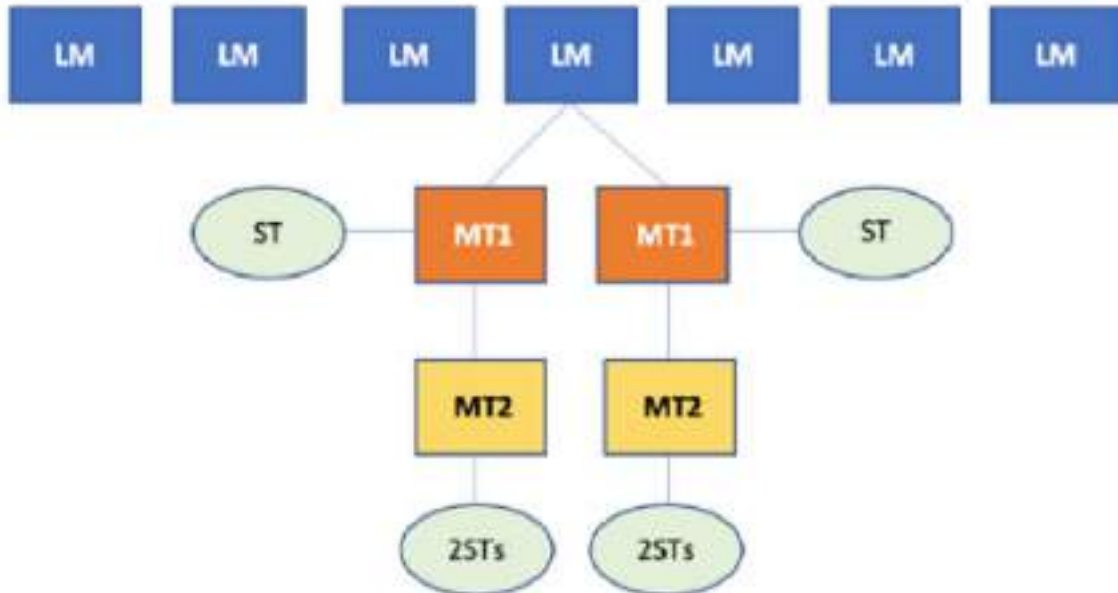


Figure 2: EAR-Thailand programme model 2024



Initial on-site training, 2024

The programme in 2024 involved a variety of activities, including:

- *Initial on-site training:* Schoolteachers (28 primary, 18 secondary level) participated in training sessions covering research methodologies and evidence-based teaching strategies. The on-site training (see photograph) was an innovation for the 2024 programme. It was three and a half days long and it was carried out at the initial stage of the programme.
- *Online training:* This continued for both mentors and teacher-researchers throughout the six-month programme.
- *Mentoring sessions:* As in previous years, teachers were paired with a mentor (in almost all cases, this year, with a Thai Mentor Teacher) to guide them in their research projects.
- *Roundtable discussion:* Teachers and mentors shared their experiences at each stage of doing and mentoring EAR in a monthly online meeting for all programme participants.
- *Dissemination of research:* Both teachers and mentors shared their findings in sharing sessions at the end of the programme, at national and international conferences, and in webinars.



In 2024, then, the overall project had continued and gathered strength, through expansion of its innovative approach to strengthening local mentoring and thus enhancing the sustainability of EAR.



Poster presentation at the Thai TESOL International Conference, January 2025

Questionnaire-based evaluation of the 2024 programme confirmed that EAR not only supported teachers' professional growth but also generated change at the student, school, and learning ecosystem levels:

- *For teachers:* Greater confidence and new skills. Teachers reported deeper understanding of their learners, increased attentiveness to student voices, and greater willingness to adapt their teaching. As one reported: 'I used to be afraid of the word "research", but after doing EAR, I realised it is a tool that helps me teach better, not a burden.'
- *For students:* Higher engagement and motivation. Students became more confident in communicating and in asking questions, and felt that lessons were more relevant to their needs, for example: 'When teachers adapt lessons to what we really need, we feel excited and want to participate more.'
- *For schools and fellow teachers:* Collaborative learning. EAR helped transform some schools into spaces for reflection and collaborative lesson design. Several schools established research clubs and began building professional learning communities.
- *For school leaders:* Concrete support. Many school administrators incorporated EAR into teacher development plans and even used it as part of performance appraisal criteria.



Thai teachers sharing research at the International Teachers Research! Online 2025 Conference, March 2025

Editing 2023 and 2024 stories for publication

From the reports submitted by 2023 and 2024 EAR-Thailand teacher-researcher participants, 29 have been selected and edited for publication here. This collection adds to a growing ‘bank’ of stories from contexts worldwide (see Camtree, n.d.), which attests to the usefulness of EAR in helping teachers of English understand and address challenges they face. Being based on practical issues identified by teachers themselves, they also provide insights into the problems such teachers believe they are facing, which are often neglected in academic research.

The 29 chapters here, all of which describe 2023 or 2024 projects mentored in one of the ways described above, have been organised into three sections according to main area of focus: Student engagement (Part I); Pronunciation and speaking (Part II); and Reading and writing (Part III). Teachers were encouraged to decide for themselves an issue of interest or importance to them in their own classrooms, and it is worthy of note that so many focused on 1) basic issues of pronunciation and reading aloud and 2) writing, both to an extent not in evidence in projects in other countries (see Camtree, n.d.). On the other hand, issues of perceived lack of motivation or engagement on the part of students, as addressed in Part I of the book, are matters of concern to schoolteachers in many worldwide contexts (Camtree, n.d.), as for these teachers.

An important stage in the process towards writing the reports contained in this book was the online sharing event organised for the end of each year’s programme, where teachers shared posters and brief oral presentations of their work. They were then invited to submit written reports for consideration for this publication, according to a provided structure reflecting typical stages of the EAR process:

- My teaching situation
- The problem I faced and my exploratory research questions
- What I did [to explore the issue]
- What I found out and learned
- What I changed [to address the issue]
- What I found out and learned

When selecting and editing stories, we were conscious above all of the need to try to achieve a clear and reader-friendly style of presentation, so that the chapters can serve as models for engagement in EAR by future teachers. For the same reason, we encouraged writers to provide examples of the research tools used.

Reading these stories will, we hope, both enable other teachers to learn from the discoveries made, and inspire them to engage in EAR journeys of their own.



Further plans for teacher-research enhancement in Thailand

The EAR-Thailand project continues to induct new participants on a yearly basis, and envisions a sustainable future for English teacher-researchers in Thailand through a series of long-term initiatives. One of the key goals is to establish an online EAR community, tailored to the needs of teacher-researchers. This e-Community will serve as a hub of resources and support, offering access to experienced mentors who can guide teachers through their research journey. The platform will provide valuable resources such as publications, handbooks and training materials, ensuring that teachers have the tools needed to enhance their practice. Teachers will also have opportunities to share their projects and engage with peers, fostering collaboration and mutual learning. At the moment, a dedicated webpage on the [British Council Thailand website](#) continues to provide updates on the project, including webinars, publications and other relevant information.

Another important aspect of the plan is to encourage sustained teacher-research. Developing EAR skills requires ongoing effort, as conducting EAR research only once is insufficient to achieve meaningful and lasting results. To truly understand and address the complexities of teaching and learning, teachers need to be encouraged to engage in repeated EAR projects. Graduates of

the programme will be scaffolded to continue conducting research, refining their teaching methods and contributing to the overall improvement of educational practices. The online EAR community will play a crucial role in facilitating this continuity by providing ongoing support and a platform for sharing insights and innovations.

A further goal is to expand the community across all regions of Thailand in the coming years. This expansion aims to introduce more Thai teachers to the idea of engaging in classroom research which they can initiate and carry out independently of traditional academic research. With the right support, including experienced mentors, accessible resources and a strong network of like-minded educators, the programme aims to inspire more teachers to adopt the EAR approach. Over time, we hope this initiative will foster a culture of reflective practice and professional growth among teachers, ultimately enhancing teaching quality and benefiting students nationwide.

During its first three years (2022–24), the programme advanced the development of classroom research skills among Thai teachers and laid the foundation for a sustainable teacher research community. With plans to create an e-Community for continued teacher-research and professional development, the project is poised to have a long-lasting impact on Thai education, contributing to better teaching practices and, potentially, improvements in language education policy, and pre-service as well as in-service teacher education across Thailand and beyond.

Acknowledgments

We wish to acknowledge all the teachers on the EAR-Thailand 2023 and 2024 programmes, whether their stories are included in the present publication or not. They showed great commitment and resilience in completing teacher-research projects despite all the other demands on their time.

Accompanying Rachanee Dersingh and Sonthida Keyuravong in the KMUTT (King Mongkut's University of Technology Thonburi) co-ordinating team were Napak Chotswasd and Khoi Tan Minh Voung. They made great contributions to the success of the 2023 and 2024 programmes. Supporting the project from the British Council Thailand side were Ewan MacRae (Senior Academic Manager, English and School Education), Pattanavimol Israngkura (Head of English, English and School Education) and Ekkarat Subannarat (Programme Manager, English and School Education).

We would also like to acknowledge the contributions of all those involved in laying strong foundations for the project. Vanita Chopra and Gyanu Dahal, the two lead mentors from the project's first year (2022), were joined by Ana Garcia Stone, Ella Maksakova, Janak Singh Negi, Nahla Nassar and Ravinarayan Chakrakodi for 2023, and by Susan Dawson and Mariana Serra,

with Ana, Ella, Janak and Ravi also continuing as lead mentors for 2024. Under Richard Smith's overall guidance, they oversaw the development of a large number of Thai mentor trainees. In 2023, these 'MTs' were: Angvarrah Lieungnapar, Bhunnarak Bhurampawe, Chutima Swangvaree, Jariya Sairattanain, Jessie James Ramirez Daguna, Jittima Duangmanee, Khoi Tan Minh Vuong, Napak Chotswasd, Nattanun Lengluan, Pajonsak Mingsakoon, Patcharin Kunna, Rachanee Dersingh, Somruedee Khongput, and Woravut Jaroongkhongdach. In 2024, they were: Ananthita Sparrow, Anek Suping, Angvarrah Lieungnapar, Atikha Alilateh, Damkerng Mungthanya, Kanokrat Uicheng, Pajonsak Mingsakul, Parinda Jantori, Penchan Kongpet, Pheerapol Muprasert, Pimpisa Thungjan, Sakkarin Konman, Salinee Bowonrattanapat, Sasiporn Phongploenpis, Thanis Tangkitjaroenkun, Thanyasiri Sittirach, Tharich Putharak, and Waree Suansuwan.

Finally, we gratefully acknowledge support from the Equitable Education Fund (EEF) and its Director of the Office of Teacher and Educational Quality Development, Dr Udom Wongsingh for the 2023 programme. We are also grateful for support from the Regional English Language Office (RELO), US Embassy Thailand and the Bureau of Academic Affairs and Educational Standards, Office of the Basic Education Commission (OBEC), Ministry of Education, Thailand for the 2024 programme.



Note on permissions

All photographs featured here were supplied by the teachers themselves. In adherence with British Council protocols, photos lacking the necessary permissions have either been excluded or edited to cover learners' faces.

References

Burns, A. (Ed.) (2023). *Exploratory action research in Thai schools: English teachers identifying problems, taking action and assessing results*. British Council. www.teachingenglish.org.uk/sites/teacheng/files/2023-10/Pub_Exploratory_action_research_in_thai_schools.pdf

Camtree. (n.d.). Exploratory Action Research – British Council. Camtree [Cambridge Teacher Research Exchange] Digital Library. hdl.handle.net/20.500.14069/686

Dersingh, R., & Vuong, K. T. M. (2024). Empowering teachers through a training on exploratory action research. *Pasaa Parithat*, 39, 259–281. so07.tci-thajjo.org/index.php/PasaaParitat/article/view/5466/3928

Smith, R. (2020). *Mentoring teachers to research their classrooms: A practical handbook*. British Council. www.britishcouncil.in/sites/default/files/mentoring_teachers_to_research_their_classrooms_a_practical_handbook.pdf

Smith, R., & Rebolledo, P. (2018). *A handbook for exploratory action research*. British Council. www.teachingenglish.org.uk/sites/teacheng/files/pub_30510_BC%20Explore%20Actions%20Handbook%20ONLINE%20AW.pdf

Smith, R., & Rebolledo, P. (n.d. [2022]). *Exploratory action research for enhanced teaching and learning*. British Council. www.britishcouncil.org/sites/default/files/exploratory_action_research_for_enhanced_teaching_and_learning.pdf

Smith, R., Dersingh, R., & Keyuravong, S. (Eds.) (2026). *Stories of Exploratory Action Research in Thailand*. British Council. <https://doi.org/10.57884/SGCA-H363>

© British Council 2026. Shared under a Creative Commons Attribution Non-commercial 4.0 International Licence (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>).

About the editors



Richard Smith

Richard Smith is a Professor of ELT and Applied Linguistics at the University of Warwick, UK. He has advised on several teacher-research mentoring projects for the British Council, and in the course of these, he developed the Exploratory Action Research approach to teacher development and original ideas on how to mentor teacher-researchers. He also originated the 'Teachers Research!' series of conferences, and is founder and chair of the International Festival of Teacher-Research (2017, 2021, 2024) and of MenTRnet, an international network of teacher-research mentors. For more information visit www.warwick.ac.uk/richardcsmith



Rachanee Dersingh

Rachanee Dersingh holds a PhD in Linguistics and is a lecturer at the School of Liberal Arts, King Mongkut's University of Technology Thonburi. As project head, she manages the EAR-Thailand initiative, introducing schoolteachers to Exploratory Action Research. Her research focuses on language choice, language maintenance, linguistic landscape and translanguaging. She can be reached at rachanee.der@kmutt.ac.th



Sonthida Keyuravong

Sonthida Keyuravong, former associate professor at King Mongkut's University of Technology Thonburi, works as a freelance trainer and consultant in ELT. As EAR-Thailand project consultant, she has been training schoolteachers in conducting Exploratory Action Research. She can be reached at sonthidak@yahoo.com

Part I. Student engagement



Chapter 1

Helping students with vocabulary recall and engagement by using chants and songs

Prapassara Daoruang
Ban Makham School,
Chanthaburi Province



Helping Students with Vocabulary Recall


Teacher-researcher information

Name: Phattanasri Darasong
School: Ban Makham School,
Chanthaburi, Thailand.
Class: Grade 5/1
Number of students: 21


Rationale

Problem:
Students cannot recall the meaning of English word in the topic of profession.

Student's Work



Exploratory Stage



Exploratory Research Questions and tools

Q1 How have I taught my students English Vocabulary?

Key Findings: - showing the slide including some pictures, playing games, drilling, using flash cards and describing pictures.

Q2 What are the reasons why they cannot remember English vocabulary?


Key Findings: - They do not always practice English vocabulary.

Q3 What do I do when my students see a word and do not know the meaning?

Key Findings: - I have my students drill the vocabulary after they finish assignments and tell students to practice vocabulary by themselves.


Tools: Lesson Plan, Focused Group Interview, Teacher's Reflection.

Evaluation



- Writing/Speaking Task
- Questionnaire (Google Form - photo above)
95.2% agrees that "Chant and Song" can help them!
- Interviewing students
 - They said that using a chant and a song helps them can remember the vocabulary better.
 - They said that they are happy to sing. It's a fun way to learn vocabulary.

Action Stage



Use 'Chant and Song' in PPP approach

Presentation:

- Present the pictures related to the student's background knowledge and their daily life
- Organize those words to a chant or a song which are easy to memorize.

Practice:

- Students pair up to drill the vocabulary through a chant or a song.

Production:

- Teacher encourages students to use those words in the related context.

My teaching situation

My school, Ban Makham School, is a government-run institution located in the rural area of Chanthaburi, in the eastern part of Thailand. It is a moderate-sized school with about 500 kindergarten and primary students. My students seem to enjoy English lessons and are eager to learn when they play games.

However, they are not very proficient in English, the main reason being that they lack fluency due to the limited usage of English in their daily lives. Additionally, their parents or families lack the ability to instruct or teach the language at home. Consequently, students tend to perceive English as a distant skill unnecessary for their personal development.

The problem I faced and my exploratory questions

I am currently teaching Grade 5 pupils (around 11 years old) and there are 20 students in the class. The students vary in their level of English proficiency. As I have mentioned, they find English lessons fun and exciting when they are playing games, but the main problem I have is that they do not seem able to memorise or recall the meanings of English words. Sometimes, they understand the English words presented during the lesson, but later they forget.

To solve this problem, I had already been thinking about how I teach. I had been keeping an eye on myself, reflecting on how I teach and trying to figure out what works and what doesn't. Plus, I had been talking and consulting with my colleagues, asking for their opinions about my teaching style.

However, when I developed my exploratory research questions, I had to think even harder about what truly interested me and what I needed to know to find the answers. I considered different ways to learn more about my classroom and how I could better understand what was going on with my students. And here are the exploratory research questions I came up with:

<p>1</p> <p>How do I teach my students English vocabulary?</p>	<p>2</p> <p>What are the reasons why they cannot remember English vocabulary?</p>
<p>3</p> <p>What do I do when my students see a word and do not know the meaning?</p>	

With these three research questions, I could focus on three different aspects: understanding what was happening, why it happened, and how I responded to problems at the time they occurred.

What I did

I used three different tools to find answers to my questions. First, I observed my teaching, and focused on knowing more about and understanding my own behaviour by looking carefully at my lesson plans to see how I was teaching, trying to answer the following questions:

1. At what stage do I teach vocabulary?
2. What activities do I use when teaching vocabulary?
3. What kinds of practice do I use?
4. How often do I have students practise vocabulary in a Unit?

Second, to know why students were having problems memorising English words, I focused on getting students' perspectives. I randomly divided my students into four groups so that they would feel more comfortable talking in a smaller group rather than in a large group. I sat down with these four groups for focus group interviews, giving students a chance to open up and share freely what they were thinking, asking them the following questions:

1. Do you like to study English? Why? Why not?
2. What do you think is difficult when studying English?
3. How do you study English vocabulary in the classroom?
4. How do you feel when you study English vocabulary?
5. How do you practise English vocabulary by yourself?

Third, I explored how I responded when students struggled with vocabulary recall. I wanted to see if I handled things well or if there were areas where I could do better. To do this, I kept track of my thoughts and actions by writing reflective notes in relation to the questions: How do I react when students cannot tell me the meaning of a word? and Why?.

What I found out and learned

From the exploratory phase, I realised from my lesson plans that much of my vocabulary teaching occurred during the introduction stage. I would present slides with images to help students comprehend. Then, to reinforce vocabulary memorisation, I would implement various techniques such as games, drills, flashcards and describing pictures. And, if my students showed that they did not know the meaning of English words in their assignments, I had them individually recite vocabulary and provide meanings in a one-on-one setting to reinforce their learning; I also often urged students to practise by themselves, promising extra points for those who did this.

Despite my efforts, I discovered that my students still faced challenges in remembering English prepositions, in particular. Even though the words don't seem to be in themselves complex or difficult, they would often confuse, for example, 'behind' and 'between', 'in' and 'on', or 'over' and 'under'. Additionally, I realised from

interviewing them that they did not tend to practise the vocabulary on their own, so once they finished lessons, they tended to forget everything they had learned. Furthermore, they seemed to think that using English isn't necessary in their daily lives.

These issues posed significant challenges for me as a teacher, and I was unsure how to address them. Fortunately, the students also told me that they respond well to repetitive learning techniques like rhymes, chants and songs. They seemed to truly enjoy singing and studying English with musical elements, which was encouraging.

Therefore, I remained hopeful because I realised that my students had a positive attitude towards my teaching, and I believe there's always a solution.



What I changed

As mentioned above, although my students didn't really see the importance of some words, and weren't taking much time to practise them on their own, surprisingly they seemed to love learning English through music and singing. So, I thought of switching things up a bit to keep them interested. Every class period, I decided to start with a little singing session to review what they had learned. I would add songs and chants into our lessons, giving them a chance to practise regularly, right from the get-go, to reinforce what they had learned. And to show them that the words are all around us, I would refer to pictures and objects in the classroom environment. I might even bring in real-life objects to help them connect with the words. I figured that if they could remember the vocabulary better, they would be more eager to join in on all the fun activities I was planning, since I had decided to try to spice things up with some games to make learning English more fun. To check they were making progress, I would monitor how they were speaking and writing. And I would ask them to share their thoughts on using songs and chants to help them remember English words better, through a questionnaire.

I followed through with the first part of my plan and introduced chants and songs into the classroom, making the chants myself by matching English words with their meanings in Thai. To make them easy to remember, I added rhyming words and a rhythm, like a poem or a song. For example, I paired 'near' (nǎ /klai/) with a word that has a similar sound (lu /nai/) 'in', then continued with other words in the same pattern. This way, students could remember vocabulary more easily by listening to the rhythm and rhymes. Here is an example for prepositions: [vt.tiktok.com/ZSM-Mm76yK/](https://www.tiktok.com/ZSM-Mm76yK/).

One challenge I faced was that some students wondered why they still couldn't remember the meanings of the words. I explained to them that remembering chants takes practice – just chanting them once won't cut it – and I encouraged them not to be discouraged. I empathised with them, explaining that learning takes time and consistent practice is key. Later, those same students came to me excitedly, saying that the chants were really helping them recall words.



What I found out and learned

After implementing chants and songs as I had planned, I noticed a real improvement in the students' performance and perspectives. Their speaking skills improved, with every single one of them scoring above 70 per cent in an assessment using role-playing activities and oral presentation. On average, they got an impressive 86 per cent. And when it came to writing, their performance improved, too. I hadn't conducted a formal

pre-test before implementing the chants, but from my classroom observations, initially, students clearly had more difficulty remembering and using vocabulary in speaking and writing.

They now hesitated less when speaking and made fewer errors in word choice. After using chants, their performance improved a lot, as reflected in their scores and overall confidence in language use. It was such a boost for me to see them overcoming challenges like this.



For me, using chants turned out to be a great innovation because they got the students practising both on their own and with their buddies. Chants are catchy, so they participated willingly and they got used to them. I was then a bit worried that they might forget everything after a month, but guess what? They still remembered the meaning of the words. That was exactly what I was aiming for.

The big lesson for me? I think there is no one-size-fits-all approach to teaching. Every student is different – we have got to meet them where they are at, and think about what they need and what they care about. Then, you can find out what you should do.



Overall reflections

Through conducting Exploratory Action Research, I gained valuable insights into my teaching practices and the learning needs of my students. Before, whenever my students struggled with a lesson, I would try to find the best approach or the best solution without even stopping to ask my students what they thought or what they needed. I rarely took a second look at my lesson plans or thought deeply about what might be the reasons that caused the problems.

My students were not involved in their learning because they never had an opportunity to talk about how they learn. We hardly ever had real conversations, whether one-to-one or in groups, which left a big gap between us. But then, EAR came along, and it completely changed my perspective.

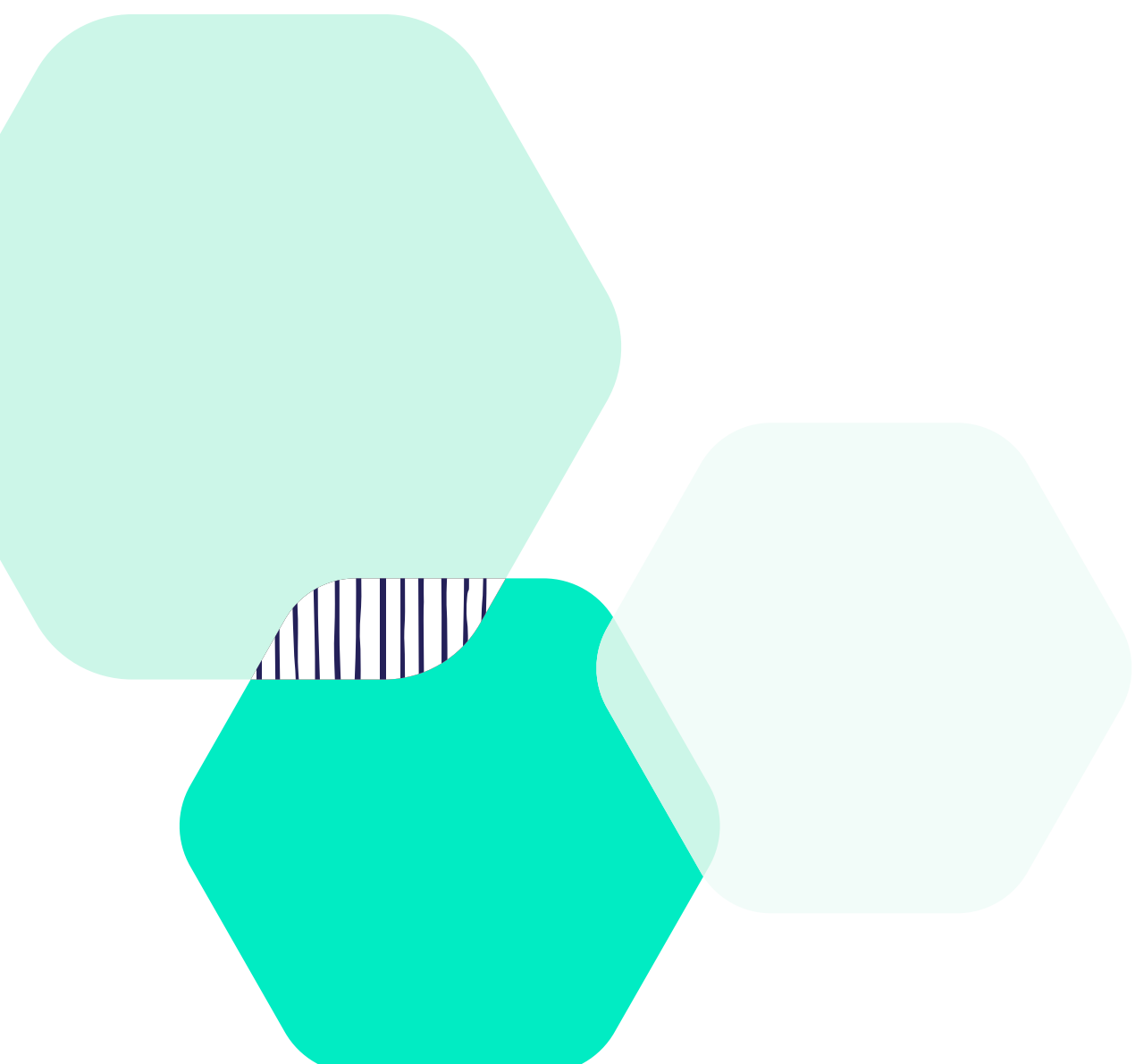
This pushed me to take a step back and really think about my lesson plans, and how they affected my students' engagement. And now,

they have been given a voice in changing the way they learn and how I teach, choosing what works best for them. It has improved the relationship between me and my students.

I also learned the importance of talking to my students without putting pressure on them. It's important to create an environment where they feel comfortable expressing their thoughts and opinions sincerely.

This whole experience has completely changed how I approach teaching and reflect on it. Now, I am much more focused on my students' needs and what they think about what's happening in the classroom.

One simple change in attitude – 'Focus more on your students' – has made all the difference for me.



Chapter 2

Reducing conflict and encouraging respect in my English classroom

Faisa Wantaha

Wat Nanglao School,
Songkhla Province



Exploratory Action Research

REDUCING CONFLICT AND ENCOURAGING RESPECT AMONG STUDENTS IN ENGLISH CLASSROOM

BY FAISA WANTAHA, THAILAND

CONTEXT & BACKGROUND

Wat Nanglao school is a small public school in a suburban area, distant from the city, with 84 students, 7 teachers, and 7 grades. It serves a community where parents are mainly engaged in agriculture and fishing.

The Major challenge is classroom management in the term of managing and resolving conflict. The conflict usually arise in 4 grade which includes 6 boys and 7 girls.

What happen in the classroom?
students fight, being not nice (verbally and physically), being too competitive to each other.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Main Question
How can I solve and manage conflicts in my classroom?

Sub Questions

1. What do students think about my classroom activities?
2. Why do students argue, act unkindly (verbally and physically), and compete too much with each other?
3. How does conflict in the classroom affect the learning process?
4. What kind of classroom activities can I conduct to increase their love, unity, understanding, and respect?

DATA COLLECTIONS

1. in-depth interviews
2. peer observation.
3. Recorded video
4. Reflective journal

CHALLENGES

1. Time management
2. Late afternoon class

FINDINGS

Causes of the problems/conflict

1. Students' individual behaviors/emotion/background
2. The activities and classroom environment are too competitive, unclear rules, negative and unhealthy environment.
3. Roles of the teacher

ACTION RESEARCH IMPLEMENTATION

Ideas of Creating Activities to reduce conflict and encourage respect

- encourage cooperative learning activities
- encourage deep listening activities
- Incorporate diverse literature

Check in-Check Out activities & The Big Show

- Happy Bar--> Asking and expressing feeling.
- Happy Pills--> using positive English adjectives to complement each other.
- The Show "Who is the most powerful," --> creating show and working together

RESULT

1. The activities that all students loved and mostly requested was Happy Pills --> They were excited and happy when they got a chance to complement each other.
2. The Show was the hardest work for students--> the major moral they have learn were harmony and respect.
3. Many students enjoy doing happy bar because they could express their feeling, also they understood others emotions and feelings much better.

** These activities conducted in classroom significantly helped reduce conflict for the number of conflict situations have declined and classroom atmosphere is more peaceful and flowing

My teaching situation

My name is Faisa Wantaha. I spent many years teaching in a secondary school before transitioning to Wat Nanglao School, a primary school where I encountered a great challenge. Wat Nanglao School is a small public school in the suburbs of Songkhla, Thailand, which is quite far from any

big city. There are 84 students and seven teachers across seven grades. Most of the students' parents work in agriculture and fishing. Half of the students are Muslim, and the remaining half are Buddhist. They live together peacefully, but occasional conflicts arise due to differences in practices and beliefs.

The problem I faced and my exploratory questions

Working at the primary school, I discovered that one of my biggest challenges is managing the classroom. The issue that worries me the most is dealing with conflicts that arise among students in my classroom. There are around 13 students in each classroom.

Although this number of students may seem small, lessons can become challenging for me because conflicts often arise among them. They argue, get into fights and say mean things to each other. Instead of being an English teacher, I am also a mediator, a judge and even a boxing referee. Of course, conflict disrupts the learning environment: it has an impact on classroom dynamics and can lead to emotional distress for students. There was conflict in every class in my school, but it seemed especially bad in Grade 4 (with pupils aged around 10 years old). I felt that this class needed special attention, so I decided to attempt to understand the situation better as the first stage in an Exploratory Action Research project.

There were 13 students in my Grade 4 class: 6 boys and 7 girls. The contents of the English subject for this class cover the basic skills of listening, reading and speaking. My lesson plans are mainly based on a school English curriculum, which includes parts of the body, auxiliary verbs, adjectives, weather and seasons, present continuous, and so on. I normally divide my lesson plan into three parts: Introduction, Action/Presentation, and Conclusion. I noticed that conflict and fights could happen unexpectedly at every stage of teaching, but especially during particularly 'active' stages. When it came to

activities like games, conversation practice, group work and, especially, competitive activities, students were too hungry for victory and the conflict situations arose. Students tried very hard to win the games but when they lost, they got very disappointed and could not accept it.

In those situations, I tried to teach them how to congratulate and feel happy for others, as well as how to be a gracious winner. I thought they got the point; however, the same situation continued to arise.

Doing Exploratory Action Research was my new hope to overcome this challenge. With the overarching aim of solving or at least managing conflict in my English classroom, I came up with five research questions:

RQ1: What are students' perceptions of my English classes?	RQ2: Why do students fight, not behave nicely (verbally and physically), and become too competitive with each other?
RQ3: How do conflicts in the classroom affect the lesson process?	RQ4: Do my classroom activities (e.g. games, group work, etc.) increase conflict?
RQ5: What kind of classroom activities can I use to increase students' love, unity and understanding?	

Exploring the issue

To explore this issue, I used a variety of tools to gain accurate and useful data:

1. Individual in-depth interviews with all 13 students and with three colleagues: a Maths teacher, a PE teacher and a Grade 4 classroom teacher (see Appendices for interview questions)
2. Peer observation: inviting my colleagues to observe and give me suggestions about: the classroom environment; students' engagement and behaviour; my teaching approach; my use of materials and resources; and the overall dynamic (three of my colleagues observed one lesson from these perspectives)

3. Video recording of lessons to aid in personal reflection
4. My own reflective journal: I wrote in this at least once a week and after significant lessons or events. I normally wrote about: how the lesson went, students' responses and progress and some specific moments; challenges; and self-evaluation of whether my teaching was effective or not, along with questions for myself, and points to improve.
5. Online search for teaching ideas.

In fact, I devoted three months to the process of collecting data to be sure that I had enough information to act on.

What I found and learned

What I found from interviews, observations and personal reflections in answer to my research questions was as follows:

RQ1: What are students' perceptions of my English classes?

Most of the students had positive attitudes toward my English classes, three students were ambivalent, and just one reported that he did not like the English class because he did not like learning languages.

RQ2: Why do students fight, not behave nicely (verbally and physically), and become too competitive with each other?

This question was quite complicated because it was related to students' feelings and emotions. However, three major reasons for conflict emerged:

Unhealthy classroom atmosphere

Students felt the classroom environment was unhealthy, involving verbal violence, physical violence and hate. All of them said they faced verbal threats, such as rude language, teasing about their parents' names, being criticised about their bodies, and being insulted about their academic performance. And they believed that if they were threatened, they should fight back.

Individual preference/bias

Students are different and they have their own reasons and experiences which cause them to like or dislike others. Many students did not feel connected to or respected by classmates. They neither felt love nor harmony in the classroom. Also, there were at least three students named as conflict-starters.

Family background

From the individual interviews with my colleagues (the classroom teacher, the Maths teacher and the PE teacher), they all agreed on one thing – one of the reasons for the conflict in this class was the students' family backgrounds. Many of these students do not live with their own parents, and they are struggling with socio-economic issues. Furthermore, one of them frequently suffers from domestic violence, affecting their behaviour.

RQ3: How do conflicts in the classroom affect the lesson process?

All of the students agreed that when it came to fighting or quarrelling in classroom, this was unenjoyable and stressful. Conflict in the classroom was strongly affecting the learning and teaching process.

RQ 4: Do my classroom activities increase conflict?

The answer was a resounding 'YES'. Students mentioned that sometimes classroom activities led to conflict, especially within group work. One more thing that I also had to accept was that I, the teacher, was a cause of conflict, too. As my students explained, conflicts happened more frequently in English class compared to other classes because I was very kind and sometimes did not know how to handle the situations properly.

To sum up, the reported causes of conflict were students' individual behaviour, emotions and background, certain activities, and an unhealthy classroom environment that was too competitive with unclear rules.

RQ5: What kind of classroom activities can I use to increase students' love, unity and understanding?

I gained some ideas from colleagues. They encouraged me and suggested some activities and ways to manage the classroom from their own experiences, for example engaging in different kinds of whole-class work in order to reduce tension for some students who really wanted to win team competitions and get a high score. I also did some online research and found useful information from other studies relevant to my case, which I incorporated into a plan for change.

Plan for change

Based on what I had found, I realised that there were three components or principles I needed to focus on, involving students' behaviour and mindset, classroom activities and the teacher's roles.

Students' behaviour

I would attempt to promote a 'growth mindset', with a positive attitude towards challenges and a view of failure as opportunities for learning. I would also encourage them to celebrate others' achievements.

Activities

I needed to engage in activities for encouraging empathy and understanding, such as role play, attempting to help students consider situations from different viewpoints.

Teacher's roles

I needed to behave as a better mediator when conflicts arose, set clearer expectations, and model positive behaviour, demonstrating respectful and constructive ways of handling disagreements.

With these ideas of encouraging co-operative learning and setting better expectations in mind, I came up with two 'check-in' and 'check-out' activities and one big project for my students.

What I did

For the action research stage, I invented and engaged in the following activities (see also the [video I made about these activities](#)). As I, the teacher, had been one of the causes of classroom conflict, I tried very hard to set out and manage every step in each of these activities clearly, especially providing rules and mediating any arguments during each activity. I tried really hard to genuinely and deeply listen to students.

Happy Bars activity

Happy Bars is an activity to check how students are feeling, allowing them to express themselves. I usually used it as a warm-up activity to check pupils' readiness for the lesson, and for them to feel others' feelings and to raise the level of empathy in the classroom. I provided three 'feelings tubes' on the front desk and gave students an orange ball each. Students put their ball into the tube that best described their feeling at that moment.

This activity aimed to explore students' emotions, feelings and readiness to study. This also encouraged them to empathise with others. I initially used this activity together with the English lesson 'Emotions and Feelings', with these learning objectives:

- Students are able to express their emotions and feelings by using the following vocabulary: 'happy', 'sad', 'not bad', 'sleepy', 'bored', 'excited', etc. and they are able to construct sentences, for example: 'I am happy.' 'I am excited today.'
- Students are able to ask and answer questions on the topic of emotions.
- Students are able to memorise the vocabulary of emotions and feelings.





Happy Pills activity

I normally used Happy Pills as a wrap-up activity, and sometimes as a warm up. This activity involves students complimenting their friends by writing positive adjectives like: 'beautiful', 'smart', 'kind', 'generous', 'open-minded', 'gorgeous', 'cute', 'honest', and so on, on small slips of paper for one another. I originally introduced this activity in the English lesson 'Adjectives', with the following learning objectives:

- Students are able to compliment their friends and themselves using positive adjectives.
- Students are able to construct sentences using adjectives and the verb 'to be'.

- Students are able to memorise the meaning of the vocabulary.

After the initial lesson, I consistently used the activity around twice a week for three months, so students got used to it as part of the normal classroom process. Receiving a 'happy pill' (a slip of paper with a positive adjective on it) made them happy, like getting candy, and I got fabulous feedback on this activity from students and my colleagues.

The Big Show

The Big Show was a role-play project that allowed students to create a drama performance from the following story, which I wrote for them:

Who is The Most Powerful? by Faisa Wantaha

In a big green forest, three groups of animals lived. The tigers, with their ferocious strength, the eagles, with their sharp eyes and ability to soar high, and the monkeys, known for their cleverness and agility. Each group believed they were the most powerful creatures in the forest, and because of this, they often quarreled and avoided each other.

One sunny morning, a tiger named Mufaza growled at the edge of the forest clearing. "Everyone knows we tigers are the strongest! No one dares challenge us." Abbas, another tiger, agreed:

"We are the strongest! Our claws and teeth can tear anything apart."

"Ha ha ha!" laughed Elli, an eagle perched on a tall tree. "Your strength is nothing without sight. We eagles see everything from above. That makes us the most powerful."

"Yeahhh ! Strength is nothing. We fly high, see everything, and strike fast. We are the most powerful." said Ellena, another eagle.

Chattering from a nearby branch, Max the monkey swung down to eye level. "Both of you are wrong! Without brains, what use are strength or sight? We monkeys can outsmart any of you." The animals argued loudly, their voices echoing through the forest. Days turned into weeks, and their disagreements grew worse. They refused to share the watering holes, argued over fruit trees, and avoided crossing paths.

One day, something strange happened. A group of human hunters entered the forest. They had traps, nets, and loud weapons. The animals were afraid but didn't know what to do.

The monkeys huddled in the trees. "What should we do? They will catch us!"

The eagles flew nervously above. "They have traps! Even flying may not save us."

Mufaza growled. "Humans! They threaten our home. We must drive them out."

Elli swooped down from the treetops. "Your strength alone won't help, Mufaza. They have weapons."

Max, swinging nervously between branches, added, "And their traps are too clever for just one group to handle."

The animals looked at one another. For the first time, they realized their strengths alone wouldn't be enough.

"What if we work together?" Max suggested.

"Work together?" Abbas raised an eyebrow.

"Yes," Ellie said, her sharp eyes scanning the hunters.

"If we combine our strengths, we might have a chance."

Reluctantly, the groups agreed. They came up with a plan.

The monkeys used their cleverness to set traps and confuse the hunters. The eagles flew high, keeping watch and warning everyone where the hunters were. The tigers used their strength and roars to scare the hunters and protect the traps.

The hunters became frightened. "This forest is too dangerous!" one said. "Let's leave!" another shouted.

Soon, the hunters ran away, leaving the forest safe again. The tigers, eagles, and monkeys gathered under a big tree.

The tiger leader Mufaza said, "We were wrong to think only our group was the best."

The eagle leader nodded. "Yes, we were stronger when we worked together."

The monkey chief smiled. "Unity made us powerful. From now on, let's live in peace."

All the animals cheered, "Together, we are the most powerful!"

From that day, the forest was peaceful. The tigers, eagles, and monkeys learned to listen to each other and work as a team. They understood that unity is the greatest strength of all.

Moral : Unity is strength. By listening to and helping each other, we can overcome any challenge.

The End

I got the idea of having a show from my colleague. I started by telling the students the whole story and letting them discuss the moral of the story, also asking them what they had learned and how they could adapt this to our classroom. I had written the story deliberately for them to realise the importance of an inclusive society and living harmoniously. The objectives of the project were:

- Students are able to understand the storyline.
- Students are able to recognise the morals of the story.
- Students are able to work in groups to give and share ideas.

Students worked together during every subsequent stage of the show while I facilitated and assisted them. There were four stages for the students to complete:

1. Planning and brainstorming
2. Preparing and practising
3. Performing
4. Checking and reflecting

In total, it took one month to complete these stages for The Big Show, and on performance day, we invited teachers and other students to watch.





What I found

Overall, these classroom activities and my clearer expectations seemed to contribute to a marked reduction in conflict situations, resulting in a more peaceful and focused classroom atmosphere. I got feedback from repeated classroom observation by my colleagues and all of them noticed the progress in the classroom, confirming my perceptions. After finishing the implementation of the action plan, I also interviewed all my students individually again, asking for their feedback about what they had liked and disliked, what they had learned, and what they now thought about conflict in the classroom. These interviews showed me that they had learned and now agreed that fighting, bullying and so on were not good things to do, and had learned to appreciate their classmates better.

The activity that all loved and requested repeats of the most was Happy Pills. They had seemed excited and happy when they got a chance to compliment each other and they felt proud when they were complimented. The Big Show was the hardest work for the students, but they had learned important moral lessons from working on this – of harmony and respect. Many students enjoyed Happy Bars, too, because they could express their feelings and it had helped them understand others' emotions and feelings much better.

Overall reflections

Exploratory Action Research has offered me a variety of insights and lessons. First, it helped me better understand my students' needs, strengths and weaknesses, leading to more tailored instruction. Second, it enabled me to try out different teaching strategies to discover what works best for my students. Moreover, it encouraged my professional growth.

—

This learning journey has empowered me to address challenges head-on, boosting my confidence and effectiveness.

—

During the research, I used many techniques, involving all of my skills and a lot of effort. I got a lot of advice and support from my mentor, my colleagues and my students. I found that my students and I became more connected and closer to each other. They were so comfortable talking to me on the day of our last interviews. They told me that this semester had been fun because they had got to do and learn so many things. They were feeling happier in my English classroom and with their friends. What they told me totally made my day and I realised that my hard work had paid off. The fruit of labour is sweet!

Appendix 1: Exploratory interview questions for students

RQ1: What are students' perceptions of my English classes?

- What do you think about English class? Do you like the English class? Why?
- What do you like and dislike about the English class?
- What kinds of activities or lesson do you love in the English class?
- What kinds of activities or lesson do you dislike in the English class?
- Can you rate your satisfaction toward the English class?

RQ2: Why do students fight, not behave nicely (verbally and physically), and become too competitive with each other?

- Do you like group work activities? Why?
- Do you prefer group work or working alone? Why?
- Who do you love to work with? And who do you dislike working with?
- How often do you argue with your friends? Why?
- Have you ever verbally fought with your friend? How?
- Have you ever physically fought with your friend? How?
- Why do you think you and your friends fight?

RQ3: How do conflicts in the classroom affect the lesson process?

- Why do you fight during classroom activities?
- How do you feel when you argue with your friends? Why?

RQ4. Do my classroom activities (e.g. games, group work) increase conflict?

- What kinds of activities do you think cause a lot of conflict? How?
- Do you feel some bias from the teacher in the classroom? How?

Appendix 2: Exploratory interview questions for colleagues

RQ1: What are students' perceptions of your classroom activities?

- Do they like or dislike your class? How do you know that?

RQ2: Why do students fight, not behave nicely (verbally and physically), and become too competitive with each other?

- Do students fight in your class? How? Why? How often?
- What topics most often cause conflict in your classroom?
- When do conflict situations happen?

RQ3: How do conflicts in the classroom affect the lesson process?

- How do you deal with it when the students get into fights?

RQ4: Do your classroom activities (e.g. games, group work) increase conflict?

- What kinds of activities do you think cause a lot of conflict? How?
- Do you think you have any bias toward students? How?

RQ5: What kind of classroom activities can I use to increase students' love, unity and understanding?

- What kind of activities do you use in the classroom?
- What kind of activities do you use in the classroom to reduce conflict?

Chapter 3

How I developed my teaching to promote my students' engagement in English classes

Wilai Phanchanokkul
Ban Dongsansuk School,
Udon Thani Province





My teaching situation

I have been teaching English for over 23 years and currently teach English to students in Grades 7 to 9 (12–15 years old) at Ban Dongsansuk School, a school in a rural area of Udon Thani, in the northeast of Thailand. I conducted the research with 19 students in Grade 7 (12–13 years old). These students have been studying English with me since Grade 4 (10 years old).



The problem I faced and my exploratory questions

The problem I faced was that my students seemed disengaged and completely unmotivated in English classes.

They struggled with vocabulary, which affected their reading and speaking abilities. Instead of studying, they would chat on their phones, play games, talk, and, moreover, interrupt me while I was teaching. I wanted to know why I was facing this situation, so I developed the following four exploratory research questions:

1 What makes me think my students don't engage in my class?	2 What activities are my students interested in?
3 How do I teach English in my class?	4 What do my students do while I have them do activities in English class?



What I did

To answer the exploratory research questions, I used the following activities: writing a reflective journal to reflect on my impressions after teaching; watching a video recording I made to analyse my teaching; asking a colleague to observe my teaching; and conducting interviews to learn more from the students.

For the self-reflective journal, I used the following prompt questions to focus my attention:

1. What did I do? How?
2. What went well? How?
3. What did not go well? Why?
4. What could I have done better? How?
5. Did any students give me feedback after the lesson?

And for the interviews I carried out with 19 students, I prepared the following questions:

1. Do you like to study English? Why or why not?
2. What kind of activities do you like to do in studying English? Please give some examples and give the reasons why you like them.
3. What kind of activities don't you like to do in studying English? Please give some examples and give the reasons why you don't like them.
4. What are your preferred activities in English class?
5. If you could change the activities your teacher wants you to do in English lesson, what would you change?

What I found out and learned

What I found from the data collection process in answer to my research questions was as follows:

1. *What makes me think my students don't engage in my class?* According to my reflective notes, some students seemed to struggle to stay focused during class, often engaging in unrelated activities instead of paying attention to the lesson. Additionally, some students seemed to find writing tasks uninteresting and lacked motivation to learn new vocabulary. In online learning settings, certain students turned away from the camera and engaged in side conversations, reducing their participation and disrupting the learning environment.
2. *What activities are my students interested in?* The survey results showed that 40 per cent of learners enjoyed studying English in class, while 20 per cent had mixed feelings, and another 20 per cent found the lessons too difficult. Online activities were popular, with 40 per cent loving to surf the internet and 20 per cent having a preference for online games. Group work, spelling and workbook exercises were also favoured by some. Overall, 60 per cent enjoyed all class activities, though 20 per cent disliked making video clips due to shyness or lack of a phone, while another 20 per cent were dissatisfied with singing activities. Preferences varied, with 27 per cent favouring online games, 20 per cent enjoying video clips, and 20 per cent liking Q and A activities. Most learners (87 per cent) did not suggest changes, although 13 per cent wanted to modify singing activities.
3. *How do I teach English in my class?* The observed lesson began with me displaying a picture and information on the screen to introduce the topic. Following this, I presented new vocabulary words on the screen while students wrote them in their notebooks, ensuring they had a written record for reference. To reinforce pronunciation, I sounded out each new word and encouraged students to repeat them. Afterwards, the class engaged in a matching activity, where students paired vocabulary words with their corresponding meanings or related information, working together as a group to reinforce their understanding. Finally, students completed exercises, which involved additional matching tasks, further solidifying their grasp of the new vocabulary through practice.
4. *What do my students do while I have them do activities in English class?* Students worked in groups to match vocabulary with personal information. They learned new words by writing them down and sounding them out to the class. However, some students did not pay good attention and seemed to disturb others.



What I planned to change

The changes I planned were aimed at promoting my students' engagement as well as improving language acquisition. I found that they would need more support with language acquisition in the areas of reading, pronunciation and learning new words with meaningful activities. I would therefore try to guide them to read word by word with correct pronunciation through phonics, and I would introduce more interactive activities, including group work, pair work and individual tasks, to reinforce vocabulary and reading skills.

I planned two main areas of change in my teaching. The first was improving my lesson plans by following the 3Ps framework – Presentation, Practice, and Production – with a more practical teaching procedure than before.

- *Presentation:* I would begin with a word association game where students connect words related to a given theme, using tools like [Wordwall](#).
- *Practice:* I would introduce new vocabulary in context through sentences or short paragraphs and use visual aids to illustrate meanings.

- *Production:* I would assign writing tasks, starting with short and simple exercises such as writing a short paragraph. Later, students would progress to more complex tasks like essays, stories or journal entries incorporating the new vocabulary.

I also needed to deal with some specific students who were not engaging in English classes. So, the second area of change was in classroom management, where I recognised the need to ensure that all students participated actively. I decided to focus on three key improvements: using a variety of attention grabbers to start activities, arranging seating to facilitate group work, and establishing clear classroom rules. Overall, these innovations marked a shift from the way I had taught in the past to a more interactive approach that fostered both engagement and language development in my classroom.

To evaluate the impact of the changes I intended, I designed two evaluation tools: peer observation of two lessons by a colleague, and a focus group discussion with 10 of the 19 students, representing a range of abilities. The observation framework and interview questions to be used during this stage (see Appendices) were different from the ones used in the exploratory stage because they were targeted at seeing if the changes had made any impact.





What I did

I engaged in three weeks' of teaching using the new style of lesson plan (twice weekly) and changed classroom management procedures. I added more interactive activities in the warm up, using Wordwall to engage students in online interactive practice, and having them study with 'My Daily Routine', an exercise book I created myself, for practice anytime and anywhere online.

At the Practice stage they also engaged in a variety of structured exercises to reinforce their understanding, retention and application of the words, for example 'Fill in the blanks', 'Match the picture with the sentence', 'Write the words in the correct order', or 'Read the passage and answer the questions'. Moreover, for the Production stage, they would try to use new words in context, for example in basic writing about their own experience.

I also introduced a variety of class management techniques, as planned, to promote attentiveness and students' engagement in a structured yet dynamic manner. For example, to effectively capture students' attention and transition them into a focused learning state, I used various call-and-response strategies, including the following:

Teacher: '1-2-3, eyes on me!'
Students: '1-2, eyes on you!'

Teacher: 'Eyes up!'
Students: 'Ears open!'

Teacher: 'Hocus pocus, everybody focus!'
Students: 'Focus!'

We also collaboratively established seven class rules, and every day we began the class by reciting these to reinforce positive behaviour and maintain a supportive classroom environment:

1. Follow directions quickly.
2. Raise your hand to speak.
3. Raise your hand to leave your seat.
4. Make smart choices.
5. Work hard, play hard.
6. Never interrupt the teacher while teaching.
7. Always keep our learning community happy.

What I found out and learned

According to both peer observation and focus group discussions, the main observable effect from the actions implemented was that the students did engage in English classes more actively. The changes had a noticeable impact, in fact. The students said they were better able to learn new vocabulary and produce basic writing using words in context, while my colleague noted an increased confidence in vocabulary use, greater student engagement and fewer grammar errors. Students demonstrated better sentence construction, active participation in discussions, and more structured responses incorporating new vocabulary and grammar. According to students, the variety of starter activities and attention-grabbers had effectively engaged them, while the classroom rules had fostered a greater sense of commitment and responsibility.

I found that, as a teacher, I had learned from my students – not only about their attitudes and preferences during the exploratory stage but also about digital tools, because they often have extensive knowledge gained from social media. As they were also learning more from one another, just as I was learning more from them, this made for a much more supportive environment in English classes. My experience of innovating with digital tools also deepened my understanding of digital platforms and strengthened my ability to integrate technology into my teaching effectively.

Overall reflections

As I reflect on my overall experience with Exploratory Action Research (EAR), I find myself more motivated now to solve problems in my English classes. This journey reshaped my perspective and deepened my understanding and my passion for teaching.

I realised I have to listen to my students more and I noticed that, when they trust me, they are more likely to act on my suggestions.

My students' feedback really had an impact, highlighting areas where improvement was needed, as well as where my teaching was effective. My students' preferences guided my choice of engagement strategies, such as introducing more engaging starter activities and better classroom management.

Exploratory Action Research guided my teaching toward evidence-based practices – I have learned to solve problems in my own context step by step, by collecting and analysing data, implementing new actions, and reflecting at the end of each stage. I now appreciate better the need to be flexible and adapt lessons based on students' feedback and challenges.

As a teacher, I intend to continue Exploratory Action Research in the future because it promotes reflective teaching and makes learning meaningful. Each year, different students will have different difficulties in English. In conclusion, my research pathway has not only enriched my teaching but also transformed my perspective on how to lead students to success into the future.



Appendix 1: Peer observation form (action stage)

The objective of the peer observation is to assess the impact of the actions implemented in teaching vocabulary and classroom management to help improve engagement in my classes.

Stage	Questions	What happened?
<p>Lead-in Begin with a word association game where students connect words related to a given theme such as Wordwall.</p>	<p>How did the students engage during the Wordwall game? Could the students read aloud words and express the meanings? What attention-grabbers did the teacher use to get the students' attention? How did they react?</p>	
<p>Presentation Present new words in context, using sentences or short paragraphs and use visual aids to illustrate meanings.</p>	<p>How did the teacher instruct students while presenting vocabulary? Did examples, visuals, and real-life contexts help students to understand the meaning and usage of new words? How?</p>	
<p>Practice Provide interactive worksheets or activities that require students to fill in blanks, match words, or create sentences using the new vocabulary.</p>	<p>How engaged were students during the interactive worksheets or activities? Please indicate specific examples. How well did the teacher manage this stage? Please indicate specific examples. How did the teacher assess the students' understanding?</p>	
<p>Production Assign tasks starting with a simple task such as reading and answering, or writing a short paragraph. Later, have them try to write essays using the new words.</p>	<p>How did the students acquire and use new vocabulary in context? Could the students complete the task using the words they learned? How?</p>	

Appendix 2: Focus group interview questions (action stage)

The focus group discussion aims to collect information about the teacher and your behaviour when you're in English classes.

1. What starter activity did you find most effective to engage you to participate in vocabulary lessons? Why? (online videos on YouTube, online interactive activities such as Wordwall, liveworksheets and worksheets, etc.)
2. Which one of these activities (online videos on YouTube, online interactive activities such as Wordwall, liveworksheets and worksheets) was most useful to help you comprehend the vocabulary being taught? Why?
3. What support did the teacher provide to help you recognise the words?
4. Did you get enough support from the teacher to learn language structures, and acquire and use new vocabulary in context?
5. Did you work alone or with a partner to learn vocabulary? In what way?
6. Do you think you had improvements in your understanding and learning of vocabulary? In what way, if so?
7. How helpful are attention-grabbers to your learning in English classes?
8. Do you like how the teacher managed the class? Why?/Why not?
9. Do you think that the teacher helped you to improve your English? How?



Chapter 4

Finding out what my students think about my teaching

Ananthita Sparrow

Uthaiwitthayakhom School,
Uthai Thani Province



HOW EFFECTIVE PROJECT BASED LANGUAGE LEARNING AND ACTIVE LEARNING APPROACH IN MY LANGUAGE CLASS

Context/Background
 17 Thai students of grade II from Japanese language class (Uthaiwitthayakhom School, THAILAND)

1. Exploration

From a success story
Research Questions
 1. What do I think about Project Based Language Learning and Active Learning Approach?
Goal/Teacher's intention/researcher's
 2. What do I do in my class when I apply PBL & Active Learning Approach to teach my students?
Tool/Teacher's reflective journal and friend observation class
 3. What do I think the students think of my class?
Tool/Analysis on open-ended questionnaire
 4. What do my students think when I teach them by using PBL & Active Learning Approach?
Tool/Analysis on open-ended questionnaire
 5. What my students achieve most in PBL & Active Learning Approach teaching?
Tool/Analysis on open-ended questionnaire



Ms. Ananthita Sparrow
THAILAND



3. Implementation

5. Know Teaching Strategy



2. Pre-Action Analysis

Teacher's perception
 PBL is an effective teaching tool for developing and enhancing students' learning skills.
 Promoted students' collaboration and creativity.

Key Findings
 Students' perception
 Students' perception on the quality of learning and teaching process was positive. They were motivated and participated actively in the learning process.

Key Action
 A new teaching strategy (Steps teaching strategy)

Project based language learning and active learning approach activities



4. Post-Action Analysis

WHAT DO MY STUDENTS THINK ABOUT THE EFFECTIVENESS OF PBL AND ACTIVE LEARNING APPROACH IN MY CLASS?



98% of students participated with better quality of works

EXPLORATORY ACTION RESEARCH Link to students projects

My teaching situation

As a Japanese and English teacher in an upper secondary school in a rural province of Thailand, I have always tried to provide good lessons for my students as much as I can, to the same standard as in schools in big cities. In my teaching, I adopt an active Project Based Language Learning (PBL) approach by giving pupils topics to study and letting them choose project activities. For example, with 17 Year 2 students (around 17 years old), who I carried out this research with, for a unit about the environment, they could choose to do a project about rivers, markets, temples or water in Uthai Thani Province. Students formed groups and chose places to go to carry out interviews with local people by themselves. Then they presented their results to the class.



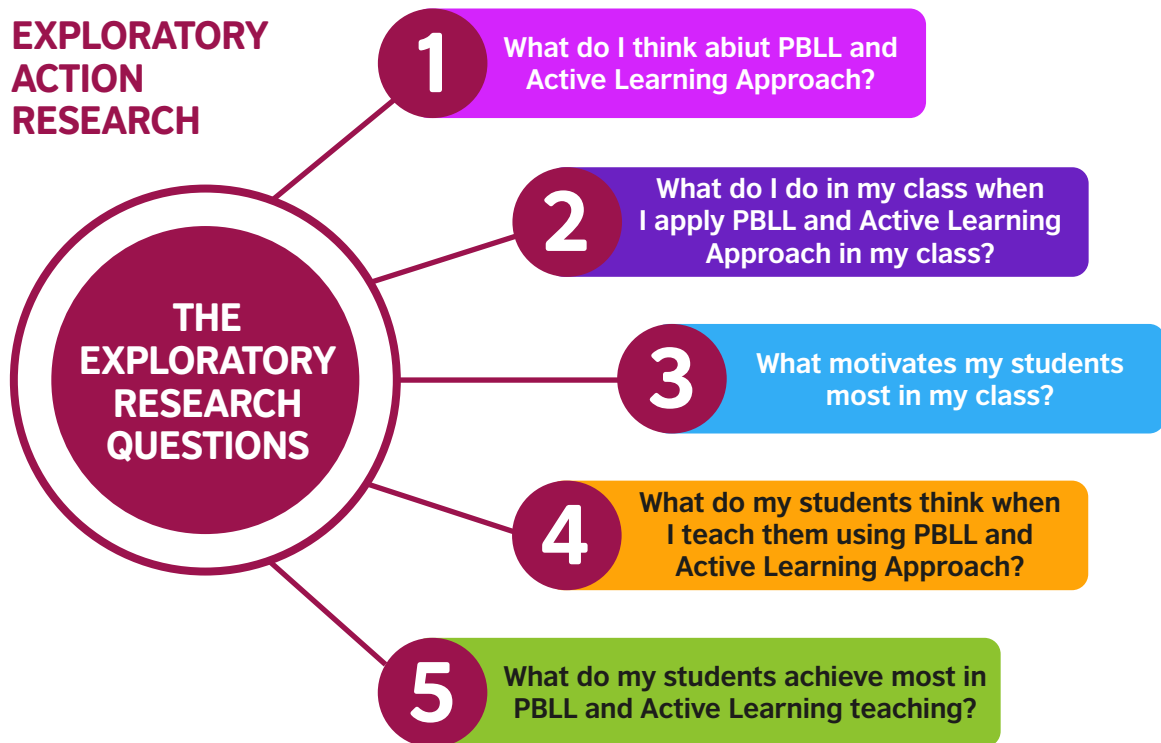
Overall, in class, I attempt to engage students in active learning, for example by engaging them in role playing and brainstorming, and moving my students about to work with different partners in pair or group work.

My starting point and my exploratory questions

It seems to me that my project-based and active learning approach motivates and helps my students to improve their language ability. However, I realised that I should ask my students what they think about it, to understand better what is good about it and to see if I could make any improvements.

So, rather than starting from a problem, this study begins from what I thought was a success story.

The activities I engaged students in seemed to go well, and most of my students appeared to enjoy them. However, in some activities a few students seemed quiet and didn't participate much. I thought they were just 'quiet students' but when I used different kinds of activities, those students enjoyed them and participated more. So I decided to find out what they, in particular, thought about my teaching approach, and what was effective for them. I decided to explore the following research questions:



What I did to explore

Research questions 1 and 2 were mainly directed towards myself, while questions 3, 4 and 5 were answerable by asking the students in my classes. I engaged in reflective writing for RQ1 (Research question 1), while for RQ2, I wrote notes on lessons after I'd taught them, according to the following prompts:

1. How did I apply PBL and active learning approaches in my class?
2. What worked well with my students?
3. What didn't work so well with my students?
4. What did I learn from teaching with PBL and active learning approaches?

I also asked a colleague to observe me and comment on students' participation and learning when I was engaging students in active learning. And, for RQ3, I gave students the following prompts for writing notes on my lessons:

1. What motivates you most in this class?
2. Why do you think those topics motivate you most, and why?
3. What are your suggestions for activities that would motivate you to participate more in class?

Finally, I also prepared a general questionnaire with open-ended questions about students' perceptions for RQs 4 and 5.



What I discovered

By analysing the data, I found the following answers to my five questions:

Firstly, in relation to RQ1, I had asked myself two basic questions:

- Why have I chosen PBL and active learning as approaches?
- Why do I think these approaches will help improve my students' learning and develop desirable characteristics?

I identified that I value PBL and active learning primarily because they encourage my students' learning progress and promote creativity and problem solving. I think my students feel more relaxed and participate more when they do the activities in pairs or groups and when they can feel free to move about in the classroom to talk and share ideas with their friends. Their speaking ability is certainly better than before. Since adopting these teaching approaches, my students' assignments are of better quality and more creative than before, and they co-operate well during group work.

Regarding what I actually do in my classes when I apply PBL and active learning to teach my students (RQ2), I found from my colleague's and my own observations that I give a variety of activities and assignments, start teaching with easy steps and with new vocabulary, make sure students can pronounce and understand the meaning and only then start teaching grammar and how to use it in conversation. I also give them enough time to practise in groups, pairs and individually to make sure they all understand the lesson before I start giving them projects or ask them to do activities. Finally, I encourage my students to feel free to ask questions and share their ideas with me. I realised that I can follow this teaching style because I have 17 students in my Japanese class, for 55 minutes each period, five days a week, and I teach the same group of students for three academic years.

My students said that the activities were what motivated them most in my classes (RQ3). I also found out, though, that most of them disliked two things I do when teaching them – namely, nominating them to answer (rather than asking for volunteers to answer) when they hadn't had enough time to review the lesson; and, secondly, only giving a few seconds' wait time to answer when they were called upon by name in this way. Something else that surprised me, though, was that a few students said they loved the way I nominate particular students to answer as it makes them feel excited and motivated to participate.

I'd wanted to understand why some students were quiet in class. I had thought that they didn't understand the lesson well or were perhaps shy in a general way. What I discovered, though, was that some students do understand the lesson well but don't like activities that take too long (are carried over longer than one period), while some students just don't like to speak in public and so keep quiet, and dislike it when I choose them to be the representative of their group to speak in front of the class.

With regard to RQ4, most students thought PBL and active learning helped them build relationships among friends and between themselves and the teacher. Also, they felt that they could improve their language skills and creativity. Most students nowadays seem to enjoy making a video and recording themselves, but it surprised me that this is not true of all of them. Some really don't like speaking in public or showing their faces on video or in photos. Another thing that emerged from the questionnaire findings was that students felt I taught too fast before they started doing their projects.

And, finally, my students thought that what they gained most (RQ5) was improved language proficiency, especially speaking skills, and, secondly, creativity.

This study helped me understand better what I myself thought was effective about the teaching approach. I also confirmed that students do enjoy and feel they benefit from the activities that I choose for them, but that not all students necessarily agree. Any particular activity will not suit all students and as a teacher I should give my students a choice about how to present their work or projects.



What I changed

Based on the findings, I decided to modify my teaching style and approach to some extent, though not in all areas.

The main change I made was to consult with students more. I continued to ask students' opinions about how they wanted to learn and study in my classes, and what kinds of activity or project they would want to do if I did not choose for them or tell them what to do. So, we collaborated more in planning, even planning how to evaluate their work, assignments and presentations together. Some of the students had said they didn't like the way of presenting their projects or assignments that I chose for them, making them feel under pressure, so I let my students choose the way they felt comfortable with for sharing their work, for example through video, mind maps, writing or presenting to the class. Students who do not like to show their faces in videos or photos were allowed to use a mask when using these media. Before, it was only me who evaluated and gave them scores. Now, students also evaluated their friends' work, assignments and projects. I also encouraged them to volunteer opinions and advice regarding what they thought about their friends' work.

In relation to the relatively quiet students, I spent a bit more time with them, talking to them about the lessons, activities, assignments or projects, or even about their day in school or anything they were concerned about, one by one for about 5–10 minutes each time. They opened up more if they talked to me alone rather than in front of their

friends in the class. I also wrote longer, more detailed comments about what they should improve when I checked their work and gave them a bit more flexibility with time to finish their class work or assignments.

On the other hand, I decided to still nominate students in class even though my students told me they didn't like it, because I want to train them to be able to control themselves when they have to face situations of needing to think on the spot like this in the future, for example in university entrance or job interviews. I explained this reason to them and my students understood – later, they also got better at responding.

From the exploration I had found out that some of them didn't understand the lesson because I taught too fast and didn't provide enough time for practice. Sometimes, my students had felt that I was pushing them too much, putting them under pressure. I therefore created an activity timeline with my students so we all knew when each activity was going to start and finish. I also decided to give my students more time to practise before starting their projects.

Consistent with my new practice, I discussed with my students what project they wanted to do for their final examination. We decided to focus on being a tour guide to recommend tourist attractions in Uthai Thani province. The project was 'One day trip with a Japanese friend'. I gave students enough time to practise before they started their project. My students chose to present this project with a video clip. During the discussion they participated well, shared ideas and enjoyed it.

I planned to evaluate the changes in my practice by gathering the perspectives of the students themselves in addition to my own reflections, using an anonymous questionnaire with open-ended questions.

What I learned

My main finding from the 'action' stage was that students participate in class and enjoy lessons if they can make decisions together with friends and the teacher to choose what kind of activities or projects they are going to do and learn from. Students are also more comfortable and feel more relaxed when they can choose how to present their work or projects. They seemed to participate more and felt more comfortable to speak in front of their friends in class. As for the relatively quiet students, they said it was clearer that I didn't want to leave them behind without finding out what they think or what help they need.

I also confirmed the value of PBLL and active learning by doing this research and changing my teaching strategy to consult students more and evaluate my practice. The results seemed to prove what I had already believed. Based on the

data collected, I discovered that students enjoyed these approaches as they made the lessons engaging and motivated students to participate, helping them develop their speaking skills and creativity. The small modifications I made to my practice with PBLL and active learning proved to be especially effective with low-performing students, who participated more and with better quality work. I could tell this from students' assignments handed in to me. After I did this research and changed my teaching style, the low-performing students came to class earlier than before and sometimes asked me questions after class finished. Some of them began to volunteer to read passages or willingly performed conversations in front of class. Also, the work or assignments they handed in were on time and of better quality. They seemed to participate more after I let them choose how to present their work and give them flexibility about when to finish.



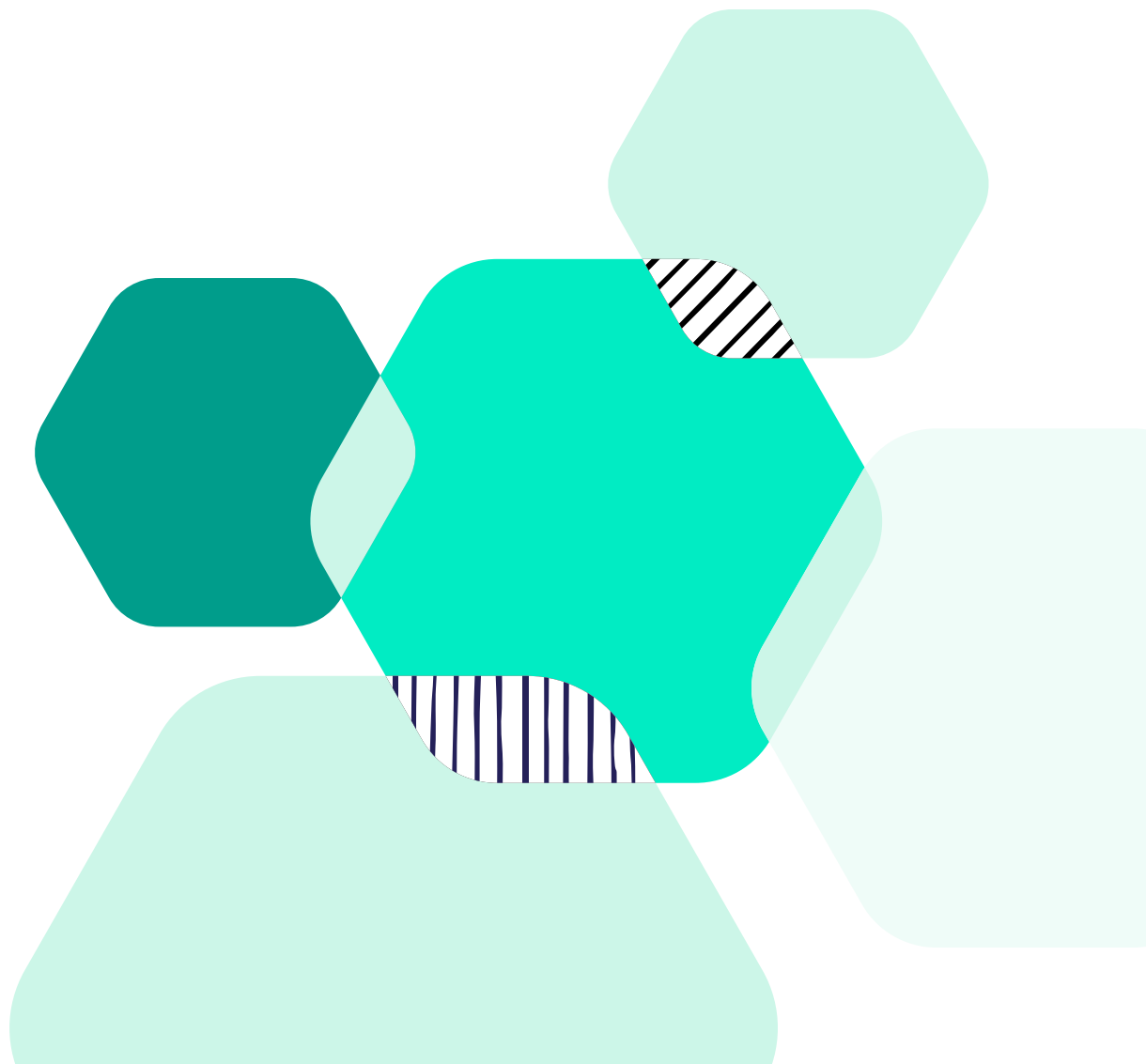
Overall reflections

Before I started on this programme, I knew nothing about Exploratory Action Research. I was confused and had no confidence in doing it. Then I realised that I do not need to use difficult statistics or use academic vocabulary in my classroom research to help my students learn better or solve the teaching problems in my classes. I gained more knowledge and understood myself and my students more through this research process, realising that I could do research myself.

Overall, my study specifically highlights the importance of a positive classroom atmosphere and of encouraging students to invest more in their studies.

My students participated and felt more relaxed while studying because of the research findings and what I changed as a result. I believe that everyone can learn according to their own abilities. And not only students are learners, but me too. I got some good suggestions for interesting activities, and for changing activities, from students. I used to be a teacher who just told students what to do, but not now. So this research motivated and encouraged me to continue to study more about my students and my teaching.

Moreover, while I was doing this study, I got a lot of support from teachers, my mentor, my colleagues and also my students. It was a great opportunity for me to exchange ideas, knowledge and learn from other teachers from other schools in Thailand and the other side of the world. Those people and this Exploratory Action Research inspire me to be a good teacher for my students even though we are a school in a rural province.



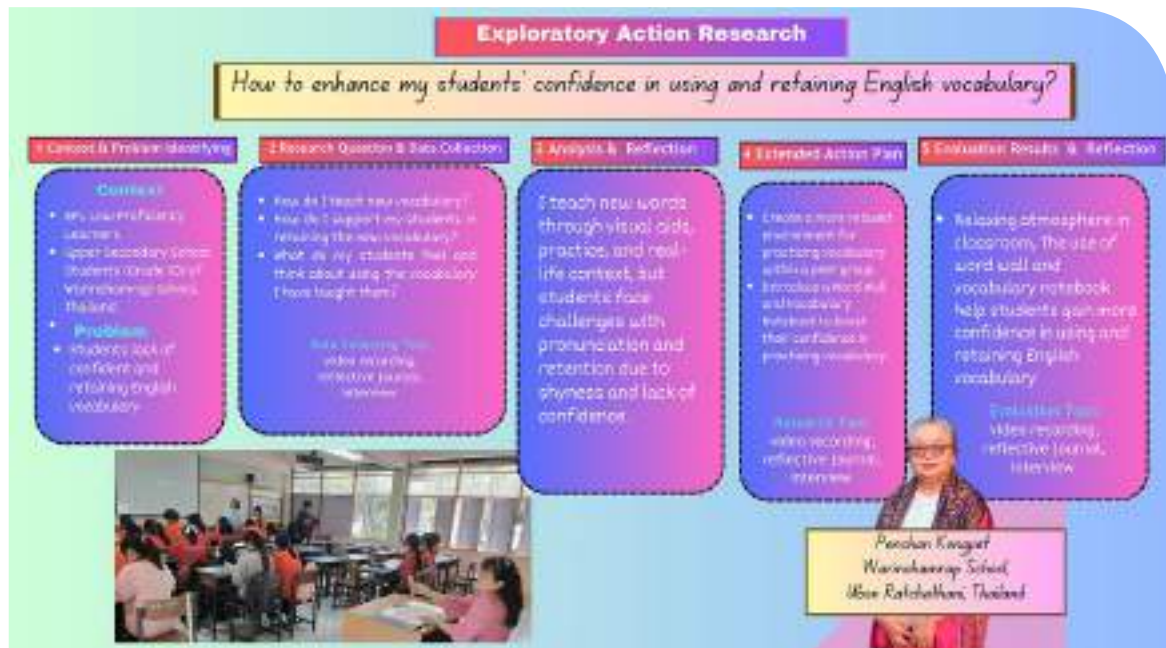
Chapter 5

How to enhance my students' confidence in using and retaining English vocabulary

Penchan Kongpet

Warinchamrap School,
Ubon Ratchathani Province





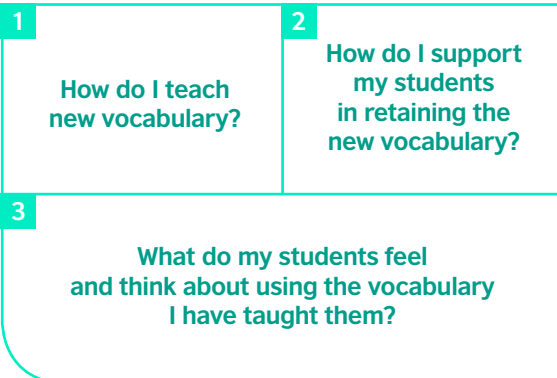
My teaching situation

As an English teacher at Warinchamrap School in Ubon Ratchathani, Thailand, I am faced with the challenge of teaching seven classes of Grade 10 students (around 16 years old), totalling 200 students. Most of these students come from low-income families and live with a single parent or cousin. Our school is located 20 kms outside the town. Most of my students have limited to no English proficiency, largely due to a lack of English teachers in their previous schools.

While my students feel happy to learn new vocabulary, they often struggle with shyness and lack confidence when it comes to pronouncing and using the words. Through my previous observations, I have noticed that my students prefer it when I use flashcards, discuss real-life situations in detail, and write on the board frequently. However, they are hesitant to use the new words in front of the class and often struggle to retain the vocabulary for tests.

The problems I faced and my exploratory questions

The main problem I encountered, then, was my students' lack of confidence and actual ability to retain new English vocabulary. They struggled with pronunciation and with remembering words during quizzes and tests. In order to address this issue, I considered the following overall questions:



Exploring the issue

To answer these questions, I employed various data sources. With one class, I recorded my teaching twice per week for two weeks. I then watched the video recordings to observe my students' reactions and engagement during vocabulary lessons.

I also maintained a reflective journal, where I recorded my observations and thoughts on the effectiveness of different teaching strategies, writing my thoughts in the journal after every lesson with this group. Additionally, I conducted focus group interviews with my students to gather their feedback and perspectives. I made sure to ask all students the following questions, sometimes in pairs or groups, or occasionally one-to-one:

1. In what ways do you prepare yourself to remember vocabulary?
2. How often do you use the vocabulary you have learned?
3. What do you think would improve your vocabulary learning?
4. What activities do you like and enjoy most in vocabulary practice? Why?
5. How many times do you use the vocabulary you learn?
6. What can the teacher do to help you develop your vocabulary?



What I found out and learned

I would spend about two minutes on each new vocabulary word at the beginning of the lesson, and, according to students, this was sufficient. However, some students mentioned that I explained too quickly and that they felt stressed as a result. From my reflections and student responses, I noticed that I also utilised flashcards, discussed example situations, and wrote the words on the board. Additionally, I encouraged them to use the new words in context.

To support my students in retaining the new vocabulary, I provided additional explanations when they asked for help, going closer to their seats. Furthermore, I helped them to find clues in surrounding sentences and encouraged them to find words with similar meanings on their own.

However, In class and in focus group discussions, some students expressed a desire for more detailed explanations and a slower pace.

In the focus group interviews, 21 out of 35 students (i.e. 60 per cent of them) said they felt happy to learn new words but lacked confidence in using them. Some recognised the importance of using the vocabulary but said they did not have many opportunities to do so in real life, while some suggested they wanted to use the vocabulary with friends or on social media.

What I changed

In order to address these challenges (lack of confidence as revealed by focus group interviews and inability to retain new English vocabulary, given that they struggled with pronunciation and remembering words), I implemented a lesson plan structure that allowed for more practice time and would develop my students' confidence with vocabulary, including various types of vocabulary exercise.

I decided that I would continue to introduce each word individually, presenting the students with pictures and pronouncing the words, and I would allow them to practise and memorise on their own using apps like WordWall, Quizlet, etc. or YouTube (BBC Learning English or English with Cambridge videos, for example).

Since some students had said in focus groups that that they felt stressed and that this decreased their motivation to learn or join activities, and in order to enhance my students' confidence in using and retaining English vocabulary, I incorporated activities that foster a relaxed atmosphere within peer groups. I also decided to introduce a word wall activity and vocabulary notebook to boost their confidence in practising vocabulary.

So, during the introduction stage of the lesson, I incorporated spelling and 'find the meaning' vocabulary games relevant to the lesson. I also encouraged students to make daily life sentences and share them with each other using the word wall, i.e. after I presented new words to the class, I let students write the word or sentence they had learned on a sticky note or paper and put it around the wall in the classroom, letting them teach each other and share their knowledge. At the end of the class, I had them create individual vocabulary notebooks to jot down everything about the target vocabulary to aid their memory and enable future use in tests. The goal was to encourage my students to confidently use the vocabulary they had learned.

What I found out and learned

I asked my students' opinions about the changes I introduced as we went along. During the last week of my teaching, I also recorded my class again for closer observation and asked the students to evaluate my teaching, in focus groups. In my observations, I noted a lot of laughing out loud and happy conversation both in student-to-student and student-to-teacher interaction. Due to this more relaxed atmosphere in the classroom, where students and the teacher interacted comfortably, students told me that they had become more engaged in learning and that their enthusiasm had increased. Additionally, the use of the word wall and vocabulary notebook helped students gain more confidence in using and retaining English vocabulary, and their scores on vocabulary tests had increased by the end.

Overall reflection

Throughout this teaching journey, my primary focus was on improving my students' vocabulary retention and boosting their confidence in English usage. Through the incorporation of a more interactive approach, the establishment of a relaxed atmosphere, and the implementation of word walls and vocabulary notebooks, I witnessed big improvements in my students' vocabulary retention and increased confidence in using English in real-life situations.

I think Exploratory Action Research is a needed competency for teachers. It has helped me a lot, not only to solve problems in my classroom but also in my daily life.

I definitely wish to use it again. EAR has helped me to explore my own teaching, understand learners' needs and expectations, notice things I had been missing, and deal with problems more quickly, making better decisions based on evidence. I now have a wider view of my teaching practice and everything in my daily life.

Chapter 6

Exploring and enhancing paragraph writing and motivation for secondary school students

Nonglak Kanthamat
Nakhonsawan School,
Nakhon Sawan Province





My teaching situation

Nakhonsawan School is an extra-large and renowned educational institution located in the northern part of Thailand, which serves a diverse student body of over 3,000 students, with 36–40 students in each class. With top-notch facilities and a focus on English proficiency, the school offers core subjects, extracurricular activities, and free self-study resources like Apple classrooms and computer labs. Additionally, it fosters global connections through student exchange programmes. Most students come from high-income families, prioritise English education, and benefit from comprehensive support. They also attend additional English classes after school and engage in online learning, utilising mobile phones and iPads for study and homework. With these abundant resources, almost all students typically meet the school's indicators for overall English achievement in English subjects.



memorisation, assessment methods that focus more on grammar and spelling accuracy rather than writing skills, or cultural attitudes towards language learning and writing that may influence students' motivation.

In this project, I engaged in Exploratory Action Research (EAR) to gain a deeper understanding and attempt to address the challenges I faced. I first aimed to analyse common paragraphing errors and explore students' experiences through the writing process. The exploratory research questions guiding this part of the investigation were as follows:

RQ1:	RQ2:
What are the most common paragraphing errors made by my students?	What challenges do students encounter when writing paragraphs?
RQ3: How do students feel during the process of writing paragraphs?	

The issue I addressed, and exploratory questions

However, in my 19 years of experience as an English teacher at Nakhonsawan School, I've encountered challenges in enhancing paragraph-writing skills and developing motivation among Grade 9 students (around 15 years old) enrolled in reading and writing subjects. These challenges may stem from various factors, including the consistent absence of dedicated writing courses over six academic years, textbooks that primarily emphasise reading, managing large and diverse classrooms, teachers prioritising rote

How I explored and what I found

To begin with, I analysed 36 pieces of student writing to identify and classify the most common types of paragraphing error (RQ1). The writing I analysed was part of the final evaluation for the semester. I then asked students to participate in mind mapping activities and focus group interviews, as well as answering a questionnaire, to help me find answers to RQs 2 and 3.

In order of frequency, the following were the most prevalent paragraphing errors in students' writing, revealing the significant hurdles they were facing (see also the top half of Figure 1):

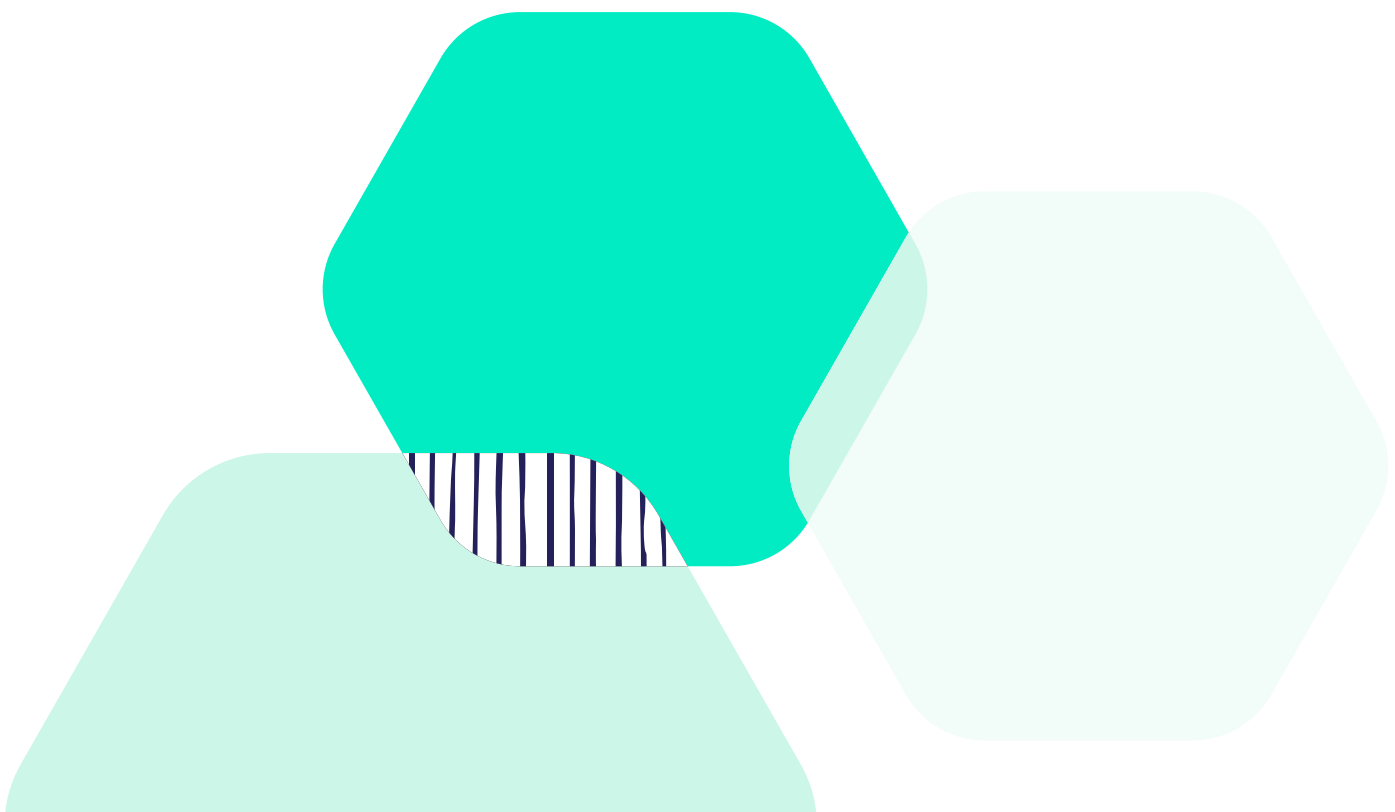
1. (most frequent) lack of transition words for coherence within paragraphs
2. lack of a clear topic sentence
3. rambling (lengthy and incoherent) sentences
4. disconnected paragraphs, with lack of logical connections between paragraphs
5. lack of supporting evidence for ideas.

These findings underscored the necessity for a targeted intervention to enhance students' paragraph-writing skills, in particular in the area of use of transition words ('In addition', 'However', 'As a result', etc.).

The findings for RQs 2 and 3 also provided several key insights into the problems students were facing, enabling me to gain a deeper understanding of possible cause-and-effect relationships involved in the challenges of paragraph writing (see the bottom half of Figure 1).

I analysed students' writing for linguistic errors and found that vocabulary issues topped the list, closely followed by grammatical errors, particularly tense misuse interfering with understanding, alongside punctuation mistakes such as incorrect use of commas and full stops. Sentence structure difficulties were prevalent, and students faced challenges in writing concluding sentences as well as in developing a clear topic.

Insights from focus group discussions emphasised persistent language proficiency obstacles, and Likert scale questionnaire findings further clarified these challenges, with word choice and editing ranking highest in difficulty, according to student perceptions.



Findings for RQ 3, relating to students' emotional responses to paragraph writing, revealed a spectrum of sentiments. According to focus group participants, negative feelings, including anxiety, boredom, stress and confusion prevailed, alongside concerns about making mistakes and feelings of frustration and discouragement. Conversely, positive emotions such as a sense of challenge, interest and improvement in writing skills

contributed to a more optimistic outlook for some students.

The analysis of questionnaire results further illuminated students' emotional experiences, with apprehension about making mistakes, lack of confidence and feelings of anxiety and confusion being prominent.

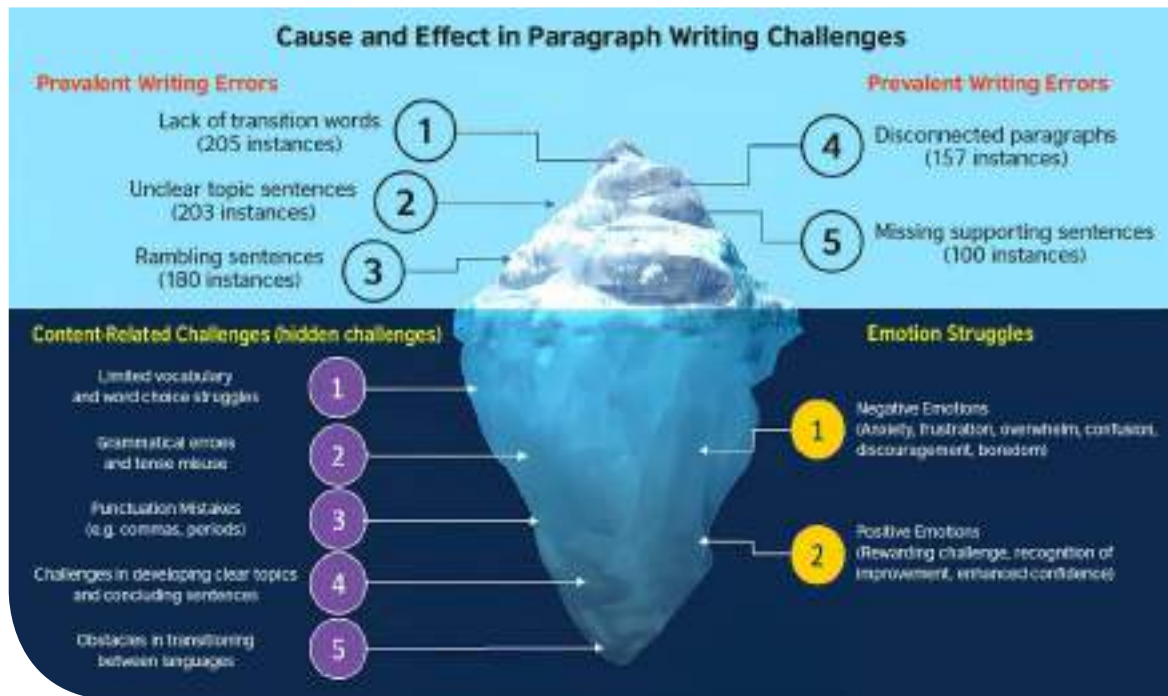


Figure 1: Cause and effect in paragraph-writing challenges

Implementation of action research

Together, these exploratory findings informed my plan for addressing the overall question, ‘How can I improve students’ paragraph-writing skills and motivation in English?’.

Through the above exploration, I had identified ‘lack of transition words’ as the most frequent paragraphing issue (205 instances). Given its prevalence and the need to focus on one area within the time available, I developed a ‘Transition Words Mastery’ module, which prioritised improving transition word usage to enhance paragraph cohesion. I implemented this over four weeks in three phases for Grade 9 students, as outlined below:

Steps of remedial writing instruction ('Transition Words Mastery')

Pre-writing (1 week)	Writing for evaluation (1) Through self-study, students read a comprehensive guide on transition words.	
While writing (2 weeks)	Step 1 Writing model analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students analysed a model descriptive paragraph, focusing on specified transition words.
	Step 2 Writing frame paragraph	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students reviewed a series of questions provided. Their task was to use these questions as a guide to start writing their descriptive paragraph.
	Step 3 Guided writing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students created an outline with an introduction, main points, and conclusion based on the information from Step 2. Students drafted their first version based on the outline, ensuring the use of transition words to connect ideas seamlessly.
	Step 4 Revision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students swapped their writing with a peer for collaborative editing and revision. Students revised their paragraphs, focusing on improving flow with transition words and proofreading for grammar, spelling, and punctuation.
Post-writing (1 week)	Step 5 Independent practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students wrote a paragraph alone, in pairs, or as a group, using at least five transition words and provided prompts. Before they started writing, the teacher reviewed the rubric for assessing transition word usage with the students. Writing for evaluation (2)

Right at the beginning, and at the end, I asked students to engage in some writing, for evaluation purposes ('Writing for evaluation' (1) and (2)). Aside from these pieces of writing, data for evaluating the four-week action plan included peer observations conducted by a native speaker

teacher, reflective writing and focus group discussions. I evaluated transition word usage in both pieces of writing using the same rubric (see Appendix), and, through content analysis, I examined and derived themes from observational data, reflective journals and recorded interviews.

Findings and lessons learned from action research

As comparison between the 36 students' two pieces of writing showed (see Figure 2), there was a marked improvement in transition word usage, with much fewer students rated 'poor' or 'needing improvement' in the five areas evaluated.

5 – Excellent 4 – Good 3 – Satisfactory 2 – Needs improvement 1 – Poor

Items	Criteria	Pre-writing paragraph					Total	Post-writing paragraph					Total
		5	4	3	2	1		5	4	3	2	1	
1	Mastery and variety of transition words	5	3	8	5	15	36	15	3	10	4	4	36
2	Transition word function and appropriateness	5	9	6	12	4	36	15	9	6	2	4	36
3	Coherence and logical flow with transitions	3	8	5	15	5	36	5	11	15	3	2	36
4	Sentence structure and transition integration	9	7	5	10	5	36	15	9	5	4	3	36
5	Grammar, spelling and punctuation related to transitions	6	4	13	4	9	36	8	5	18	4	1	36

Figure 2: 'Transition Words Mastery' assessment scores at the beginning and end of the course



There was also improvement in students' appreciation of transition words, as illustrated by the following quotations from focus group interviews (translated from Thai):

“

I think [the module] has greatly improved my understanding of transition words and how to use them effectively in paragraph writing. It feels like a reflex now, almost like a shift in perspective about transition words – I've come to realise their value. Before, I used them without really noticing, but now I can consciously see their benefits in structuring my writing more clearly.

“

After learning transition words, I felt that I have developed better writing skill, such as in writing a short story, and I can improve them in daily life. I still couldn't properly speak [English], but when I started using transition words, I felt better when writing.

“

Transition words help make my writing smoother and more cohesive, giving the impression of a more structured and intelligent thought process.



“

I feel that after learning, my writing skills have improved, whether in drafting simple stories or adapting them for everyday use. In regular conversations, I often struggle to express myself clearly, but through practice, I have noticed that my writing has become more coherent and structured.

Overall, the 'Transition Words Mastery' module effectively enhanced students' writing clarity and coherence. Working within a supportive environment and experiencing tangible achievements also seemed to bolster students' motivation and sense of writing proficiency.

Overall reflections

Thinking about the overall process, there are three aspects of my EAR journey that stood out for me:

1. *Uncovering hidden challenges and tailoring solutions.* The research journey began with identifying hidden challenges, akin to an explorer revealing the submerged mass of an iceberg. Through observation, reflection, and student interaction, I identified key issues such as a limited grasp of transition words and difficulty in connecting ideas coherently. This led me to develop tailored solutions, including self-study materials, practical writing exercises focusing on these specific aspects, and reflective documentation. This personalised approach directly addressed students' needs and demonstrably improved their writing skills.
2. *Collaborative practices and evolving strategies.*

This research transformed my teaching perspective by highlighting the effectiveness of collaborative learning through peer interaction and assessment.



Additionally, the research underscored for me the need for continuous adaptation, since I needed to adjust the plan to address students' evolving needs.

3. *Triangulating data.* Combining quantitative analysis with qualitative insights provided me with a nuanced understanding of the impact of the strategies I implemented, more than would have occurred with just one data source.

Overall, this EAR journey profoundly enriched my teaching practice and students' learning experiences. It emphasised to me the significance of ongoing exploration, diverse approaches, data triangulation, and continuous reflection in creating a dynamic and effective learning environment. These lessons will undoubtedly guide and enhance my future teaching endeavours.

Appendix: Paragraph-writing transition words assessment rubric

	5 - Excellent	4 - Good	3 - Satisfactory	2 - Needs improvement	1 - Poor
1. Mastery and variety of transition words	Demonstrates a strong grasp of transition words, using a wide variety naturally and effectively to enhance logical flow. Placement is precise and impactful.	Uses a good range of transition words appropriately, with only minor misplacements. The paragraph flows well.	Uses some transition words correctly but with limited variety. Some transitions may feel forced or awkward.	Uses few transition words, and several are misused, disrupting coherence. Lacks variety.	Rarely or incorrectly uses transition words, making the paragraph difficult to follow.
2. Transition word function and appropriateness	Transition words are correctly chosen and placed to show relationships between ideas (e.g. contrast, cause-effect, sequence). The paragraph flows logically.	Most transition words fit their function well, with only minor errors in placement or selection. The paragraph is mostly coherent.	Some transition words do not match their intended function (e.g. using 'however' incorrectly). Transitions sometimes disrupt the paragraph's flow.	Many transition words are misplaced or used incorrectly, confusing the reader.	The paragraph lacks transitions or uses them in a way that distorts meaning.
3. Coherence and logical flow with transitions	Ideas are well-connected through smooth and effective transition words. Sentences and paragraphs flow logically.	The paragraph is mostly coherent, with a clear logical sequence enhanced by transitions. Minor disruptions.	Some sentences flow well, but transitions feel unnatural in places. Some gaps in logical connection.	The paragraph lacks a smooth flow, with transitions used inconsistently. Some abrupt shifts in ideas.	The paragraph is disorganised, and transitions are either absent or disrupt logical progression.
4. Sentence structure and transition integration	Sentences are varied and well-structured, seamlessly integrating transition words. The paragraph is engaging and well-developed.	Most sentences are structured effectively, with smooth transition integration. Minor chopiness in places.	Some transition words feel forced or disrupt sentence fluency. Some repetition in sentence structure.	Sentence structure is weak, and transition words do not integrate naturally. Many choppy or awkward sentences.	Sentences lack structure, and transition words are misplaced or absent, making comprehension difficult.
5. Grammar, spelling and punctuation related to transitions	Transition words are used with perfect grammar, spelling and punctuation. No errors.	Minor errors in punctuation or grammar related to transitions, but they do not affect readability.	Some grammatical or punctuation errors affect transition word usage and clarity.	Several errors make it difficult to understand how transition words function in the sentence.	Frequent grammatical and punctuation mistakes make the paragraph hard to follow.

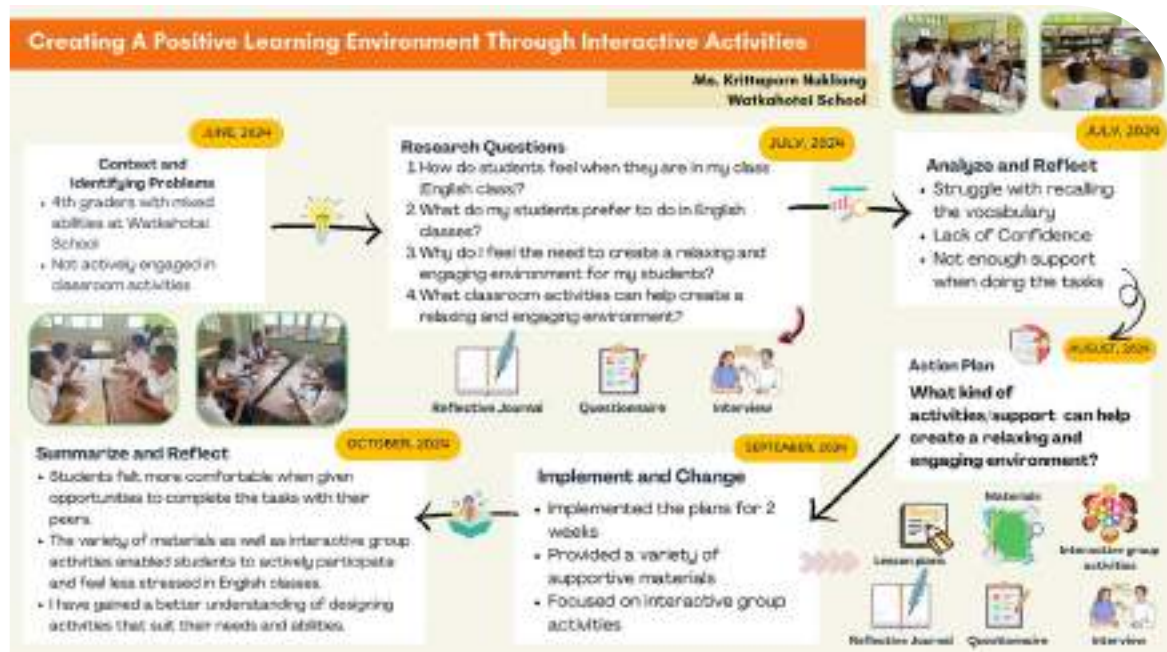
Chapter 7

Creating a positive learning environment through interactive activities

Krittaporn Nukliang

Watkahotai School,
Kuannonghong, Cha-uatt,
Nakhon Si Thammarat Province





My teaching situation

Watkahotai School is a kindergarten/elementary school serving 225 students aged 3–12. My research was conducted in Fundamental English 4 with 23 mixed-ability Grade 4 students aged 9–10. While the students showed enthusiasm in some English classes, they were not, in general, actively engaged in classroom activities. Most of them also struggled with recalling vocabulary.

The issue I faced and my exploratory questions

Students seemed to feel pressured in English classes because they could not recognise the letters of the alphabet and lacked vocabulary, even with support. In addition, I noticed that some of them needed more time to complete tasks and were afraid of making mistakes or even asking questions. For example, students were asked to rearrange vocabulary about items in the room using the textbook. Although they had support, they took more time than they usually did to

complete this task because the vocabulary was new to them. In this lesson, I observed that the classroom atmosphere was dull and students were not fully engaged. As a result, I decided that I wanted to explore more about creating a comfortable learning environment for my students, which led me to these exploratory questions:

RQ1:	RQ2:
How do students feel when they are in my English class?	What do my students say they prefer to do in English lessons?
RQ3:	RQ4:
Why do I feel the need to create a comfortable environment for my students?	What are some activities I use in my lessons to help create a comfortable environment?

What I did to explore the issue

To seek answers to RQs 1 and 2, I gathered students' responses to statements on flipcharts and held interview sessions with them. I also kept a reflection journal for one week to gain insights into RQs 3 and 4 and to find out what was really happening in the classroom.

Students were asked to respond to statements in class. I wrote the following statements in Thai on five large pieces of flipchart paper attached to the board (I kept the flipcharts, folded in half, to reuse them for collecting data in the action stage):

1. ฉันคิดว่าฉันเรียนภาษาอังกฤษได้ดีขึ้นหากได้ทำกิจกรรม
[I think I can learn English better through activities.]
2. ฉันมีความสุขเมื่อได้เรียนภาษาอังกฤษ
[I feel happy whenever I have English class.]
3. ภาษาอังกฤษเป็นวิชาที่ยากและฉันไม่อยากจะเรียนภาษาอังกฤษ
[English is very difficult and I don't want to learn it.]
4. ฉันรู้สึกกดดัน/ประหม่า/เครียดเมื่อต้องเรียนภาษาอังกฤษ
[I feel pressured/nervous/stressed whenever I have English class.]
5. วิชาภาษาอังกฤษเป็นวิชาที่สนุกและน่าสนใจ
[English is a fun and interesting subject.]

I then asked all students to come to the board to give their individual response to each statement by drawing a circle on each paper, using the following colours: green = agree, black = indifferent, and red = disagree.

With regard to the interviews, I interviewed all 23 students. At first, I did this in groups of 4–5 students, but in the second group interview I noticed that students felt uncomfortable about expressing their opinions, so I continued the interviews individually, one student at a time. I recorded the interviews to analyse them later. Here are the questions I asked in the interviews:

1. What kinds of activities do you like or would you like to do in English classes?
2. How do you feel when you have English class? Why do you feel that way?
3. Is English a difficult subject? Why?/Why not?

What I found and learned

In relation to the exploratory questions, I found that students feel pressured in English lessons because they have difficulties recognising the letters of the alphabet and recalling vocabulary, even with support. The data from the interviews showed that students loved doing activities that allowed them to move around the classroom. They also loved activities that made them feel like they were playing rather than learning English. I also learned that students enjoyed doing hands-on activities, and were able to complete the activities when provided with enough material and when they felt comfortable in class.

From my reflections, I noticed that I often used flashcards and gave examples of how to complete the given tasks. In some lessons, I designed activities where students could both learn English and participate in hands-on activities with drills and practice, but it was not enough.

I realised I wanted students to be able to learn English without any pressure and to complete the given tasks.



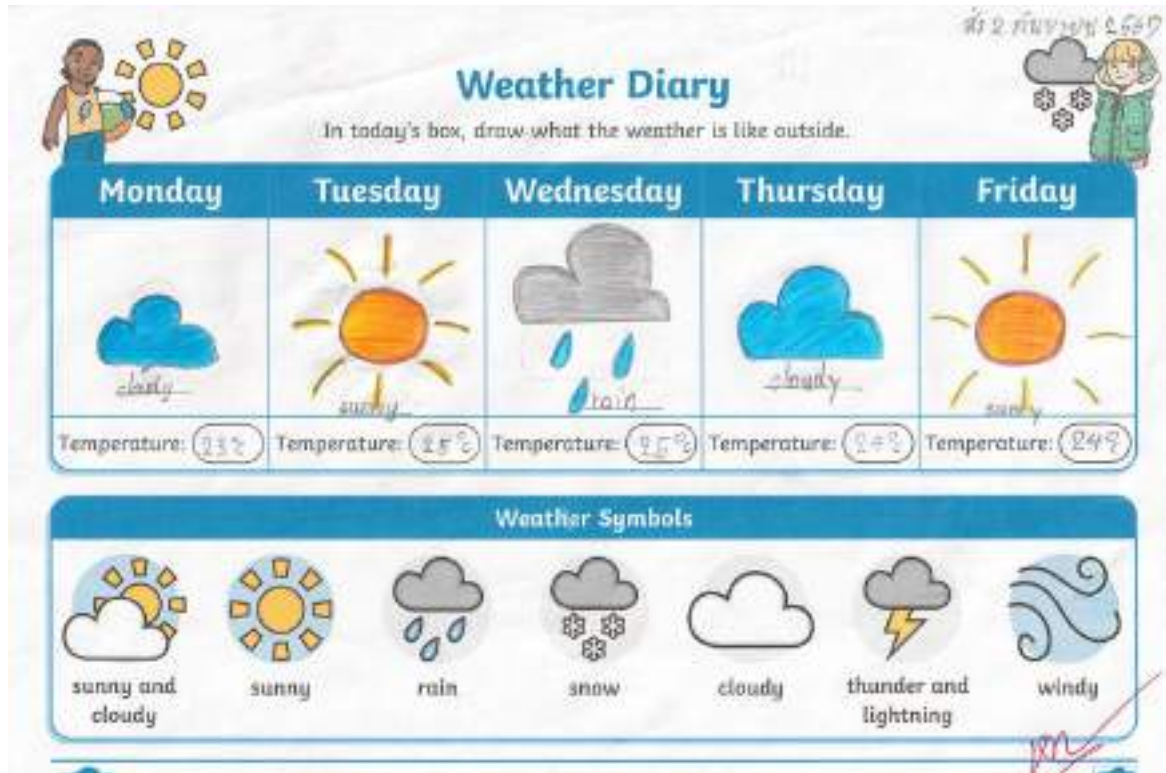
My action plan

On the basis of my exploratory findings, my new question was: How can I use activities to create a comfortable and positive learning environment? The changes I thought I should make were:
a) to provide more/enough materials in classes and b) to model each task with target vocabulary.

My action plan consisted of four lessons over the course of one week on the textbook topic of The Weather (see Appendix). In response to the findings, I decided to integrate four specific activities:

- *Flashcards* (listening about weather in Thailand). In this activity, students listened to a recording about the weather in different provinces in Thailand and matched the flashcards with correct places.
- *Our Q and A* (asking about the weather) focused on speaking with controlled sentence structures – ‘What’s the weather like?’ and ‘It is _____.’ I put students into groups of 4–5. Then, they were given weather dice and rolled them one by one, going round the circle. The person rolling the dice would ask ‘What’s the weather like?’. Then, the others in the group would answer according to the number rolled, corresponding with a picture of a particular kind of weather.
- *Sorting activities* aimed to help students connect what they had learned with their daily life. In this activity, I placed seasonal sorting boards – Summer, Rainy Season, and Cold Season – around the classroom. Students had to put pictures of appropriate clothes and weather on the correct season sorting board. They were given five minutes to do so. Then, I introduced the structure ‘I wear _____ when it is _____.’ with 4–5 examples before asking students to form their own sentences corresponding with what they had sorted.
- *My weather log* also aimed to help students connect what they had learned with their daily life. I assigned them a Weather Log worksheet as homework. Students were to record the following week’s weather, giving them an opportunity to write using the vocabulary and the structures they had learned.





Additionally, in the first lesson, students were introduced to a weather mini-book, which was an A5 leaflet providing students with weather vocabulary and pictures. This was used as a reference in most of the lessons.

During the implementation of this plan, the responses were positive. For example, during the listening, students told me that the exercises were easier and that they felt more confident when doing activities because they used the flashcards

and the mini-book to help them. The students were more confident when doing speaking tasks, too. Even though some of them were unable to speak (low-ability group), they still participated and were willing to repeat the sentences after the teacher.

Overall, the action stage seemed to go very well. My lessons supported my students' needs and helped them feel more comfortable while they were doing some challenging tasks in English lessons.

What I found and learned

After implementing the lesson plans with the specific activities described above, I tried to find answers to the following questions:

- How much are students able to complete the tasks in class (compared with before)? (I referred to my reflective journal to answer this question.)
- How do students feel now, after getting the extra support (activities, materials, etc.) in English classes? (I used the same ways of gathering feedback – interviews and responses to statements on flipchart papers – as I did during the exploratory stage, to compare ‘before’ and ‘after’ responses.)

Both the responses to statements on flipchart papers and interview responses showed that students could learn English better when provided with enough extra materials and activities. Interviews showed that they felt more confident when completing the tasks and responding in English classes. In contrast with the exploratory stage, fewer students found English difficult or felt pressured whenever they have to learn English. In conclusion, the new activities enabled students to learn better, complete the given tasks, and feel less stressed in English classes.



Apart from the responses to statements and interviews, I also wrote a reflection after each lesson, which was a great opportunity to reflect on my teaching and to explore continuing challenges my students might be encountering. According to this data, difficulties with recognising the alphabet and recalling vocabulary continued to be underlying challenges that I still want to explore more.

What I have learned from the overall process is that students feel more confident if they are given opportunities to do activities before completing worksheets. In addition, about half of the students (12 out of 23) said in the interview that they felt more comfortable when given opportunities to complete the tasks with their peers rather than just individually.



Overall reflections

During and after the EAR project, I became more observant regarding what is compatible with my students' needs and ability. I have also turned out to be more patient with my students and myself because improvement does not happen overnight. In addition, it was refreshing to see students gain more confidence in English class. They actively participated in the activities and are now comfortable enough when learning English – enough to make mistakes. I can even say that most of Grade 4 are not afraid of making mistakes anymore – they now realise the importance of making mistakes when learning new language. This has transformed the classroom into a safe space.

I also learned that EAR is an approach that helps teachers understand their classroom more, which results in understanding students' needs and allowing us to create an engaging and relaxing classroom.

Usually, 'doing classroom research' was thought to be very time consuming and complicated for a lot of teachers, myself included. However, EAR is much easier and more convenient than this and allows me to get important insights into my classroom.

This experience has changed the way I view my students forever – rather than fighting the challenges, I know now that I should investigate them, and allow them to help me create a better class for my students.



Appendix: Action plan lessons

Unit 4 Weather	
Lesson 1: Introduction	
Objective:	After listening to the audio, students will be able to match the weather with provinces in Thailand correctly.
Materials and activities:	Materials: Flashcards, Workbook Activity: Listening
Plan:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ask students to discuss the weather and seasons in Thailand. 2. Introduce the vocabulary to the students using flashcards. 3. Students practise target vocabulary through matching activities and use flashcards as their support. 4. Students listen to the audio and choose the correct provinces on page 38. 5. Ask students to share their answers and have them read the vocabulary out loud. 6. Students complete the exercise on page 37 to review the vocabulary. 7. Ask students to describe today's weather using the vocabulary they have learned.
Lesson 2: Our Q and A	
Objective:	Students will be able to ask and answer questions about the weather.
Materials and activities:	Materials: Flashcards Activities: Our Q and A
Plan:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Show the weather pictures and ask students to identify the weather. 2. Introduce the phrase 'What's the weather like?' to the students. 3. Model the speaking activity to help students build confidence. 4. Ask students to get into pairs. Students with lower ability will be asked to complete this activity in groups. 5. Students roll the die to create a conversation using the target phrase. The activity will continue until both of the students complete the weather. 6. Students do the spinning wheel activity for wrap-up. Homework will be assigned.

Lesson 3: Clothes and weather**Objective:**

Students will be able to identify weather and clothes in each season correctly.

Materials and activities:

Materials: Flashcards, Sorting Boards, Clothes cards
Activity: Vocabulary Sorting

Plan:

1. Ask students to discuss the weather and seasons in Thailand.
2. Introduce the vocabulary to the students using flashcards.
3. Give students a clothes card and a weather card (2 cards/1 student) and ask them to put their cards on the correct season boards.
4. Students will walk to the season table and use the information from the sorting board to complete the exercise in the workbook.
5. Ask students to share their answers and have them read the vocabulary out loud.

Lesson 4: My weather log**Objective:**

Students will be able to write about the weather using the correct sentence structure.

Materials and activities:

Materials: Flashcards
Activities: Note taking, Exercises and Weather Log (weekly assignment)

Plan:

1. Show the picture of different weather then ask students to say the word out loud.
2. Students will take note of sentence structure, target vocabulary and sentence examples.
3. Students will complete additional exercises.
4. Students will be assigned a Weather Log. In this log, students will record next week's weather using the correct structure.
(It is _____ today.)
5. The Weather Log will be handed in at the end of the following week.

Chapter 8

Improving vocabulary skills through interactive classroom activities

Nurfareeda Waemamu

Ban koh mo kaeng School,
Pattani Province



Exploratory Action Research
EAR ♡ ♡

How can I help my students improve their vocabulary?

01 My name is
Miss Nurfareeda Waemamu
I am from
P

02 **Context & Problem Identifying**
Context
School: Bankomokaeng School Class: Prathom 5
Problem
students faced difficulties with vocabulary usage due to not knowing the meanings of words.

03 **Research Questions & Data Collection**
Research Question
1. What activities do students enjoy learning English vocabulary?
2. How did the students feel about the vocabulary activities while in the class?
3. How do I teach my students to improve their English vocabulary skills?
Data Collection Tool
Interview (with students), Questionnaire, Observation

04 **Analysis & Reflection** ♡ ♡
Most of students enjoy learning English vocabulary with many activities because variety in vocabulary activities boosts engagement and understanding.
but some students dislike learning English word because they are not particularly engaged and they feel English frustrates them and they think English word is very difficult to memorize.

05 **Action Plan** 😊
• I try incorporate more engaging, interactive activities in my lessons, like group discussions, role-play, and multimedia presentation.
• Foster a positive, supportive classroom environment.
Research Tool
Interviews, observations, questionnaires

06 **Result** 👑
Adding interactive activities and fostering a supportive environment made my lessons more engaging, boosting student participation and understanding.
Evaluation Tool
Interviews, observations, questionnaires

My teaching situation

I teach at Ban koh mo kaeng School in Pattani Province. My research focused on a Prathom 5 (Grade 5) class of 20 students aged 10–11. The learners faced challenges in learning English vocabulary, often struggling with understanding meaning and memorising words. While some students were enthusiastic about English, others were less engaged because they found it very difficult and frustrating. Their mixed attitudes toward learning vocabulary motivated me to explore ways to improve their vocabulary skills, using interactive activities to create a more engaging and supportive classroom environment.

The issue I faced and my exploratory questions

Based on my experience of teaching English to Grade 5 students, I knew that students face difficulties with vocabulary usage due to not knowing the meaning of words. This related to challenges in retaining and reusing previously learned vocabulary, resulting in relatively low academic achievement in English. In the particular

context of the three southern border provinces, most students primarily use Malay for communication and view it as the main language for daily communication. The use of English for communication, on the other hand, is limited to the few class hours they have for this subject. Consequently, students are not regularly using a wide range of vocabulary, and this directly impacts their academic achievement.

As a teacher, I wanted to find vocabulary activities to effectively help students expand their vocabulary and apply it to their studies. I considered this as crucial, since a strong vocabulary foundation is essential for language proficiency and for advanced studies. To address this issue, I developed the following exploratory research questions:

<p>1 What activities do students enjoy when learning English vocabulary?</p>	<p>2 How do the students feel about the vocabulary activities I use?</p>
<p>3 How do I teach my students vocabulary?</p>	



What I did to explore the issue

To answer my research questions, I collected data using three tools. For questions 1 and 2, I designed a student questionnaire and interview questions. For question 3, I designed an observation checklist.

In the interviews, I asked the following questions about students' favourite activities for learning vocabulary:

- Do you enjoy learning vocabulary through games? What kind of games do you like?

- Do you enjoy learning vocabulary through songs? Why?
- Do you enjoy learning vocabulary using flashcards? Why?
- Do you enjoy creating vocabulary notebooks? Why?

Through a questionnaire (below), students also shared their learning preferences, engagement levels and challenges, providing insights into their feelings about learning English and vocabulary:

	Agree	Indifferent	Disagree
1. I like learning vocabulary through games.			
2. I like to memorise the new words.			
3. I like learning vocabulary through songs.			
4. I like learning English vocabulary with m teacher.			
5. English words are very difficult to memorise.			
6. I think it's impossible for me to learn new vocabulary.			
7. I feel happy whenever I have English class.			
8. I don't like learning English because my teacher is boring.			
9. I don't learn English because I'm lazy.			
10. English frustrates me because I don't know anything.			

The questionnaires were completed in class at the end of a lesson so that all students could participate. To ensure understanding, the questions

were explained in both English and Malay. Students filled them in individually and anonymously, without writing their names, to encourage honest responses.



I also designed the observation checklist below. Classroom observations were conducted by a colleague from the English department, who observed a total of three lessons over the course of the project. After each session, the observer gave me oral feedback immediately, highlighting strengths and areas for improvement. In some cases, short notes were also provided for my reference. No video recording was used.

Observation checklist	Yes	No
Teacher introduces new vocabulary by 1. Showing a real object 2. Showing a flashcard (word and picture) 3. Giving a definition 4. Teaching pronunciation 5. Teaching prefix/suffix 6. Giving translation 7. Having students guess from context 8. Writing the word in a sentence 9. Demonstrating the meaning through gesture 10. Other: _____		

These tools helped me gather both quantitative and qualitative data to understand students' challenges and preferences. I was also able to check the types of activities I used to teach vocabulary.

What I found and learned

The exploratory stage confirmed that some students find it frustrating and difficult to memorise words. These students struggle with vocabulary usage because they don't know the meanings of words. This difficulty of retaining and reusing vocabulary leads to lower academic achievement in English. On the other hand, the research also revealed that most students enjoy learning English, with a strong preference for interactive and visual learning methods. Interviews and questionnaires revealed that:

- Flashcards were the most popular method, with all students indicating they liked this approach.
- The use of vocabulary notebooks was also highly favoured, with around 80 per cent of students indicating they liked using these.
- Games and songs were enjoyed by 70 per cent of the students, while 20 per cent were indifferent and 10 per cent expressed dislike of them.

The observation confirmed that my teaching approach involves engaging students in interactive vocabulary activities, using games, visual aids and real-life contexts to make learning meaningful and enjoyable. Additionally:



- I consistently used flashcards that feature both words and corresponding pictures to introduce new vocabulary.
- I incorporated real objects whenever possible, using items from our surroundings to reinforce word meanings.
- I provided guidance on correct pronunciation to help students articulate words accurately.
- I introduced 5–7 words at a time, ensuring to give clear definitions for each one.
- I regularly checked students' understanding during class by having them write the words they've learned.

While the findings showed that students have positive attitudes towards interactive activities, they also highlighted that the classes were not interactive enough for some students, particularly those who found English frustrating or difficult to memorise. The research showed that these students' low engagement was often caused by a lack of confidence and a fear of making mistakes.

I therefore realised that a more intentional and varied approach was needed to boost engagement and make vocabulary learning more effective for all students. This realisation led to the development of an action plan focused on incorporating more varied, student-centred and interactive activities to build confidence and participation.

My action plan

The findings from the exploratory stage revealed a mix of positive and negative attitudes toward learning English vocabulary among the students. While some students enjoyed certain activities, others were disengaged and struggled with the material.

Based on the findings, I decided to introduce even more interactive and engaging activities, such as group discussions, role plays and multimedia presentations, to make vocabulary learning more enjoyable and effective.

I decided to:

- make the content more relevant and relatable to students' lives and interests, incorporating topics and materials that aligned with their hobbies, current events or future career aspirations
- use a variety of teaching methods and modalities to cater to different learning styles, incorporating visual aids, audio recordings, kinaesthetic activities and collaborative work
- foster a positive, supportive classroom environment where students feel comfortable taking risks and making mistakes as they learn, celebrating small wins and progress
- consider offering incentives or rewards for participation and effort, not just performance, in the belief that this could help motivate less enthusiastic students.



I included various kinds of vocabulary-matching activity using flashcards, including a race where students had to compete to touch the card corresponding with the word I said aloud.



We used videos to learn English songs, including action songs, and I focused on teaching vocabulary relatable to students' own lives, including names of food and drink, animals, and so on. Group work was also an important part of this action phase. I focused on creating a positive and supportive classroom environment by praising students for their efforts and encouraging them to participate without fear of mistakes. I decided to celebrate small wins and praise students for their efforts, not just performance, to help them feel more comfortable taking risks.

What I found and learned

Challenges arose at first when a few students were hesitant to engage due to shyness or fear of failure. To overcome this, I assigned group leaders to support their peers and encouraged small group work first before presenting to the whole class. I also used simple, familiar words to build confidence gradually.

To evaluate the changes that occurred, I again used interviews, questionnaires and classroom observations as my research tools.

The second round of interviews and questionnaires showed a clear improvement in student attitudes. Many students said they enjoyed the new activities like group work and role plays because they made learning 'fun and less stressful'. For example, some students said they loved acting out words in role plays, because this helped them to connect meaning to vocabulary through actions. Some students even mentioned that, compared with before, they now looked forward to English class. The questionnaires confirmed that most students enjoyed the new techniques, and many found English words 'easier to remember' because they could use them in fun, practical activities.

What surprised me most was how quickly students' attitudes improved with the right activities. I learned that variety and creativity in teaching are key to keeping students motivated and helping them retain vocabulary effectively. On the other hand, the questionnaires also revealed that a small group of students still found English challenging, especially when they had to remember spellings.

Classroom observations revealed a positive shift in the learning environment, with increased participation, smiles and enthusiasm being recorded by the observer. Students became more engaged and willing to try using new vocabulary. According to the observer, the classroom atmosphere became 'more lively and collaborative', with students actively participating in discussions and multimedia activities. Students who were previously shy had started raising their hands to answer questions or participate in group work, and students clearly felt more confident to try new words, no longer being so fearful of making errors. Via interactive methods and encouragement, students were starting to feel more comfortable using English words.



During this second round of interviews, many students expressed that they now found English words 'easier to remember' because they could see, hear and use them in fun activities. For example, role playing had helped students visualise words in real-life situations, which made learning meaningful. Compared to the situation described earlier, where students were disengaged and frustrated, the classroom atmosphere transformed into a more positive and energetic space.

This experience taught me that the causes of low engagement may often stem from lack of variety, support, and opportunities to use language practically. Addressing these issues helped me improve both my teaching methods and my students' learning outcomes.

Overall reflections

From my exploration of effective teaching strategies, I found that incorporating engaging and interactive activities can enhance student participation and learning outcomes to a large degree. I realised that fostering a supportive and positive environment was also crucial. This understanding helped me see that low engagement was often caused by a lack of confidence and fear of failure. The findings also revealed large improvements in students' engagement and attitudes toward learning vocabulary, though problems remained in the case of a few students.

Overall, the process of conducting Exploratory Action Research (EAR) has been incredibly rewarding and transformative for me as a teacher.

First, I gained a deeper understanding of my students' needs and challenges. Before doing this research, I didn't fully realise how much students' engagement depends on the variety of activities and the classroom environment. Now, I see the importance of keeping lessons interactive and supportive to build students' confidence and interest in learning.

Through this process, my perspective on research also changed. Initially, I thought research was complicated and time-consuming,

—
but I learned that by asking the right questions and collecting data through tools like interviews and observations, I could solve real classroom problems effectively.
—

I also gained more confidence as a teacher. By exploring different teaching techniques, I discovered creative strategies that made vocabulary learning enjoyable and meaningful. I now feel better equipped to design lessons that address my students' needs.

Moving forward, I will continue to use interactive activities such as group discussions, games, and role plays, to keep my students engaged. I am committed to enhancing my teaching practices to foster a more engaging and supportive learning environment. I also plan to regularly reflect on my teaching and seek feedback from students to improve further.

Overall, this experience has helped me grow as an educator. I have learned that small changes in teaching approach can make a big difference to students' learning outcomes.



Part II.

Pronunciation and speaking

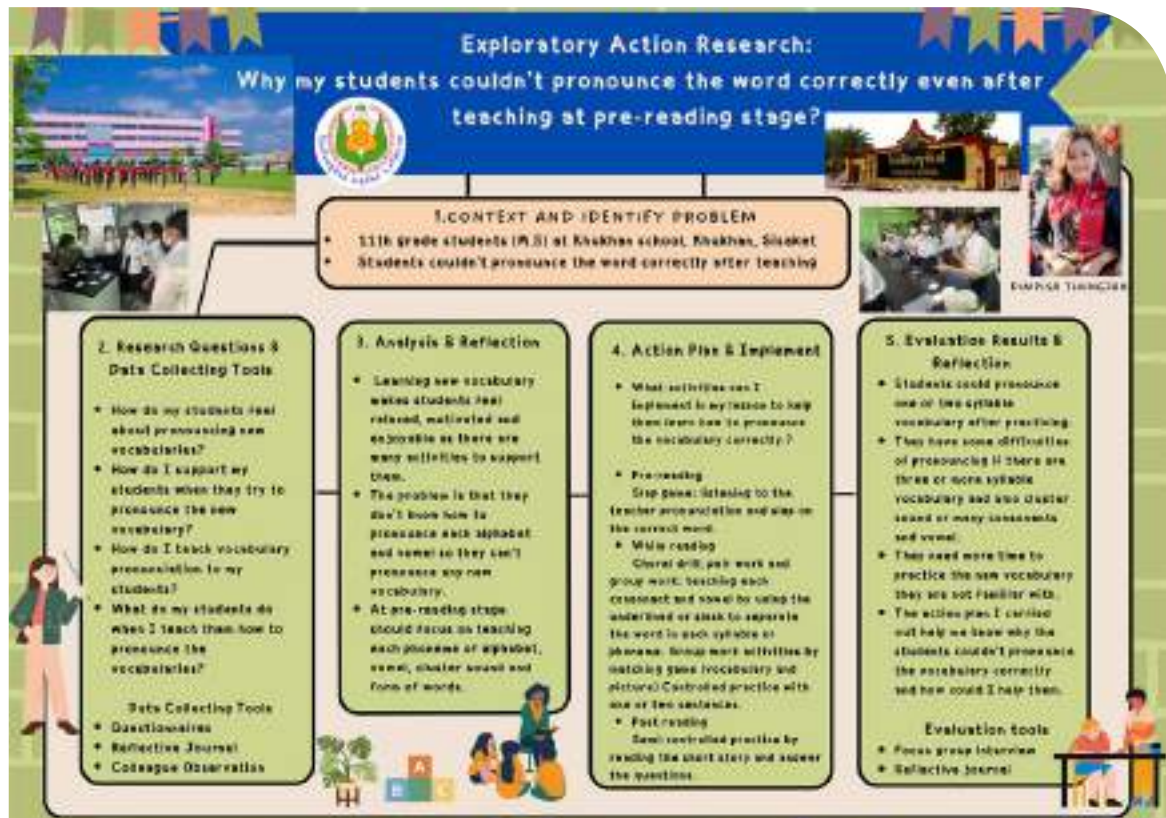


Chapter 9

Helping my students pronounce words correctly

Pimpisa Thungjan
Khukhan School,
Sisaket Province





My teaching situation

Khukhan School is a secondary school in a rural area of Khukhan district, Sisaket Province in the northeast of Thailand. My English class is a Grade 11 class of students who are around 17 years old. There are about 40 students in the class and they have a relatively low level of proficiency. Most of them don't use English either inside or outside class. They speak four dialects – Khmer, E-san, Kui or Yer – or standard Thai at school. Some of them can't recognise the English alphabet or the phonemes. They sometimes write down the pronunciation of English words in Thai in case the teacher asks them to read aloud.

The problem I faced and my exploratory questions

When I asked students to read aloud, I found that most of them weren't able to pronounce words correctly even though I had taught them the pronunciation already during pre-reading activities. In fact, when I had taught them how to pronounce each word before reading a sentence or text, they had done quite well. However, when I showed them the new vocabulary on the board and asked them to choose the word I said aloud, they tended to get the wrong one.

I gave them a reading text to practise for about 15–20 minutes. Most of them felt relaxed and

happy when doing the activity. I observed the class carefully and found that the words with three or more syllables were the most difficult for them. Some of them would write a translation of the text or the pronunciation of English words in Thai, but when I asked them to delete these, they couldn't pronounce the words correctly and some of them just said, 'I'm sorry teacher, I don't know how to read and I can't remember'. Moreover, some students asked their friend to help, and repeated the new word only after their friend had whispered the pronunciation to them.

Therefore, I wanted to find out why my students couldn't pronounce the words correctly, and there are four exploratory research questions that I focused on:

RQ1:	RQ2:
How do my students feel about pronouncing new vocabulary?	How do I support my students when they try to pronounce the new vocabulary?
RQ3:	RQ4:
How do I teach vocabulary pronunciation to my students?	What do my students do when I teach them how to pronounce the vocabulary?

What I did

To address the research questions, I used three research tools for collecting data: a questionnaire, a reflective journal, and observation of a video recording. The questionnaire, which 30 students completed, can be found in Appendix 1. In the reflective journal, I recorded my own written reflections in relation to lessons in which I taught vocabulary, based on the following questions:

1. How did I start the lessons?
2. How did I involve students in vocabulary practice activities?
3. What do I do well in vocabulary teaching lessons?
4. What doesn't go well in vocabulary teaching lessons?
5. What should I do to support my students in vocabulary teaching lessons?
6. How do I give feedback to the students to improve their vocabulary pronunciation?
7. How do I motivate them to learn more vocabulary?

I also watched video recordings of two or three of my lessons, writing in my reflective journal again to add to the notes I had already made after each of these classes. For another perspective (peer observation), I asked my colleague to watch one of the video recordings and note down what happened in relation to the following questions:

Question	What happened
1. How does the teacher introduce new vocabulary during the pre-reading activity?	
2. What do the students do when the teacher teaches new vocabulary during the pre-reading activity?	
3. What activities do the students most enjoy during the practice stage?	
4. How does the teacher give feedback to the students to improve their vocabulary pronunciation?	
5. How do the students feel when the teacher gives instruction?	
6. How actively do the students participate in vocabulary teaching activities?	
7. How do the students feel when the teacher gives them feedback?	

What I found out and learned

From the data I got from the questionnaires, self-observation/reflective journal and colleague observation, here is a brief summary of what I learned:

In answer to RQ1 (How do my students feel about pronouncing new vocabulary?), I found that the students feel motivated and relaxed when pronouncing new vocabulary with the teacher in class. They enjoy it and are happy. However, some of them mentioned that they sometimes feel confused because they don't know how to pronounce individual letters, including vowels.

In response to RQ2 (How do I support my students when they try to pronounce the new vocabulary?), the data revealed that I supported my students by observing and checking their understanding in class. Moreover, group work activities helped them to support each other and learn from their friends. Giving them points and praising them after doing an activity helped them to enjoy it more.

Next, regarding how I taught vocabulary pronunciation to my students (RQ3), the data showed a common pattern: I first did a warm-up activity, eliciting students' background knowledge about the new vocabulary, and then showed them flashcards with the word and a picture so they could repeat the vocabulary after me. After that, I organised a group work activity so they could practise with their friends. Finally, they played a game using the new vocabulary and pronouncing the words one by one.

In answer to the last research question (RQ4: What do my students do when I teach them how to pronounce the vocabulary?), I found that my students were able to pronounce the words correctly when listening to and practising with the teacher. Choral drills and individual drills using flash cards with phonetic symbols and games motivated them to learn. However, some of them didn't understand the words' meaning and I realized that I should teach the meaning of vocabulary more frequently.

From the summary of data above, I found that studying new vocabulary with the teacher was enjoyable for my students and helped them feel relaxed and motivated as there were many activities to support them to learn.

I also found that my students couldn't pronounce the words correctly because they were not sure how to pronounce individual letters, including vowels.

This general underlying problem is the reason they can't pronounce new vocabulary items independently.

What I planned to change

I decided to search for activities I could implement to help students learn how to pronounce vocabulary correctly. Before asking students to read the text aloud, I would pre-teach pronunciation, highlighting each letter

and corresponding phonemes with phonetic symbols, including consonant clusters. I also decided to encourage pronunciation practice with the teacher, then friend-to-friend in pairs, and individually. The research tools for evaluation were to be my reflective journal and a focus group interview.

What I did

Here is the general procedure I adopted:

1. I divided students into five groups, with six to eight students per group. One representative from each group came to the front and they had to slap the word on the board that they heard me say. One by one, each person in a group had a turn.
2. I then demonstrated to the class how to pronounce each consonant and vowel in the new words, separating out the phonemes and syllables. I used choral drills and group work to practise the pronunciation, and students also practised in pairs and individually.
3. Next I used the same groups as teams for a matching game (matching vocabulary item with a picture), where I first pronounced the word, and then students chose the correct word and picture on a flashcard. They had two types of card – picture flash cards and vocabulary flash cards.
4. Next, students picked up cards themselves and pronounced words individually to their group, with the others repeating.
5. Finally, students did controlled practice of reading aloud one or two sentences in pairs, and then some volunteers did so in front of the class.

Here are examples of the two types of flash cards I used:



Rescue



The most challenging part was that the action plan needed to be changed during implementation because my students didn't know what the phonetic symbols represented and got confused between the English letters of

the alphabet. Therefore, I decided to revise my action plan and use underlining and slashes to differentiate between letters and syllables, as here:



Rescue



Res/cue

Another challenge to my research was the limitations of time due to other school events interfering, for example sports day and academic competition.

What I found out and learned

I found that students could learn to pronounce the one- or two-syllable words after practising with me and their friends. However, they still had some difficulties pronouncing words with three or more syllables. Moreover, consonant clusters or words with many consonants and vowels confused them and they couldn't pronounce these correctly. I also found that some students needed more time to practise the new vocabulary which they are not familiar with. They had to open online dictionaries to check the pronunciation or ask the teacher again and again to be sure of the sounds. From these findings, I realised that these particular students still need more activities on the pronunciation of each phoneme and consonant clusters, and more variety of pronunciation exercises. I will therefore plan some further remedial work for them.

Overall reflections

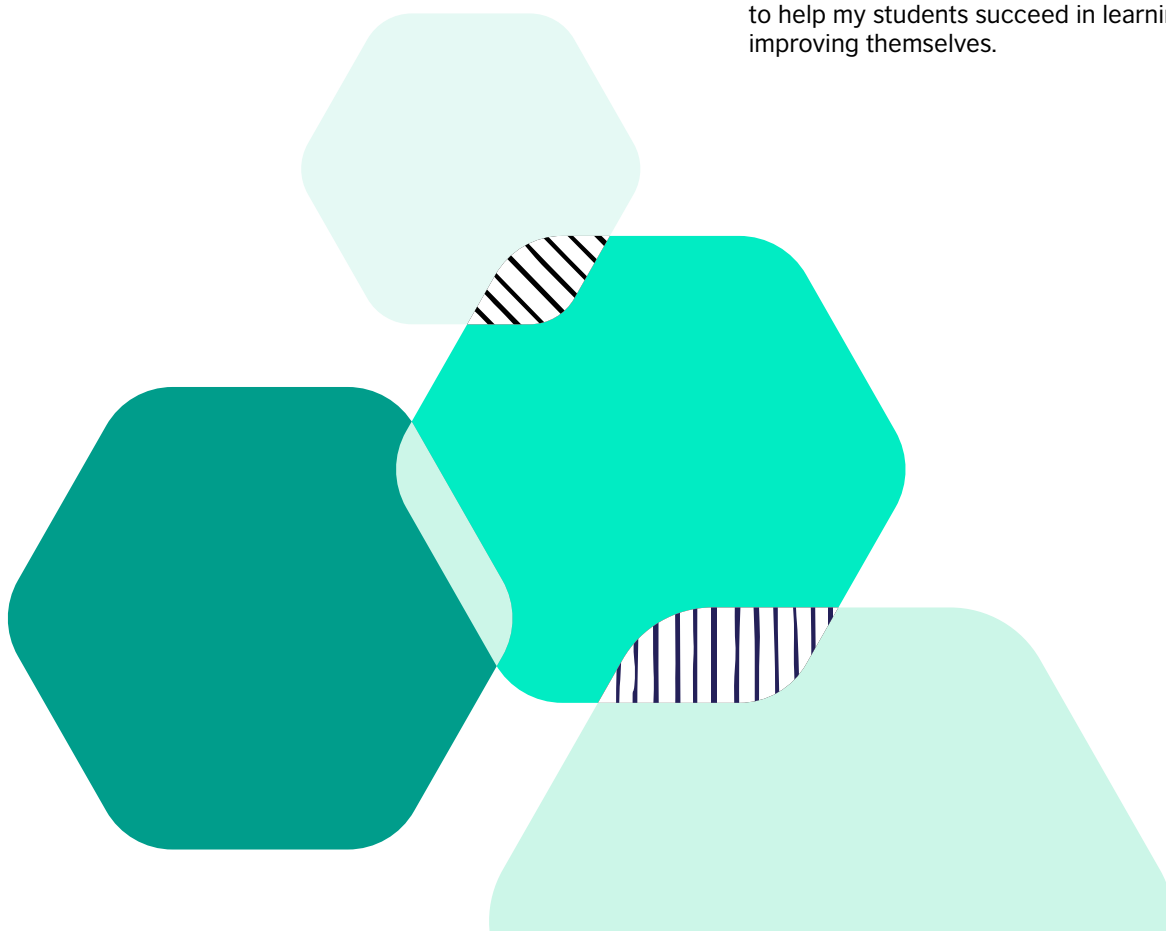
This Exploratory Action Research project helped me to know why the students couldn't pronounce the new vocabulary correctly and how I could help them to overcome this problem.

As I mentioned above, I found that my students felt happier after doing the pronunciation activities. Moreover, most of them improved their pronunciation because they could pronounce one- or two-syllable words after practising with the teacher and friends. They could read the long sentences aloud without their friend and feel more confident speaking English. They felt free to ask the teacher how to pronounce the words and could look them up in an online dictionary themselves. I also realised that some students need further remedial practice and will try to provide them with this.

In my opinion, EAR is a great procedure for exploring the problems which occur in our classrooms as it helps us to find solutions or new ideas by ourselves with the help of a mentor.

We can adapt EAR to bring about improvement for our students, our teaching techniques and ourselves by focusing on our own class, our students and ourselves.

In the future, I plan to do more EAR in my class to help my students succeed in learning and improving themselves.



Appendix: Questionnaire for the students

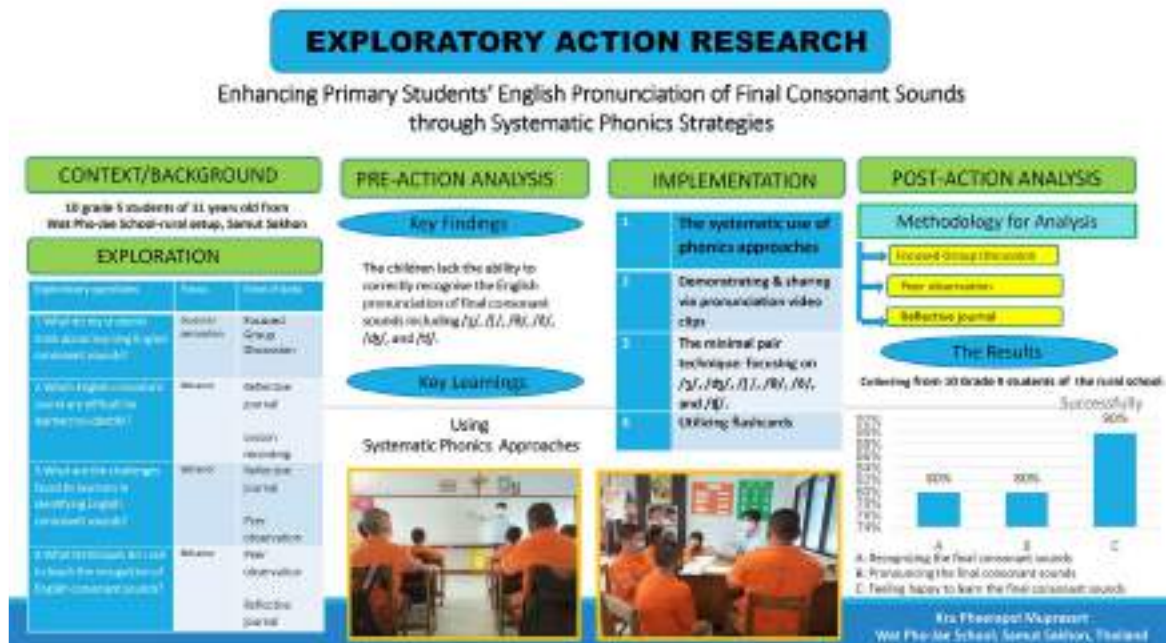
1. **How do you feel about pronouncing new vocabulary?**
 - a. Motivated
 - b. Relaxed
 - c. Confused
 - d. Frustrated
 - e. Other (please specify).....
2. **How do you feel when the teacher teaches new vocabulary?**
 - a. Motivated
 - b. Relaxed
 - c. Confused
 - d. Frustrated
 - e. Other (please specify).....
3. **How do you feel when your friend pronounces new vocabulary?**
 - a. Motivated
 - b. Relaxed
 - c. Confused
 - d. Frustrated
 - e. Other (please specify).....
4. **What reading vocabulary activities do you like?**
 - a. Individual drill with teacher
 - b. Individual drill with classmates
 - c. Pair work
 - d. Choral drill with teacher
 - e. Other (please specify).....
5. **What English reading assessment activities do you like?**
 - a. Reading vocabulary with teacher individually
 - b. Reading vocabulary with classmates in pairs
 - c. Reading vocabulary with classmates in the whole class
 - d. Reading vocabulary with classmates in groups
 - e. Other (please specify).....
6. **What technique do you think could help you learn new vocabulary?**
 - a. Getting feedback individually from the teacher
 - b. Playing games with friends in class
 - c. Listening to the audio and practising by yourself
 - d. Practising reading from the phonetic symbol in dictionary online
 - e. Other (please specify).....
7. **How could you pronounce new vocabulary?**
 - a. Listen to the teacher
 - b. Listen to your friend
 - c. Listen to the audio/voice recorder
 - d. Listen to the dictionary online
 - e. Other (please specify).....
8. **Why is pronouncing new vocabulary difficult for you?**
 - a. I don't know how to pronounce the alphabet and the vowels.
 - b. I don't know how to pronounce the new vocabulary.
 - c. I'm shy to speak English with my dialect accent.
 - d. I'm afraid of the teacher when pronouncing incorrectly.
 - e. Other (please specify).....
9. **What would be a good way to help you learn new vocabulary easily?**
 - a. Vocabulary in your daily life
 - b. Vocabulary in the story you are familiar with
 - c. Vocabulary that you are interested in
 - d. Vocabulary that supports your further studying
 - e. Other (please specify).....
10. **What could help you to remember how to pronounce the new vocabulary?**
 - a. Game
 - b. Song or chant
 - c. Flashcard with phonetic symbol
 - d. Audio/recorder
 - e. Thai translation with Karaoke

Chapter 10

Enhancing students' recognition and pronunciation of final consonant sounds in English

—
Pheerapol Muprasert
Wat Phojea School,
Samut Sakhon Province





My teaching situation

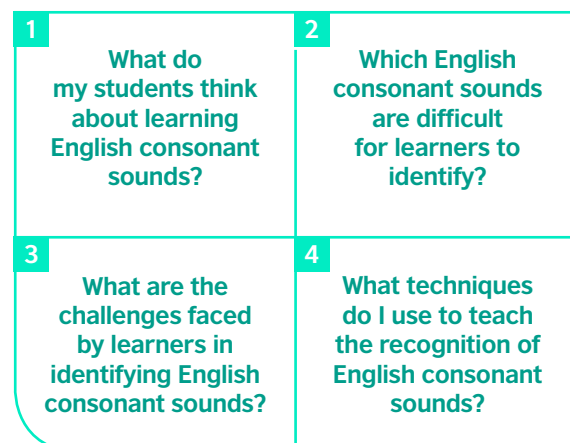
I teach English students in Grades 4 to 6 (10–12 years old) in a government primary school in Wat Pho-Jae School, a rural school in Samut Sakhon Province, Thailand. There are on average 30 students in each class. For this research, I only focused on Grade 5 students, who were 11 years old. Although some of them come from other provinces, most of them live in Samut Sakhon. The students are well-behaved, respectful and friendly, and they try their best to complete the tasks they are given.

The problem I faced and my exploratory questions

My students find it difficult to learn and correctly produce final consonant sounds in English. Most students struggle to understand the English pronunciation of final consonant sounds and seem to have lost confidence in their ability to identify them. The majority of my students were unable to differentiate final English consonant sounds

in front of the class when they performed. Even in group tasks, most of my students failed to recognise final consonant sounds in English words, specifically: /z/, /ʒ/, /ʒ/, /θ/, /ð/, /z/, /ʒ/, /l/, /b/, /d/ and /g/.

So, for the exploratory part of my research, I generated four questions:



Exploring the issue

To find out what students found difficult or easy during pronunciation teaching, I organised two 30-minute focus group discussions, each with five students. I asked them how they felt about the instructions, lessons and activities used in class, and any difficulties that arose. I also enquired about students' attitudes, confidence levels, achievement levels, and extracurricular activities involving pronunciation practice.

Next, I invited colleagues to observe my classes. I provided them with questions which centred on my efforts to create a conducive learning environment for learning final English consonant sounds: for example, 'How often does the teacher encourage peer support activities to identify English consonant sounds?' and 'How does the teacher monitor students engaged in identifying English consonant sounds during activities or tasks?'

Finally, I recorded three lessons in total. One was audio-recorded, and two were video-recorded. I used the recordings to analyse classroom interactions and evaluate the effectiveness of my teaching methods, transcribing some key segments for deeper analysis. I used the following prompts as reflective tools to guide my analysis:



- Examples of English consonant sounds activities.
- Information about these from my observation and recordings – which sounds are difficult for students to identify?
- More details from peer observation and from chatting informally with students about why they find these difficult.

After each lesson, I referred to these prompts to evaluate specific teaching objectives and student responses, taking notes in a reflective journal.





What I found out and learned

Evidence from the different data sources – focus group discussions, peer observations and reflective journal – consistently highlighted significant challenges faced by students in recognising the English pronunciation of final consonant sounds. In focus group discussions, students reported struggling with specific final consonant sounds such as /z/, /dz/, /ʃ/, /θ/, /ð/, and /f/. They also expressed difficulty in identifying words containing these sounds, such as 'push', 'age' and 'smooth'. In my own reflections, I noted that students lacked confidence in recognising final consonant sounds both in individual and group settings. Additionally, they struggled with tasks requiring them to differentiate or pronounce these sounds correctly in front of their peers. Observers noted that most students were unable to identify final consonant sounds despite being provided with instruction and exercises using flashcards and dictionaries. It was clear that students not only lacked familiarity with the target sounds but also struggled with practical application, leading to frustration and a loss of confidence.

While most students struggled with recognition, some instructional methods showed promise. In focus group discussions, students expressed enjoyment of and engagement with flashcard

games, especially when they were able to successfully identify final consonant sounds. This positive emotional response suggested to me that gamified activities may help build confidence and sustain interest. In my own reflective journal, I noted that group activities such as flashcard games encouraged collaboration and made students feel more at ease, even if the results were mixed. One observer noted that, while students participated actively in flashcard games, they often relied on peer support and struggled to apply the skills independently during other tasks. It was evident that students faced significant challenges, especially in tasks requiring independent recognition. These insights revealed that while interactive methods like flashcard games created a positive learning environment, they were insufficient on their own to address the deeper pronunciation challenges.

In addition, the research revealed a lack of consistent independent practice among students. In focus group discussions, students admitted they did not attempt to recognise English consonant sounds outside of class. They did not record their voices using their smartphones or engage with any additional study resources. This lack of independent practice indicated a gap in students' learning habits, which may have stemmed from insufficient guidance or lack of motivation regarding how to use tools and resources effectively for self-study.

What I planned to change

To me, the data had revealed critical gaps in my instructional approach.

In my reflective journal, I noted that I did not explicitly teach students how to pronounce consonant sounds using their mouth, lips, or tongue. Furthermore, I did not provide instruction on reading phonetic transcription which could have supported their ability to recognise and produce the sounds. Despite repeated demonstrations and instructions, students continued to struggle, and this suggested to me that the teaching approach lacked the explicit, detailed articulation practice needed to build foundational skills. From this, I learned that I would need to introduce a more structured and explicit focus on pronunciation techniques, such as demonstrating the physical aspects of sound production and teaching phonetic transcription.

I therefore planned to improve students' articulation by teaching physical movement of the tongue, lips, teeth, and jaw to produce sequences of speech sounds, such as modelling the sounds, showing pronunciation videos via YouTube, and demonstrating positions of the relevant articulators. In order to help my students to recognise the sounds, I decided to use minimal pairs in the classroom with a wide range of vocabulary, focusing on the following sounds: /z/, /ʒ/, /ʃ/, /θ/, /ð/, /ʒ/, and using flashcards to help students recognise how to differentiate among these in English pronunciation. I decided to put the plan into action at the beginning of each lesson and apply these activities throughout the pronunciation lesson.



What I did

To help my students improve their recognition and pronunciation of English final consonant sounds, I implemented the following new teaching strategies:

1. *Flashcard exercises*: I used flashcards to engage students and reinforce their understanding of specific final consonant sounds. Each flashcard contained a word with the target sound, accompanied by a simple picture or visual cue. For example, a flashcard with the word 'bath' (/θ/) included an image of a bathtub. A flashcard with the word 'wish' (/ʃ/) had a picture of a birthday cake with candles. I asked students to identify and pronounce the final sound on the flashcard. To make the activity interactive, I incorporated games such as matching flashcards with their corresponding sounds or grouping them by sound categories.
2. *Minimal pair strategy*: I progressively introduced the minimal pair strategy to help students distinguish between similar sounds. For example, I provided pairs of words that differed in their final consonant sounds and asked students to compare and pronounce them. Examples included:

- o 'breath' (/θ/) vs. 'breathe' (/ð/)
- o 'cash' (/ʃ/) vs. 'catch' (/tʃ/)
- o 'badge' (/dʒ/) vs. 'beige' (/ʒ/)

These exercises encouraged students to focus on subtle differences in pronunciation, enabling them to hear and produce the contrasting sounds more accurately.

3. *Brainstorming vocabulary associations*: I used brainstorming activities to connect new vocabulary words with familiar ones, reinforcing students' understanding of final consonant sounds. For instance, I wrote words like 'breath', 'south', and 'cash' on the whiteboard and asked students to suggest words with the same final consonant, such as:

- o 'breathe' (/ð/) and 'bathe' (/ð/)
- o 'witch' (/tʃ/) and 'catch' (/tʃ/)

Writing these words on the whiteboard allowed students to visualise the differences while practising pronunciation.

What I found out and learned

The action research revealed several important outcomes related to students' ability to recognise and articulate final consonant sounds, with evidence drawn from repeated focus group discussions, writing in my reflective journal, and peer observations.

First, students did improve their recognition and differentiation of final consonant sounds. My notes confirmed that through guided exercises, students demonstrated noticeable progress, particularly when tasks were well-structured and linked to familiar vocabulary. Students also said that the structured activities had helped them improve, while the observers also noted that students engaged actively in pronunciation activities, showing growing confidence in identifying final consonant sounds during classroom interactions. Second, the brainstorming activities seem to have been effective in aiding confidence-building as well as vocabulary retention. As students said in focus group discussions, they were able to connect textbook vocabulary with their prior knowledge, and I observed in my reflective journal that these activities inspired them to actively participate, fostering collaborative learning, as students supported one another in identifying and pronouncing final sounds.

Finally, students' overall willingness to participate seems to have grown. Students indicated that their confidence grew as they succeeded in recognising and articulating final consonant sounds during structured activities and, as I noted in my reflective journal, by the end of the research process, nearly all students exhibited greater self-assurance in discerning and articulating the target sounds, while observers reported that students who had initially hesitated to engage in pronunciation tasks became more confident and proficient as the activities progressed.

Although there were these important successes, a significant challenge I had faced was managing the class time effectively. My responsibilities as a teacher, combined with limited lesson time, often required me to prioritise specific strategies or revisit concepts in subsequent sessions. I also reflect that the success of these strategies depended on my teaching context, including the resources available, the needs of my students and my school's schedule. Some solutions turned out to be more practical than others based on these factors, requiring me to remain flexible and adaptable.

Overall reflections

This EAR project taught us – my students who were the focus of the research and myself as an English teacher – many useful lessons. It's easy to lose sight of how children, like teachers, are individuals with thoughts and feelings.

Instead of speculating about what is going on, it's important to ask students directly to find out. The students' needs and interests must come first.

I am a staunch believer that all students are capable of developing regardless of their background, upbringing or grade level. As long as we as teachers understand what is causing the problem, we can focus on it. This action plan not only helped students significantly enhance their pronunciation of final consonant sounds, but it also helped me, as a professional teacher, to better understand how to teach pronunciation of final consonant sounds to students more effectively, and how to take better account of my students' needs in general.

Chapter 11

My first journey into Exploratory Action Research: Enhancing long vowel awareness

Juthapad Benjapong

Wat Samakkayaram School,
Nakhon Si Thammarat Province





ENHANCING LONG VOWEL AWARENESS through Word-Family Sorting and Long Vowel Booklet in Phonics Lessons

Aithapad, Benjapong, Wat Samakkayaram School, Nakhon Si Thammarat Province, Thailand

1 CONTEXT AND IDENTIFYING PROBLEM

- Primary 6 students in a medium-sized school, located in a suburb of Nakhon Si Thammarat
- Unable to pronounce words with long vowels

2 EXPLORATORY RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- What do my students do when I teach them new vocabularies?
- What do my students feel about phonetic spelling?
- How do I teach new vocabularies?
- Why do I think that my students have difficulty in phonetic spelling?

3 ANALYSIS AND REFLECTION

- Lack of confidence due to the lack of familiarity with vowel sounds
- Weakness and mispronouncing
- Designed phonics lessons for long vowels by using active learning activities

4 CONTEXT AND IDENTIFYING PROBLEM

How do word family sorting activities help students' pronunciation confidence and accuracy?

5 IMPLEMENT/CHANGE

- Implemented lesson plans for 3 lessons
 - word-family sorting activities in practice stage
 - a long vowel booklet in production stage
- Peer observation by colleagues
- Focused group discussion with TP students

6 SUMMARISE AND REFLECTION

- The use of word-family sorting activities and a long vowel booklet enhanced students' ability to spell the words by identifying the long vowel in each word. The students could pronounce the words clearly and confidently.
- Some students need more help decoding the alphabet and vowel sounds and more practice blending. They were also likely to have reading problems in the Thai language.
- I learned that some students didn't try to spell and asked friends to pronounce the word. Some of them noted down Thai spelling under the English word. Those spellings were wrong and caused mispronouncing.

I am an English teacher at Wat Samakkayaram School – a medium-sized school in Ron Phibun District, Nakhon Si Thammarat Province, southern Thailand.

My teaching situation

I conducted the research with my Primary 6 class – 19 students aged 11–12 who have been studying English with me for two years, since Primary 4. A few of them are good at English, but most have an average level of proficiency. They have been learning phonetic spelling, for example, that the letter 'b' makes the /b/ sound, and 'a' makes the /æ/ sound. I have also tried to teach them to blend these sounds together to read words, for example putting /b/, /æ/ and /t/ together to read 'bat'. While most of them can remember the alphabet and short vowel sounds, they seemed to have particular difficulty pronouncing words with long vowels.

The issue I faced and my exploratory questions

For this, my first Exploratory Action Research project, the most challenging part was to narrow down the research topic and develop exploratory questions. Initially, I wanted to focus very broadly on students' pronunciation, considering aspects like alphabet and vowel correspondences, spelling, blending, intonation and stress, aiming for comprehensive improvement. However, my mentor helped me to focus on how to improve my students' pronunciation of words with long vowels, and I formulated four exploratory questions to work with during the research process:

<p>RQ1:</p> <p style="text-align: center; color: teal;">How do I teach new vocabulary?</p>	<p>RQ2:</p> <p style="text-align: center; color: teal;">What do my students do when I teach them new vocabulary?</p>
<p>RQ3:</p> <p style="text-align: center; color: teal;">How do my students feel about phonetic spelling?</p>	<p>RQ4:</p> <p style="text-align: center; color: teal;">What difficulties do my students have with phonetic spelling?</p>

What I did to explore the issue

I taught an English vocabulary lesson on the topic of health and I was careful to include words with short and long vowels. I employed the PPP (Presentation, Practice, Production) approach, incorporating songs, games, group work and individual worksheets.

In relation to this lesson, I utilised three tools to answer my research questions: a peer observation form focused on my teaching approach (RQ1) and students' engagement (RQ2) for a colleague to use when watching a video recording of the lesson (see Appendix 1); reflective journal prompts to help me identify the difficulties my students faced with English spelling and pronunciation (RQ4 – see Appendix 2) and the following set of interview questions (RQ3):

- Did you enjoy the activities the teacher uses to teach new vocabulary (e.g. using flashcards, etc.)? Why or why not?
- How did you feel when the teacher asked you to spell words based on letter sounds?
- Do you think spelling words based on letter sounds is easy or difficult? Why?
- Do you think the teacher's activities helped you remember the sounds of all English letters? Why or why not?
- What do you think you need to do in order to spell words correctly based on letter sounds?

Using these questions, I interviewed all 19 students individually to learn about their feelings and their understanding of phonetic spelling.

What I found and learned

Data collected from peer observation showed that most students demonstrated interest, co-operation, and interaction with the teacher. They were able to spell words using letter sounds and pronounce simple words, although their pronunciation was often unclear. When confronted with unfamiliar vowels, some students attempted to pronounce them, while others refrained from trying. My colleague observed that I supported my students by modelling the correct spelling and pronunciation when mistakes occurred, encouraging students to repeat after me.

On the other hand, interviews with my students revealed predominantly negative emotions including confusion, discomfort, lack of confidence, anxiety and fear of making mistakes. Many students felt they could not pronounce or read words correctly, and some struggled to articulate their feelings. Generally, they found spelling words using letter sounds to be moderately challenging.

From my journal notes, it was clear that students experienced difficulty recognising vowels in words, and that these challenges hindered their ability to blend sounds, for example putting /k/, /eɪ/ and /n/ together to read 'cane', leading to mispronunciations or an inability to pronounce words at all. In particular, my students were having difficulty with pronouncing words with long vowels, because they could neither identify the long vowels nor pronounce them. For example, they would pronounce the word 'cane' as 'can', 'teen' as 'ten', 'pine' as 'pin', 'note' as 'not', and 'tube' as 'tub', indicating an inability to distinguish short and long vowels.

To summarise, while most students actively engaged in learning activities with interest, they lacked confidence and experienced anxiety when spelling words phonetically.

This difficulty arose from their inability to recognise vowels, in particular long vowels, which impacted their ability to blend sounds and pronounce words correctly.

My action plan

In response to my findings, I decided I would continue with activities that the students enjoyed, such as games, flashcards, worksheets, note-taking, vocabulary memorisation and songs with actions. However, I would redesign learning activities focused on phonetic spelling and pronunciation of long vowels.

Accordingly, I designed three lessons using a PPP approach. I focused on three long vowel sounds – /eɪ/, /i:/ and /aɪ/ – using a word family sorting activity in the practice stage and a Long Vowel Booklet in the production stage as follows:

Practice stage: word family sorting activity

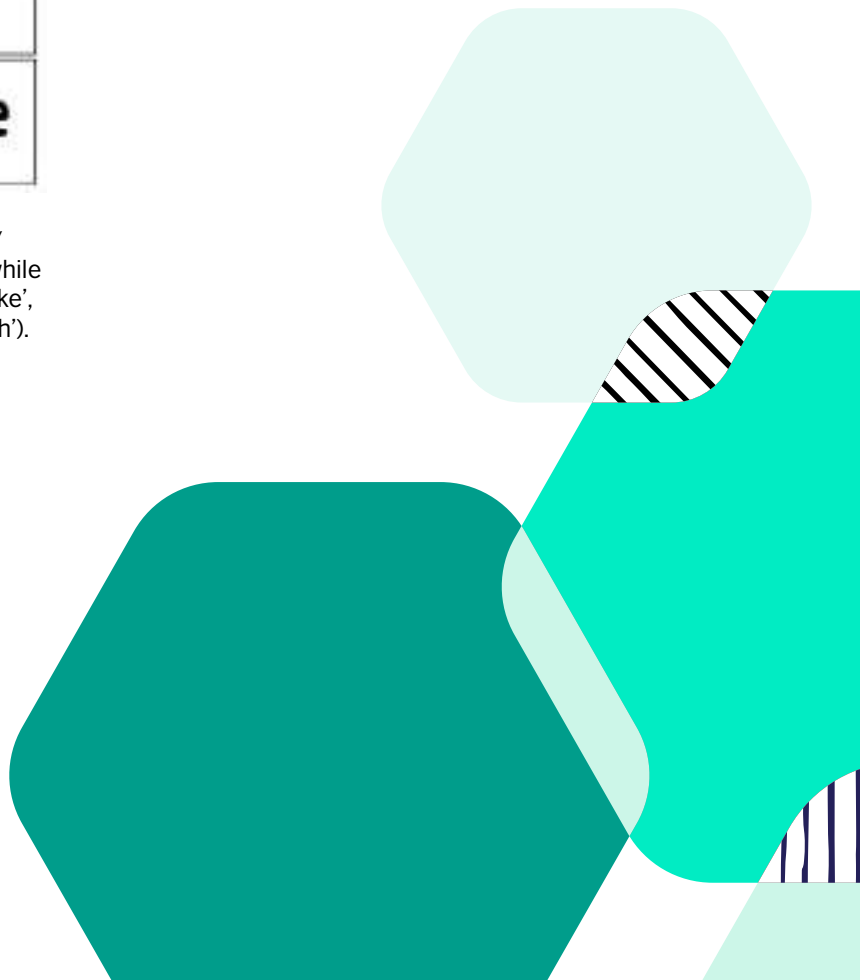
The students worked in groups of three. Each group received word cards containing a mix of short and long vowel sounds — for example, /ɪ/ and /aɪ/.

fin	bike	line
sky	right	high
pine	spy	kid
pie	pin	time

They sorted the cards by vowel pattern: the /ɪ/ group included words like 'fin', 'pin', and 'kid', while the /aɪ/ group included words with i...e (e.g. 'bike', 'line', 'pine', 'time') and with igh (e.g. 'right', 'high').



After sorting, students underlined the vowel pattern in each word (e.g. pin, bike, right). Finally, they labelled each group with its vowel pattern, such as i...e for 'bike', 'line', 'pine', and 'time'. The students matched flashcards with the word cards and practised spelling and pronouncing the words. At the same time, I provided corrective feedback and gave them additional practice if needed. Afterwards, I randomly nominated students to pronounce the words. Then, we played a 'show me the word' game, where I pronounced a word and a student showed the corresponding word card.



Production stage: Long Vowel Booklet



I produced and distributed a Long Vowel Booklet containing exercises with long vowel words. Students sorted the words according to their vowel patterns and labelled each pattern – for example, ‘i_e’ for ‘bike’, ‘line’, ‘pine’, and ‘time’ in the picture of a kite. The booklet was designed to help students recognise vowel patterns and develop confidence in spelling and pronunciation.

To find out the impact of my actions, I used two research tools: a peer observation during the third lesson of the intervention (see Appendix 3); and discussions afterwards with all 19 students, divided into three focus groups corresponding with good, moderate and poor proficiency (see Appendix 4 for the questions I asked). During the individual interviews in the exploratory stage, I had conducted individual interviews and found that some students had difficulty expressing their opinions. Therefore, I placed them in groups with peers of the same learning level, thinking they would feel more comfortable answering questions when with classmates of similar ability, and this did prove to be the case.

What I found and learned

During the action stage, I had some success but I also learned some lessons.

From the focus group discussion, I found that students felt they had generally improved their spelling and pronunciation by identifying word vowels. The word family sorting activity had helped them to differentiate short and long vowel sounds and remember vowel patterns using the letters a, e, i, o, and u. This activity also promoted collaboration.

Exercises from the Long Vowel Booklet had reinforced long vowel sounds, aiding students in reading, writing and memorising vocabulary. As a result, their pronunciation improved overall and they articulated words more clearly, as I observed in the family sorting activity. However, some students showed no improvement due to continuing difficulty recalling long vowel sounds, while others relied on peers for assistance with spelling and pronunciation or made errors in Thai phonetic notation.

Most importantly, I discovered that some students could remember the alphabet and vowel sounds, but they could not blend individual sounds to pronounce the words. I noted down their names and discussed this issue with the Thai language teacher, who informed me that those students had reading problems in Thai, too.

Peer observation by my colleague confirmed that students could effectively identify vowels by underlining them in the word family sorting activity and grouping words based on vowel patterns. However, although many students pronounced words with increased confidence, some struggled with spelling or seemed to lack concentration. I provided support and feedback to address these challenges while they were working on the tasks.

Overall, I can say that combining the word family sorting activity with the Long Vowel Booklet enhanced students' ability to identify vowels and improve their spelling and pronunciation, resulting in greater fluency. However, a few students continued to struggle with accurate spelling and pronouncing long vowel sounds, as I learned from both peer observations and focus group interviews.

Overall reflections

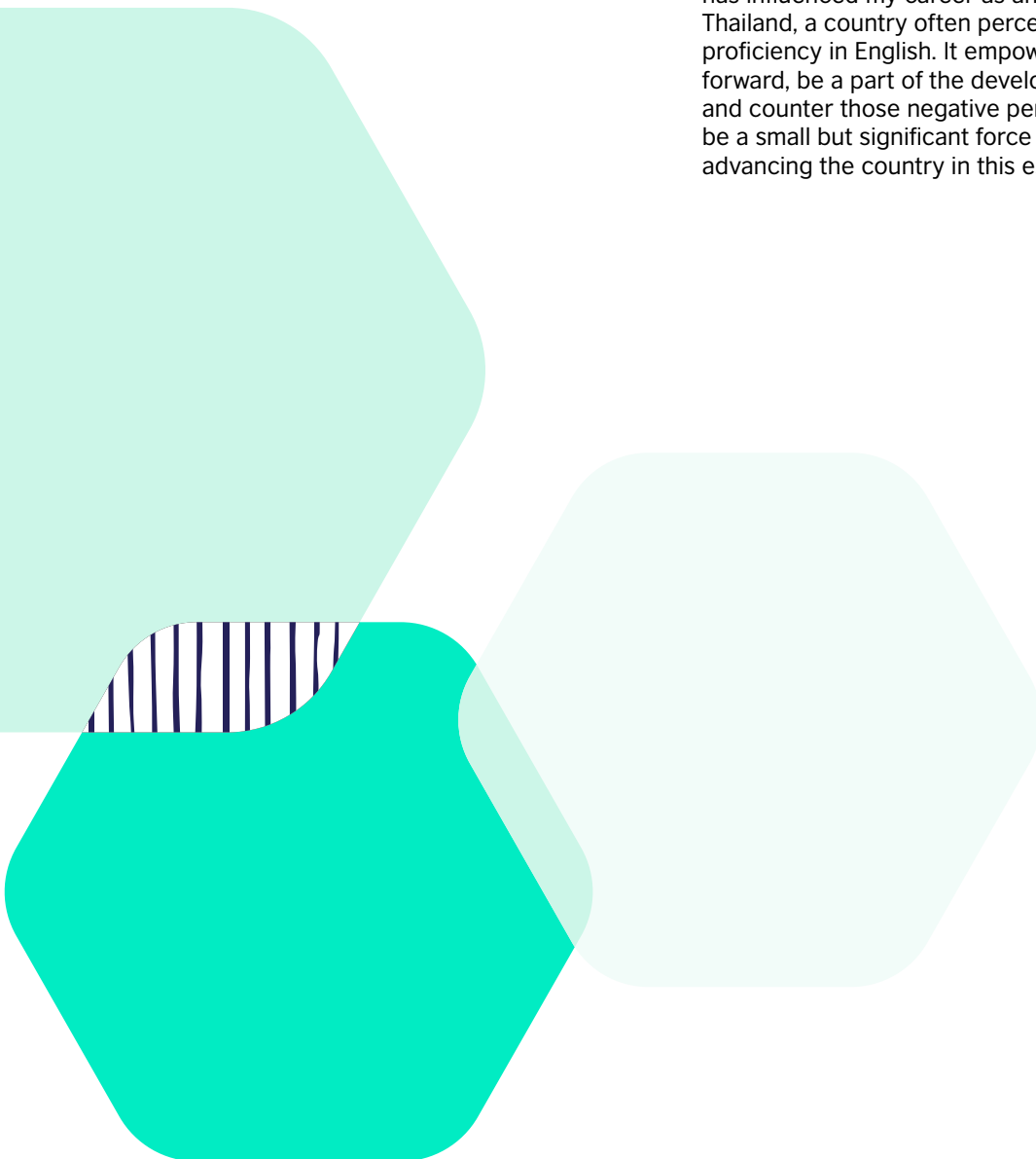
First, I learned that the research results relating to research questions are not the only thing to focus on; I found that other insights that emerged during the research process were equally valuable. I discovered issues outside the scope of my research that nonetheless impact my students' learning and my teaching. For instance, my students used Thai phonetic notation under English words. Unfortunately, these notations were incorrect, which led to mispronunciations in English. What I've gained from this is a valuable lesson, and it motivates me to continue my research to address my students' needs. I am now interested in the idea of adapting Thai notations to help teach phonics.

Additionally, EAR has introduced me to a new perspective on classroom development: the student's perspective. I have learned that listening to students and understanding their viewpoints is not very difficult, yet it is significant for my teaching development.

EAR stands for Exploratory Action Research, but it also reminds us of the 'ears' we need to listen to our students.

Paying close attention to students is essential for improving our teaching skills. As a researcher, I learned that I must also be careful with my interview questions, especially since the interviewees were students in Primary 6, around 11–12 years old. My questions need to be direct, easy to understand and relevant to their experiences; otherwise, they may be reluctant to respond. I must also avoid any sense of seeming to judge whether the answers are right or wrong to enable them to feel comfortable answering or sharing their opinions.

My experiences with EAR have shaped me into a teacher who listens more attentively to my students. I now pay closer attention to their messages, feelings and problems. This experience has influenced my career as an English teacher in Thailand, a country often perceived as having low proficiency in English. It empowers me to move forward, be a part of the development of Thailand, and counter those negative perceptions. I aim to be a small but significant force contributing to advancing the country in this essential area.



Appendix 1: Peer observation form for the exploratory stage

RQ1: What do my students do when I teach them new vocabulary?

Part 1 Students' behaviour

Questions	What is happening?
1. What behaviour do students exhibit when the teacher teaches new vocabulary?	
2. How do students spell and pronounce the new vocabulary words?	
3. What do students do when they encounter letters or vowels they cannot pronounce?	
4. Do all students spell and pronounce the vocabulary words correctly?	
5. How is the fluency and clarity of students' pronunciation of vocabulary words?	
6. How do students participate in the vocabulary pronunciation activities?	

RQ3: How do I teach new vocabulary?

Part 2 Teacher's behaviour

Questions	What is happening?
1. How does the teacher teach new vocabulary?	
2. What does the teacher do to help students pronounce the new vocabulary words?	
3. What does the teacher do to help students spell the new vocabulary words?	
4. What does the teacher do when students spell, blend and pronounce the vocabulary words incorrectly or are unable to pronounce them?	
5. How does the teacher check if all students in the classroom can pronounce the new vocabulary words correctly?	

Appendix 2: Teacher's reflective journal for the exploratory stage

RQ4: Why do my students have difficulty in phonetic spelling?

Questions	What is happening?
1. How do I teach new vocabulary?	
2. What do I do to help students pronounce the new vocabulary words correctly?	
3. What do I do to help students spell the new vocabulary words?	
4. How do I teach students to separate the initial consonant, vowel, and final consonant in English?	
5. How do I help students pronounce short and long vowels correctly?	
6. What do I do when students spell, blend and pronounce the vocabulary words incorrectly or cannot pronounce them?	
7. How do I check if all students in the classroom can pronounce the new vocabulary words correctly?	
8. How do I assist students who cannot pronounce the new vocabulary words correctly?	
9. How do I feel when students pronounce the vocabulary words correctly, and why?	
10. How do I feel when students cannot pronounce the vocabulary words correctly, and why?	

Appendix 3: Peer observation form for the action stage

Part 1 Students' behaviour

Questions	What is happening?
1. How did students distinguish between short and long vowels in the word family sorting activity?	
2. How did the Long Vowel Booklet help students better differentiate, recognise and remember long vowel patterns?	
3. How has students' pronunciation of vocabulary words improved compared to before the action plan?	
4. How did every student participate in the learning activities?	

Part 2 Teacher's behaviour

Questions	What is happening?
1. Do the teacher's activities help students learn? How?	
2. Do the teacher's materials aid students' learning? How?	
3. Does giving feedback help with distinguishing between short and long vowels and pronunciation? How?	
4. What does the teacher do when there are students who cannot blend words or pronounce them correctly?	

Appendix 4: Interview questions for focus group discussions

1. How did the teacher help you with pronunciation, and how did you feel about it?
2. Which activity do you think helped you pronounce English vocabulary words better?
3. Do you think the word family sorting activity helped you distinguish between short and long vowels and remember their patterns? How?
4. Do you think the Long Vowel Booklet helped you better differentiate and remember long vowel patterns? How?
5. After the last three lessons, do you think you have improved in pronouncing English vocabulary words? How?
6. After the last three lessons, do you think your group members pronounce the vocabulary words by spelling them out or by memorising the whole word? Explain with examples.



Chapter 12

How can I improve students' confidence in speaking class?

Autsawapol Muedthong
Huai Yot School,
Trang Province





My teaching situation

I teach English to secondary school students in a large public school in rural Thailand. My classes of Grade 7 students (aged around 13) often struggle with speaking due to limited vocabulary, weak sentence structure knowledge and low confidence. Many students are hesitant to participate in speaking activities, seeming to fear

making mistakes and peer judgment. Before my Exploratory Action Research, my teaching focused more on grammar and reading than on practical speaking skills, but through this research I identified a need to change my approach by integrating more communicative activities, structured speaking practice, and constructive feedback to help students build confidence and improve their fluency.

The problem I faced and my exploratory questions

Students' lack of confidence in speaking could be attributed to various factors. First, many students seemed to fear making mistakes, such as incorrect pronunciation or grammatical errors, leading to feelings of self-doubt or discouragement. A limited vocabulary seemed to further exacerbate this issue, as students struggled to express themselves fluently. Additionally, the lack of sufficient opportunities to use English in their daily lives may have made it difficult for students to gain the practice necessary for improvement.

To identify the root causes of my students' lack of confidence in speaking, I developed three exploratory research questions:

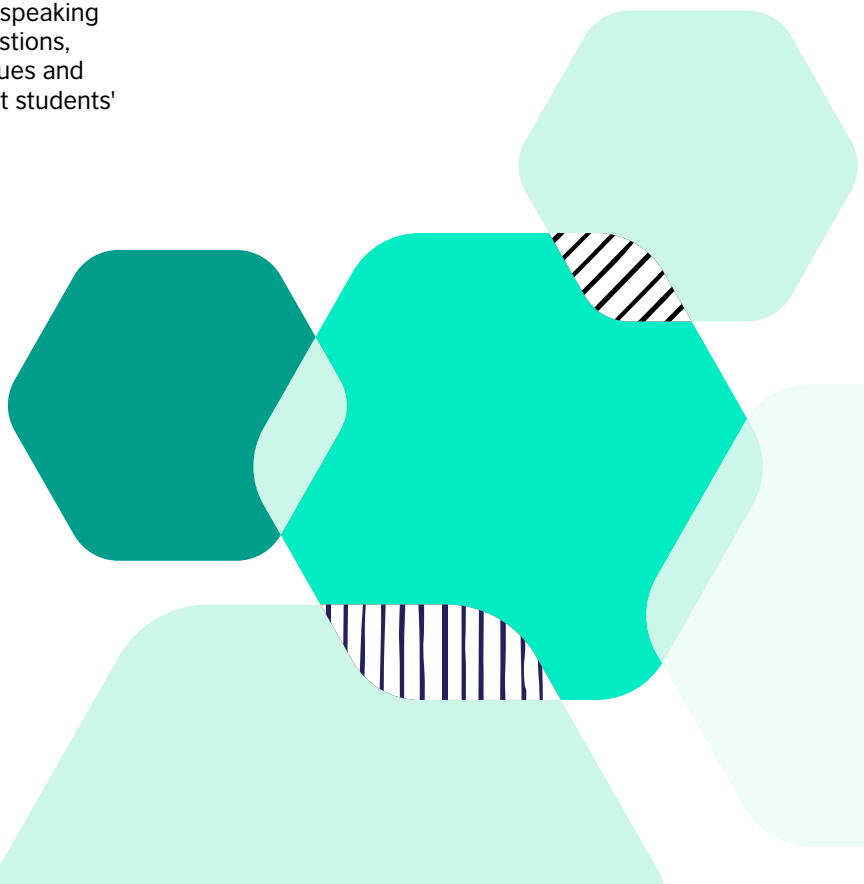
<p>1</p> <p>Why do I want the students to be confident in speaking English?</p>	<p>2</p> <p>How do students feel when they speak English?</p>
<p>3</p> <p>How do I teach speaking?</p>	

Research question (RQ) 1 would help me reflect on the importance of different language skills for my students' future academic success and communication abilities. RQ2 was designed to help me understand the emotional barriers that hindered students from participating in speaking activities. Lastly, I asked RQ3 to examine my own teaching practices and identify potential areas for improvement in supporting students' speaking development. By exploring these questions, I aimed to uncover the underlying issues and determine effective solutions to boost students' speaking confidence.

What I did

I wrote in my reflective journal after each class, recording my thoughts and observations for three weeks, with six periods per week. I also interviewed 20 students individually, with each interview lasting about 10–15 minutes, to gather insights into students' feelings about speaking English. I invited colleagues to observe my teaching during three lessons, with a focus on my methods for teaching speaking, student engagement and the effectiveness of feedback.

These observations provided valuable insights into how I could improve my teaching and support students more effectively.





What I found out and learned

Through the data collected from my reflective journal, student interviews and peer observation, I identified two main causes of my students' lack of confidence in speaking English: 1) insufficient vocabulary and sentence structures and 2) an absence of effective teacher feedback.

1. Insufficient vocabulary and sentence structures

The issue of limited vocabulary and sentence structures became evident through both my reflective journal and student interviews. In the journal, I reflected on how students struggled to express themselves fluently during speaking activities, often pausing or resorting to basic phrases due to their limited vocabulary. For example, one particular entry noted, 'Students hesitated when asked to speak about a familiar topic because they couldn't find the right words'. In the student interviews, many reported feeling frustrated and anxious about speaking because they lacked the vocabulary needed to

construct complete sentences.

One student mentioned, 'I want to speak more, but I don't know enough words to say what I want'. This lack of linguistic resources was directly related to their hesitation to participate, impacting their overall confidence in speaking.

2. Lack of teacher feedback

Another significant finding was the lack of continuous and constructive feedback during speaking activities. According to the peer observations, students often lacked guidance on how to improve after speaking tasks. The observer noted that, while I encouraged participation, I did not always provide immediate or detailed feedback to help students reflect on their performance. My journal entries also highlighted this issue, with one reflection stating, 'I sometimes forget to give feedback after speaking activities, and students seem unsure about how they did'. This lack of feedback led to confusion and a lack of direction, which diminished students' confidence in their speaking abilities.

My action plan

Together, the above findings showed that a lack of vocabulary and effective feedback were key factors contributing to my students' lack of confidence in speaking English. I therefore decided to try to help students feel more confident and capable in using English by addressing these shortfalls through vocabulary-focused lessons and regular feedback.

My teaching had tended to rely on relatively traditional methods, such as grammar explanations and controlled exercises, with minimal speaking practice. However, I had recently come across the PPP (Presentation–Practice–Production) model through professional development workshops and research on effective language teaching strategies. I now decided to shift to a new PPP lesson plan model, as it provided a structured, interactive approach to teaching speaking. I decided that the

PPP framework would allow me to address vocabulary and feedback issues by scaffolding students' learning systematically.

In the Presentation stage, I would introduce new vocabulary with clear definitions, visual aids and example sentences. In the Practice stage, students would engage in activities like role playing and pair work to reinforce their learning, and during the Production stage, students would create dialogues, skits and presentations, encouraging creative use of language. Tasks like mini-interviews and short presentations would allow students to practise speaking in varied contexts, boosting their confidence.

To address lack of feedback, I decided to provide continuous, constructive feedback during activities, encouraging reflection and development. Pair and group activities would promote peer learning and collaboration.



To evaluate the impact, I used four tools: peer observation (three observations), students' performance on speaking tasks (at the end of the intervention), student interviews (after the intervention), and my own reflective journals (for three weeks, six periods per week, as during the exploratory phase). Overall, this maintained the same evaluation framework as in the

exploration phase, allowing me to track change in my teaching methods and enabling me to monitor the effectiveness of the new strategies. By comparing the two phases, I could assess whether the adjustments had led to meaningful improvements in students' speaking abilities and confidence.

What I found out and learned

Through my action research, I gathered evidence from four main sources and this showed me that my students' confidence had improved.

Peer observations: In three observations during the intervention, my colleagues noted that students were more engaged during speaking activities. They observed that students were willing to participate in group discussions and showed less hesitation when speaking in front of their peers. One observer remarked, 'The students seem more comfortable using new vocabulary and structures they have learned, and the class atmosphere feels more positive'.

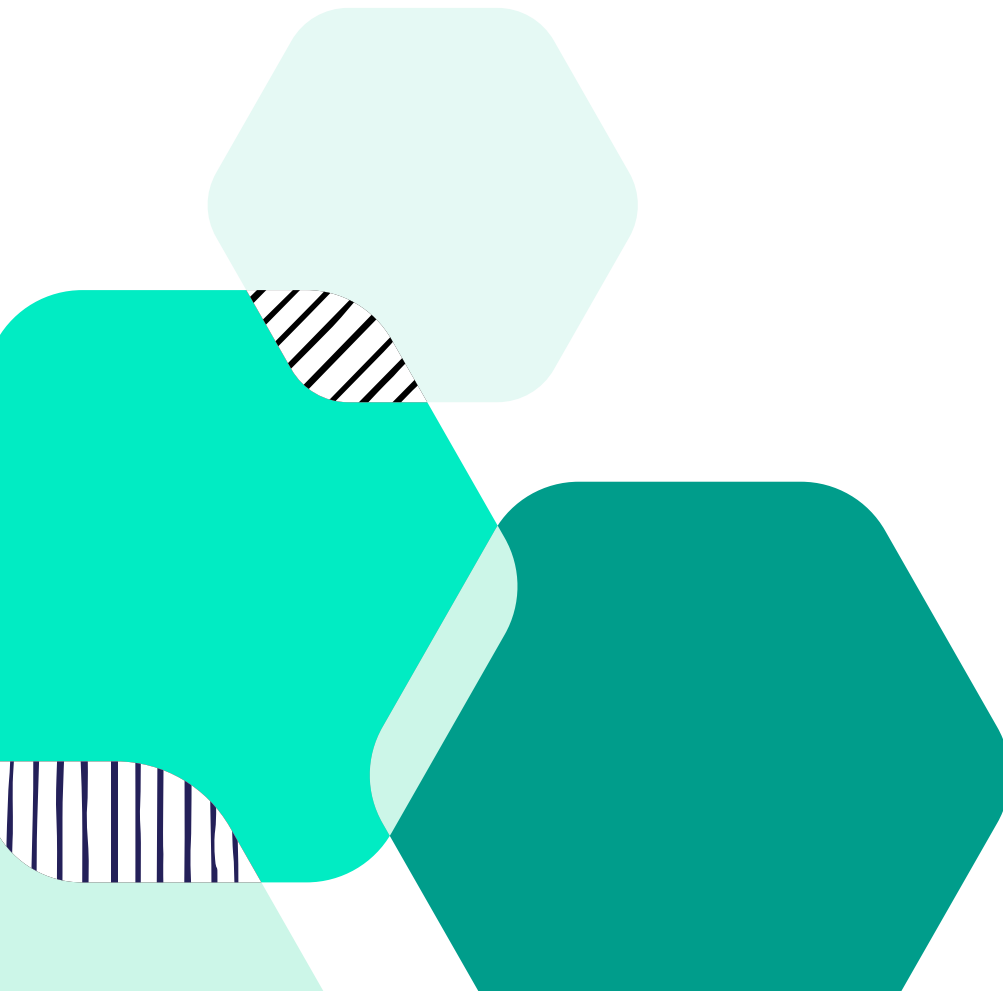
Student interviews: At the end of the intervention, I conducted interviews with 20 students. A majority of students reported feeling more confident in speaking English. One student said, 'Before I was afraid of making mistakes. But now I feel more comfortable because I can use the words we practised in class'. Many students mentioned that the opportunity to create

dialogues, record them and listen back had helped them improve. They also appreciated the continuous feedback, with one student stating, 'The feedback helps me know what I need to improve and makes me feel I am getting better'.

Students' performance on speaking tasks: At the end of the intervention, students' performance in speaking tasks showed marked improvement. For example, during a role-playing activity, many students were able to use the target vocabulary correctly in context, which had been a challenge for them before. Their ability to form complete sentences and engage in conversations without looking for translation was noticeably improved.

Reflective journal: In my reflective journal, I noted a shift in my approach to teaching speaking. I felt more confident in providing immediate, constructive feedback and actively supporting students through scaffolding and encouragement. I also observed that students were becoming more comfortable with peer feedback, which enhanced their learning.

In conclusion, the findings from these tools together showed that using the PPP approach and providing consistent, supportive feedback had improved students' confidence in speaking English. This approach helped them feel more confident participating in speaking activities and using English in varied contexts.



Overall reflections

Through participating in this project, I learned about the process of Exploratory Action Research for addressing classroom problems. This involves gathering data by asking students about their areas for improvement or any issues they are facing, allowing both myself and the students to open up and address these problems together. Additionally, I found it very useful for colleagues of mine to observe my teaching sessions, which provided insights into my teaching practices. This fostered a true community of learning where I could gather feedback from students and my colleagues to devise solutions for improving my teaching methods.

This encouraged students to ask questions when they didn't understand or needed additional information. Moreover, it enabled me to continuously develop my teaching methods to make them more effective.

I have integrated the experiences gained from this project into my ongoing lesson planning and teaching development. By listening to students' needs and areas for improvement, I can focus on developing my teaching practices more effectively. If given the opportunity, I hope to participate in this project again because I believe in continuous self-improvement and that learning has no end.

By being open to listening to students, a closer bond between them and me was established.



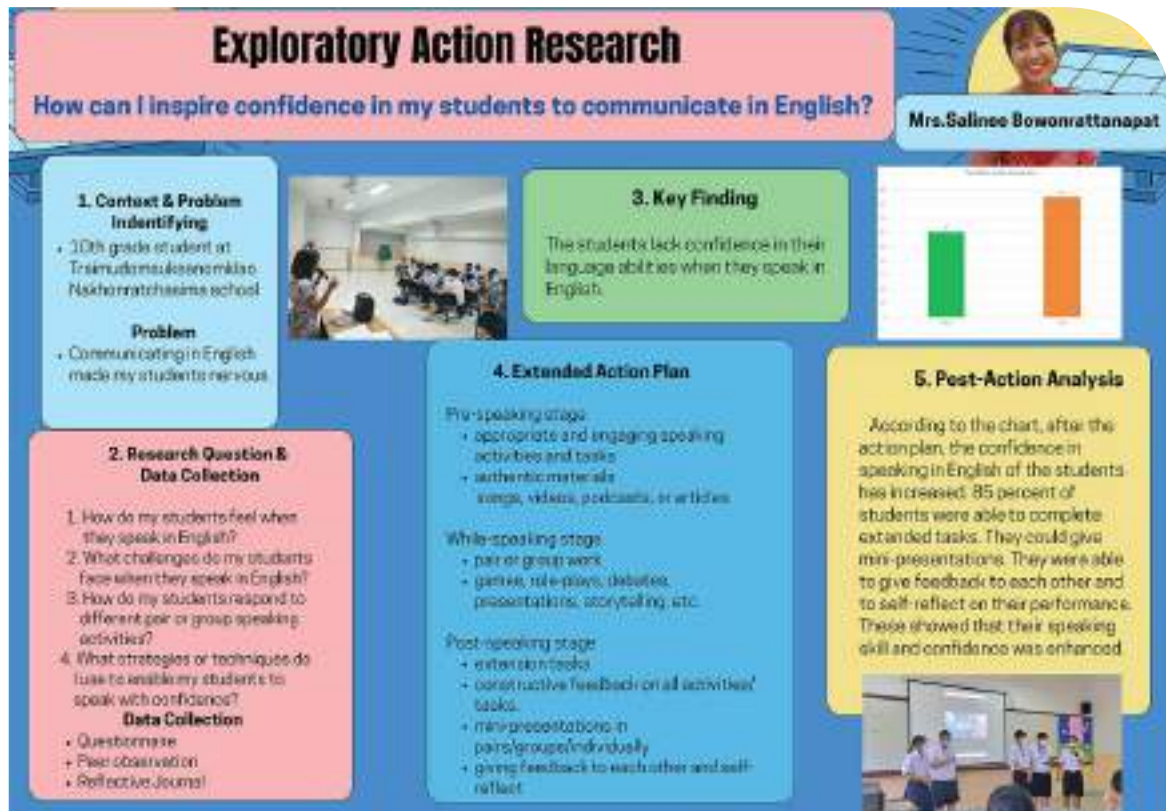
Chapter 13

How can I inspire confidence in my students to communicate in English?

Salinee Bowonrattanapat

Triamudomsuksanomklao Nakhonratchasima School,
Nakhon Ratchasima Province





My teaching situation

My school caters for students aged 15 to 18 and I teach an English Listening and Speaking class to Grade 10 students who are 15–16 years old. Most of these students face various challenges when they try to speak in English. Grammar, pronunciation, vocabulary and impromptu speech seem to be their main areas of difficulty.

The problem I faced and my exploratory questions

One of the problems I faced in my class was that my students got nervous in communication in English – maybe because they don't use English in their daily life, could not get familiar with it or got shy, I imagined. So, I decided to do Exploratory Action Research on this issue because I wanted

to help them feel more comfortable and confident in English speaking. Specifically, the objective of my research was to strengthen my students' confidence and communication abilities in speaking English. For the exploratory phase of my research, I developed four questions to guide my investigation.



What I did

I used various tools to gather data from the 35 students in my class to understand their perspectives. For research questions 1 and 2, I conducted two focus group discussions with eight students each about their English challenges, and I also used a questionnaire (see Appendix 1). The focus group discussion questions were as follows:

1. Did the brainstorming activities boost your speaking confidence in the target language?
2. Which of these speaking activities or tasks did you find most interesting for enabling you to speak in the target language: games, role play, presentation, debate, storytelling, interview? Why?
3. How did the teacher support and motivate you to speak confidently in the target language?
4. How did you collaborate with each other in speaking practice activities?
5. What difficulties did you encounter while doing your speaking tasks?
6. What additional guidance do you need from the teacher to enhance your speaking skills?
7. How did you evaluate your own speaking performance?
8. How did the peers help or support you while speaking?
9. How confident are you in speaking English in class now?

For questions 3 and 4, I collected data through peer observation (see Appendix 2) and a reflective journal. The reflective journal questions were as follows:

1. How did I introduce and model the speaking task?
2. How did I monitor and support the students during the speaking activity?
3. How did I provide feedback on their speaking performance?
4. How did I assess students' speaking skills and progress?
5. What kinds of speaking practice did I provide to my students in the lessons covered so far?
6. How did I engage the students in meaningful communication?
7. How did I create a safe and supportive environment for speaking?
8. How did I use questioning techniques to elicit and extend students' responses?
9. Did the students seem motivated or interested in all the activities? How could I tell?
10. What did I find challenging about the speaking lesson?

What I found out and learned

From the analysis of questionnaire results, I found that grammar anxiety, fear of making mistakes, nervousness and shyness were some of the factors that affected the learners' confidence in speaking English. The students enjoy using the language, but they are not sure if they are saying something correctly. They get stressed when the teacher asks them to speak spontaneously and are embarrassed to speak in front of others, especially if they have what they perceive as a 'different' accent or pronunciation. From the focus group discussion, I also found that grammar, pronunciation, vocabulary and impromptu speech are some of the common challenges that learners report when they speak in English.

From peer observation and my reflective journal, I found that pair or group speaking activities,

in particular, helped students improve their pronunciation, comprehension and feedback skills, as well as their assertiveness and enthusiasm. I found that some activities did not motivate my students to participate enough. For example, traditional drills or repetitive tasks often led to disengagement, especially among students who needed more dynamic and interactive approaches to stay interested. Also, I realised that I was not always tailoring activities to suit the diverse needs and proficiency levels of my students. Some students struggled with tasks that were too challenging, while others found them too easy, leading to a lack of engagement and progress.

What I discovered from the exploratory research was helpful for me in understanding the situation better. It made me realise that I needed to find more ways to stimulate my students' interest and motivation to enhance their confidence to speak in English.



What I changed

To improve the situation and inspire confidence in my students to communicate in English, I decided to put more effort into choosing appropriate and engaging speaking activities and tasks that would suit my students' level, interests and goals.

I thought that I would use more authentic materials to provide opportunities to students for brainstorming and speaking and I would use songs, videos, podcasts, and articles that were relevant and interesting for my students.

I would also use pair or group work to reduce anxiety and increase interaction among my students, assigning different roles and responsibilities in the speaking activities or tasks. I would need to choose appropriate and engaging speaking activities and tasks that suit my students' level, interests and goals. I thought that games, role plays and presentations would create opportunities for my students to use English for

real communication. In the post-speaking stage, I would provide some extension tasks and would give constructive feedback on all activities/tasks.

I planned to use focus group discussion, peer observation and reflective journals as research tools to see what change occurred.

I implemented this action plan for five weeks, trying to improve the situation. In the pre-speaking stage, I learned to select suitable and engaging speaking activities and tasks that matched my students' level, interests and goals, and I used authentic materials such as TED Talks, YouTube vlogs, songs, photographs and maps to stimulate their background knowledge to generate ideas for speaking. I also tried to have the students practise speaking English as much as possible. They worked in pairs and small groups and did role plays and mini-presentations. After that, they were able to complete some extension tasks and some did mini-presentations in front of the class.

What I found out and learned

A colleague who observed my classes noted that students appeared more engaged and confident over time. She observed that pair work and group discussions helped reduce anxiety, as students felt more comfortable practising English with their peers before speaking in front of the whole class. My colleague commented, 'Students were actively participating in role plays and seemed less afraid of making mistakes'.

This colleague also highlighted the effectiveness of using real-life communication scenarios, such as asking for directions or students introducing themselves. She noted that these practical activities made students more confident and willing to speak. Additionally, she observed that positive reinforcement in class encouraged students to take more risks with their language use.

During focus group discussions, students shared that they felt more relaxed and confident in their English communication skills, particularly

in speaking and listening activities. Many noted that their anxiety had significantly decreased over time, making it easier to participate in class. Students appreciated the use of pair work, group discussions and role plays, which created a supportive environment for practising English. One student said, 'Working with friends helped me feel less nervous. Now, I'm more confident speaking in front of the class'. The gradual progression from simple dialogues to more complex conversations also made students feel more prepared and less overwhelmed.

Students felt that the supportive environment, practical communication activities, and consistent encouragement helped reduce their anxiety and build their confidence in using English effectively.



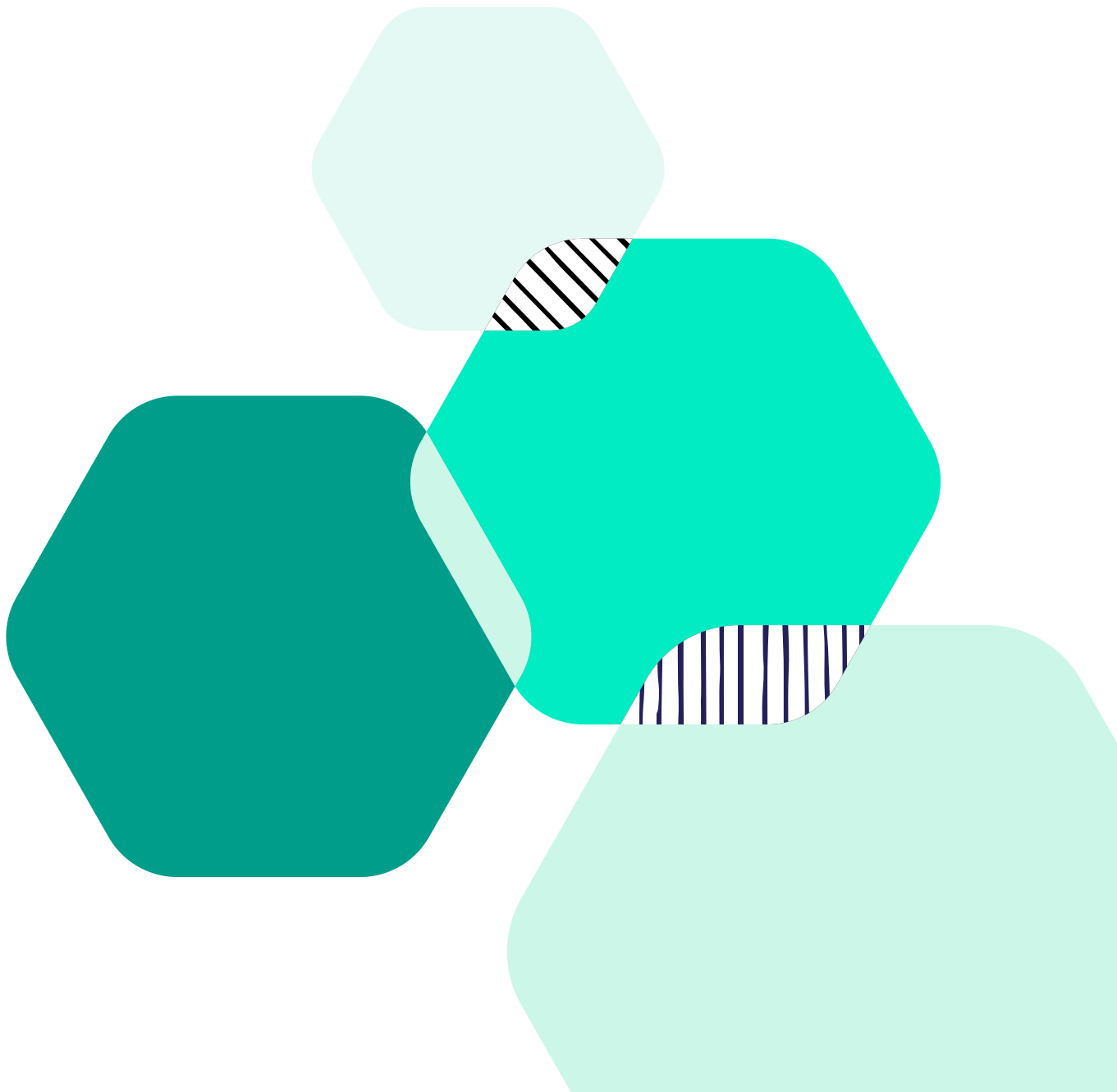
Overall reflections

Through Exploratory Action Research (EAR), I have learned to explore and understand classroom situations, identifying challenges and gaining insights into student needs and interests. I gained knowledge about how to do action research in my classes, including how to create the tools to gather data, such as questionnaires, focus group discussions and reflective journals.

I also discovered strategies to enable students to speak with confidence, such as choosing appropriate activities, giving clear instructions, and effective monitoring and feedback.

—
From the process of doing EAR, my point of view has changed. I recognise students' needs, interests and unique requirements better.
—

I discovered how to strengthen teacher-student relationships and enhance student engagement during lessons. This process provided me with valuable insights and contributed to sustainable improvement in my classroom learning environment. EAR empowered me to explore, reflect and take meaningful actions to enhance my teaching practice and will influence my future work as a teacher also.



Appendix 1: Questionnaire

Part I: Read the statements and choose a number for each statement.

1. Strongly agree
2. Agree
3. Neutral
4. Disagree
5. Strongly disagree

No.	Statement	1	2	3	4	5
1	I feel proud when I speak English because my pronunciation sounds like a native speaker.					
2	I feel anxious because my grammar isn't good so I am worried if what I said was right or not.					
3	I like to speak in English but sometimes I get shy when I come across words that I'm not sure how to pronounce.					
4	I am not confident in my pronunciation and vocabulary when I speak in English.					
5	I feel excited when I speak English and sometimes I feel bad because I can't pronounce it.					
6	I feel happy to speak in English but sometimes I am afraid of making a mistake.					
7	I feel nervous when I speak English because I'm afraid of making mistakes or not being understood.					
8	I feel insecure when I speak English in front of many people.					
9	I feel unhappy with an impromptu speech					
10	I like to study English speaking by myself, especially with games.					
11	I lack self-confidence in my pronunciation.					

Part II: Answer these questions according to your opinion.

1. What are the main reasons or goals for learning and improving your spoken English?

.....
.....
.....

2. What are the main strategies or methods that you use to practise and develop your spoken English skills?

.....
.....
.....

3. How confident or comfortable are you in speaking English with different people, such as native speakers, non-native speakers, teachers or peers?

.....
.....
.....

4. What are the main benefits or advantages of speaking English well?

.....
.....
.....

5. What are the main challenges or difficulties that you face when speaking English?

.....
.....
.....

6. How do you feel when you speak English in different situations, such as in class, with friends, with strangers or online?

.....
.....
.....

Appendix 2: Peer observation

Stage	What happened?
<p>Stage 1: Pre-speaking stage</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How did the teacher motivate the students before starting the lesson? • Were the students given enough support to assess their background knowledge/ vocabulary related to the topic? Provide specific examples. 	
<p>Stage 2: While-speaking stage</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What activities created opportunities for students to use English for real communication? • How did pair and group work support the students' development of speaking during the task? • Did the activities/tasks provide sufficient opportunities for students to gain more confidence in speaking? Please provide specific examples. 	
<p>Stage 3: Post-speaking task</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What tasks were given to give students practice in productive skills? • How did the students evaluate their own performance? • How did the students give feedback to each other during pair/ group presentations? 	

Chapter 14














Preparing my students for impromptu speaking

Kanokrat Uicheng

Deebukphangnga Wittayayon School,
Phangnga Province



Preparing Students' for Impromptu Speaking

Background	Exploratory Stage	Action Stage	Evaluation	Experience
<p>Teacher-researcher: Informative</p>  <p>Name: Pansak Sittong School, Dusitthongkiri, Nakhon Phanom, Thailand Student Class: 11 Program: Science Mathematics Technology & Computer Program Number of Students: 28 Course Title: English for Higher Education</p>	<p>Exploratory Stage</p>  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teacher's lesson and explicit questions on impromptu speaking (see below) Students had difficulties in terms of task (i.e. vocabulary, coherence, flow, topic, time allocation) Students had difficulties in terms of structure (i.e. relevance, organization, and topic) 	<p>Action Stage</p>  <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Implement a preparation activity called Applying for BERT whereby, instead of the task of a student's need to do an impromptu speaking task. Prepare students in terms of task <ul style="list-style-type: none"> examine the transitional devices speaking from notes group discussion on certain topics Prepare students in terms of structure <ul style="list-style-type: none"> flow among ideas about structural preparation Conduct an activity of impromptu interviews 	<p>Evaluation</p>   <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Questionnaire & Checklist (Single Item) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 80.7% of the students stated that they performed better More than 90% of the students felt less shy when The top 3 key factors for a successful impromptu speech are 1) Know the audience 2) Movement and Organization Comparison of the writing files <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Length: Longer pre-writing, less pre-writing, more pre-writing Content: Of Coherence, Relevance, Organization, Flow, Coherence, Fluency, and Grammar Number of ideas from 1 to 3 or 4 	<p>Experience</p>  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discover my own classroom, my student needs, and improvement potential from the perspective of an enable Start what to expect of what Ask valid questions and design suitable tasks and solutions Be less shy of everything. Don't start to conclude that one solution fits all
	<p>Data Collection: Short Interview Protocol</p> 			
	<p>Data Collection Tool: Survey</p>  <p>Open-ended questions, English to English.</p>	<p>Preparing students in terms of structure</p>  <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. I find and frequent situations 2. Share/prepare with Teacher 		
	<p>Data Collection Tool: Checklist</p> 	<p>Preparation for Task: Learning to Use Transitional Devices</p> 		
	<p>The practice of impromptu speaking was tested and used involved language preparation, not task. In other words, students had hardly noticed themselves to learn or respond to students' opportunities.</p>	<p>Preparation for Task: Speaking from Notes, Not Full Script</p> 		

My teaching situation

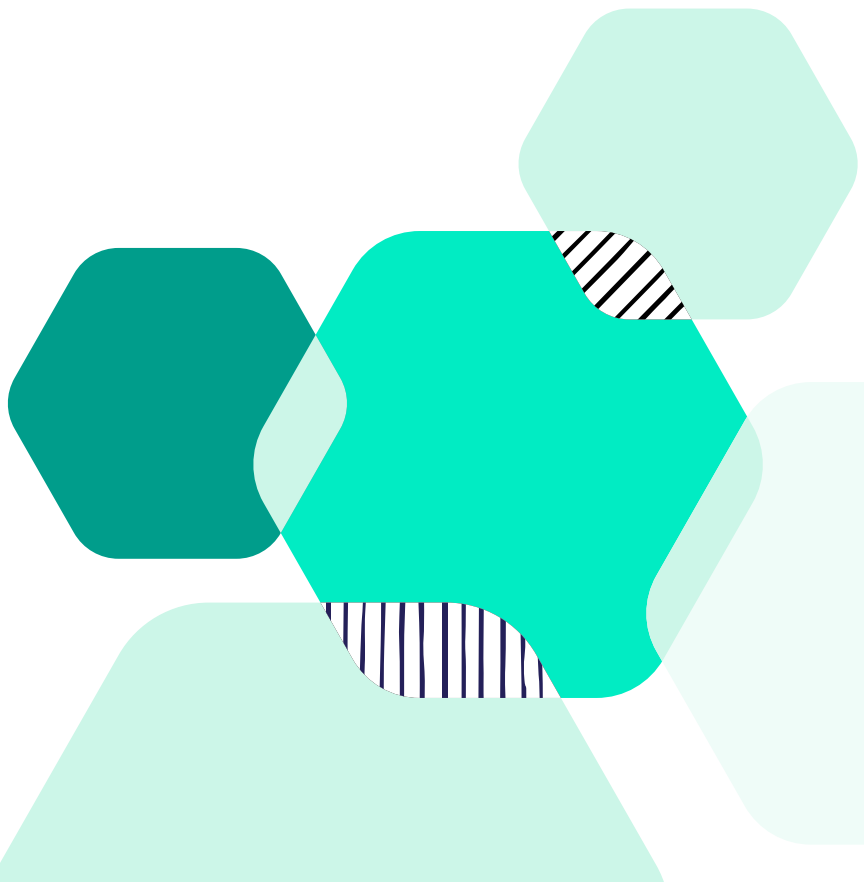
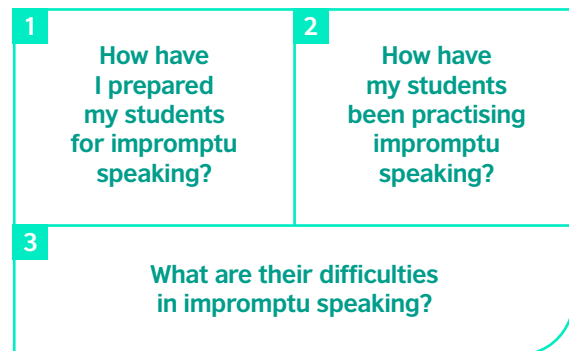
I teach students from Grade 10 to 12 in a provincial secondary school. My research participants were Grade 12 students (aged around 18) in the English for Higher Education stream. They were 28 enthusiastic students who love to ensure quality in every assignment due. So, in general, they always ask for a good amount of time to prepare or to do homework. They perform well in presentations and speaking tasks when scripts are allowed, and they consult Google and translation tools on a daily basis.



The problem I faced and my exploratory questions

However, my students did not perform well when they participated in tasks requiring them to respond to questions without preparation or support tools. Their answers were short, fragmented, and with frequent pauses or hesitation. It seemed that my students had something to say but got stuck and chose to stop speaking. I could see hints of frustration in some of them too, for example wrinkled brows and jerky hand motions. I felt the need to help my students and, in order to achieve that goal, I needed to have a clearer understanding of the difficulties they were encountering. I again considered the nature of the tasks I set them and realised that the dramatic change in my students' performance

occurred specifically when I asked them to engage in impromptu speaking. I therefore set out to understand the situation further by using these exploratory research questions:



What I did

To answer my first exploratory question, I checked my previous lesson plans, reflection notes, and other evidence of students' learning to see if I had provided enough knowledge and opportunities for my students to practise impromptu speaking. I also asked my foreign co-teacher for their opinions about the students' speaking performance, for instance, what our students' strengths and weaknesses were, in order to see if these were related to impromptu speaking.



The research tools I designed for questions 2 and 3 were a checklist and a survey, respectively. The checklist (below) provided items for the students to indicate what they had been doing to practise impromptu speaking:

ที่ผ่านมานักเรียนใช้ชีวิตอย่างไรในการฝึกทักษะการพูดโดยไม่ได้เตรียมตัวล่วงหน้า What have you been doing to practice impromptu speaking?			
<input type="checkbox"/>	การค้นหัวข้อฝึกพูดด้วยตนเอง Self-practice with randomly picked topics	<input type="checkbox"/>	ฝึกสนทนากับเพื่อน Start an English conversation with friends.
<input type="checkbox"/>	ทำความเข้าใจเกณฑ์การให้คะแนน Study the criteria	<input type="checkbox"/>	ศึกษาค้นคว้าจากใน YouTube/ Social Media Study from YouTube/Social Media
<input type="checkbox"/>	เข้าร่วมการแข่งขัน Impromptu Speaking Join a competition	<input type="checkbox"/>	จัดทำคลังคำศัพท์สำหรับการพูด โดยไม่ได้เตรียมตัวล่วงหน้า Create Word Bank for Impromptu Speaking
<input type="checkbox"/>	อื่นๆ โปรดระบุ Other (Please Specify)		
<input type="checkbox"/>			
<input type="checkbox"/>			
<input type="checkbox"/>			
<input type="checkbox"/>			

The survey provided the following five open-ended questions to elicit more in-depth opinions from students:

1. What do you think about your performance in impromptu speaking?
2. How do you feel when you need to do impromptu speaking?
3. What topics do you find easy to answer? What topics do you find difficult?
4. Do you have enough vocabulary to express your ideas?

5. What else do you find difficult about impromptu speaking?

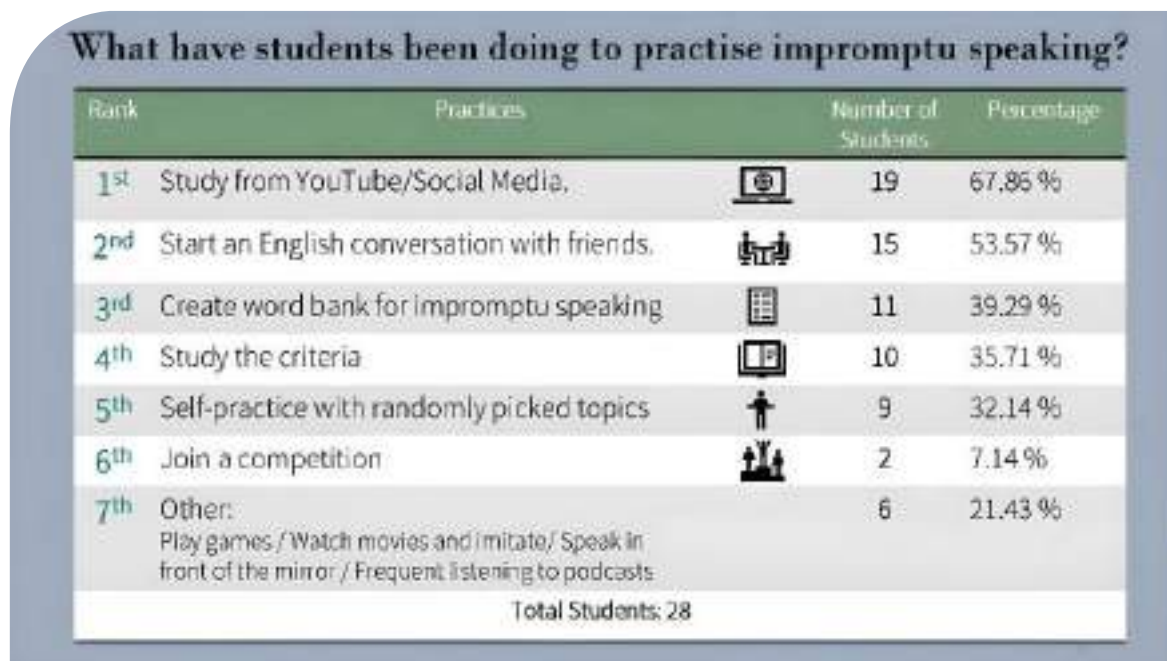
I administered both research tools right after an impromptu speaking task in which each student took a turn being interviewer and interviewee. The interviewers asked questions about: 1) a daily situation; 2) a specific topic; and 3) an abstract topic. The interviewees had one minute to answer each question. Their answers were recorded on mobile phones and sent to me once the task was finished. I listened to these recordings attentively to gain extra understanding of their speaking difficulties.

What I found out and learned

The first thing I learned was that neither my previous lessons nor the students' practice in impromptu speaking were sufficient. Although my co-teacher and I had provided the students with a wide range of vocabulary, the goals were generally to prepare them for listening and reading. I had too quickly jumped to the conclusion that my students would be able to use those vocabulary items when speaking. In fact, I later learned that speaking has its own common vocabulary and functions, too, and that applying what is learned across skills cannot be done so easily and

automatically. I then better understood why my students had a hard time doing impromptu speaking well.

Furthermore, the data from the checklist suggested that my students' practice in speaking tended to be passive rather than active. For instance, they watched a lot of movies and YouTube videos to learn how other people speak English, but they had done little active preparation to speak in varied situations or answer a good number of questions. I think this was one of the reasons why most of them found my impromptu speaking tasks to be new and difficult.



The survey results additionally offered interesting insights into students' difficulties. Besides the tasks themselves, which demanded a good command of vocabulary, structures, ideas and coherence, my students needed to deal with their own emerging emotions. Many students said they felt very excited and nervous. Some were worried about being judged for poor grammar and pronunciation. Several students were not confident when there were no scripts or translation tools. All these emotional interferences prevented my students from having a good and satisfying speaking experience.

The last type of data was students' recorded productions. What I found from listening to these were: 1) the students' answers were generally short and incoherent; 2) the pace of speaking was slow; 3) the vocabulary used was simple and repetitive; and 4) the ideas expressed lacked supporting details.

In conclusion, I learned that my students needed more lessons and practice in impromptu speaking so that they could engage in it comprehensively and successfully, with positive emotions.

What I changed

I planned to adjust my teaching to be more process-oriented, so that I could focus on my students' needs while fostering impromptu speaking skills. My first few actions would be to equip my students with useful target language and provide practice deliberately aimed at impromptu speaking. In addition, I discussed with my co-teacher what we could do collaboratively. They agreed to include more discussions as well as promote the use of cohesive devices, while

I planned to encourage my students to speak more productively by introducing them to collocations, relative clauses, and different types of supporting details.

To ensure active practice, I also planned to facilitate more idea-sharing activities, with authentic and up-to-date prompts. All of these plans were to prepare my students in terms of task and language, with the hope of making speaking less demanding.



Regarding the development of positive emotions, I planned to pay more attention to each individual student. Previously, I used to ask questions very randomly, and there were students who hardly expressed ideas to the class at all. This time, I would make my lessons inclusive to convince my students that every idea counts. I wanted them to feel confident and comfortable to speak up and share what they think or feel. In one session, I decided, we would sit together and discuss tips to reduce stress or deal with emotions while speaking.

I also initiated a long-term activity called 'Applying for MEXT scholarship'. MEXT is Japan's Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, which offers a wide range of scholarships for international students. This activity, involving filling in the official application form, lasted for two months, taking up several lessons and paving the way to a final interview

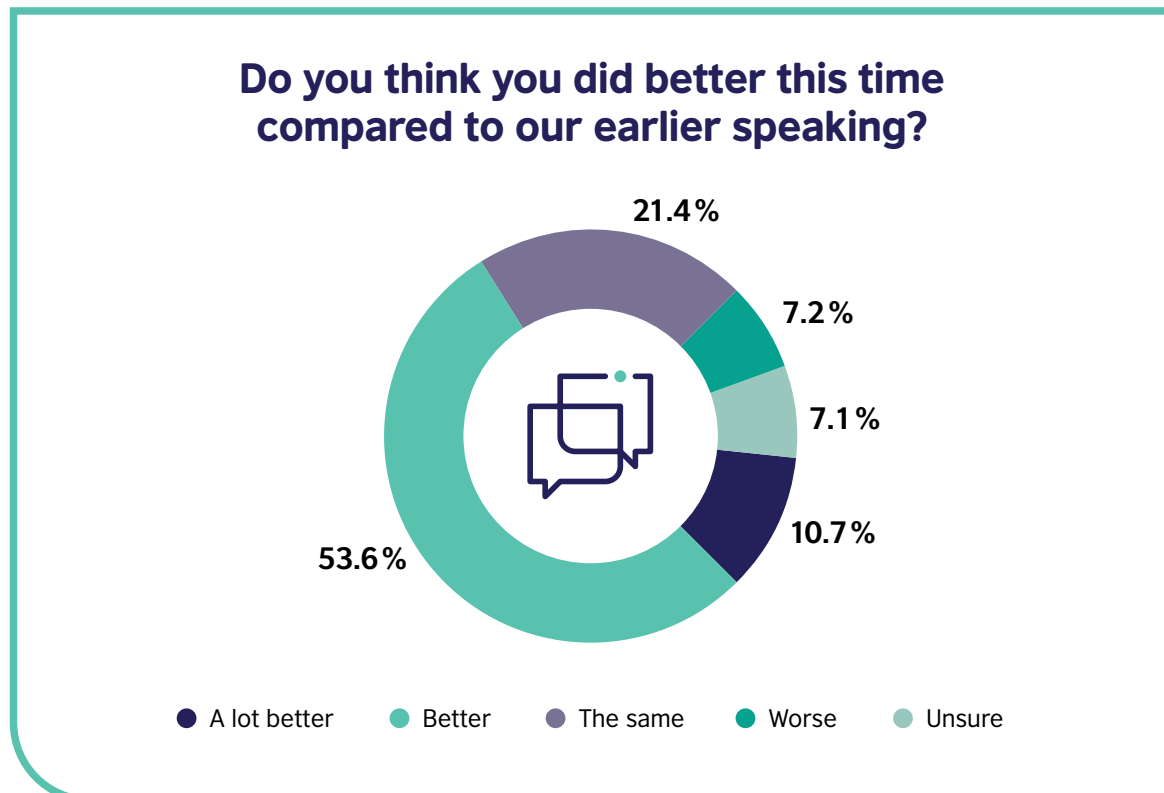
session. This activity provided enough time for me to listen and speak to every student individually. I encouraged them to try out vocabulary, collocations, transitional devices, and other target language learned. I also prompted them from time to time to answer questions about themselves, future plans, global issues, and so on.

The research tools to be used for determining success were a post-task survey and an observation form relating to my students' attempt at the scholarship interview activity. In a further, final interview session with me, too, I asked individual students to answer impromptu questions in English, as well as reflecting on activities and lessons. I then examined the survey results, listened to the interview audios, and reconsidered what had happened in the classroom, in these ways trying to see what changes had occurred.

What I found out and learned

In the survey, there were a number of open and closed questions relating specifically to perceptions of preparedness and performance in the interview activity, as well as emotions relating to it, and overall self-evaluation of impromptu speaking abilities. The survey results for one question (see Figure 1) showed that

18 students (64.3 per cent) thought they had done better in the final speaking task given. Six students (21.4 per cent) stated that they performed just the same as they had with earlier tasks. Two students (7.1 per cent) considered their performance worse, and another two students (7.1 per cent) were unsure. This result suggested that students felt they had improved, and at the same time motivated me to keep exploring so that I could successfully help every student.

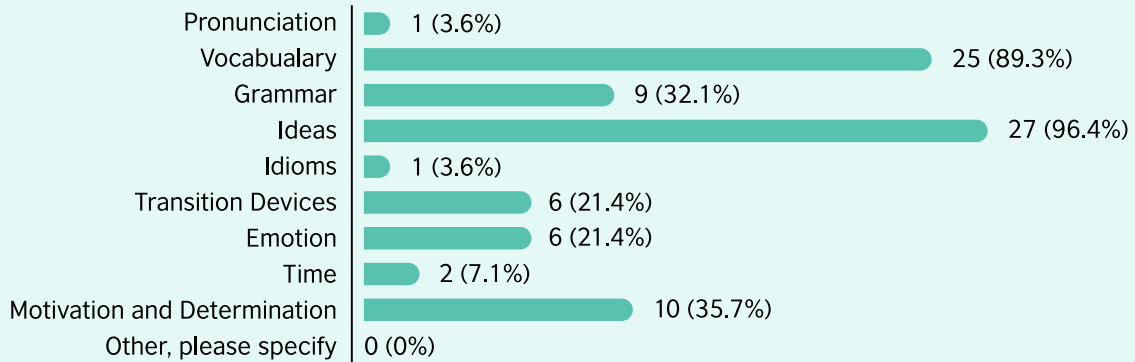


The survey findings also suggested there had been improvement in how students evaluated their own level of preparedness in terms of task, language and emotion. While eight students (28.6 per cent) were neutral regarding their linguistic and task preparedness, in terms of language and task, 14 students (50 per cent) rated their preparedness in these areas positively. Only six students (21.4 per cent) reported their level of preparation negatively. This information will be guiding my future explorations to see what

aspects of language and task remain difficult for some students. Results for how emotionally prepared students were for impromptu speaking were even more positive. Although six students (21.4 per cent) agreed with the idea that they had been nervous, worried or unconfident about the interview task, 16 students (57.2 per cent) reported being prepared emotionally, with a further six (21.4 per cent) being neutral. Still, there is clearly further work to do in this area.

The most interesting and surprising result for me, however, came from a question I asked about perceptions of the top three key factors for successful impromptu speaking.

What do you think are the top 3 key factors for successful impromptu speaking?



As can be seen in the chart, 'ideas' ranks first in students' opinions, followed by 'vocabulary', and 'motivation and determination'. While, in the exploratory stage, emotions seemed to be the major factor preventing students from delivering good impromptu speaking, in this final task, emotion had not seemed to play such a big role at all. I inferred from this result that, once students had overcome their emotional barriers, they found ideas to be a far more important factor. Vocabulary, which remained important, is definitely something in which to keep investing for me as a teacher. What was totally surprising for me, though, is the third factor. I put 'motivation and determination'

last in my list of options and I did not remember emphasising this in my class, yet it stood out as the third most important key factor for my students, higher than grammar and other elements we had been focusing on throughout the whole process. This is something new and inspiring for me to study further. In fact, it might have already been playing a part in my students' new level of achievement – in the final recorded productions, my students were no longer giving up on answering, but rather keeping on talking, speaking faster and giving examples and support for their ideas, too.

Overall reflections

There have been so many things, big and small, that I gained from doing Exploratory Action Research (EAR). However, ranking first in my mind is the phrase 'a good start'. I gained so many good starts due to the EAR process. Looking back, I didn't think at first that doing research would be so manageable or immediate. Before, I would often wait until I found good academic literature before deciding on a topic to investigate. My experience with EAR was different. I started from my students, and I started right away when I found something that was difficult for them. And, by starting early enough, I had time to explore and plan relevant actions. My actions were specifically designed for my students *at the time*, not last year's or next year's. I think this is the most powerful and outstanding strength of EAR.

It would be remiss of me to discuss what I gained merely from my perspective. I would say that my students gained as much as I did. I learned from the final survey and from the time spent with them that they had become happier and more confident to speak English.

By doing EAR, I was able to talk and listen to each of them. One source of their increased confidence, I believe, came from their trust that someone was really listening to them, thinking about what they were saying, and responding to it attentively.

Engaging in EAR made sure I did that for them. I made sure their opinions counted. Our learning and development are therefore very interwoven and sustainable. I feel more accomplished as a teacher.

Last but not least, it might be a coincidence, but EAR has given me a similar experience to the one I gave to my students. In these past months, I have gone through each lesson and recorded activity with care. I got to speak and discuss with my mentor and teammates. They listened to me very attentively. I even got a chance to present and answer some impromptu questions in sessions where I reported on this research. There were things I did well. There were also things I didn't, but I can now approach this research topic again with greater understanding. My sincerest respect to everyone who made this project happen.



Chapter 15

Boosting students' confidence in English speaking

Pornchanok Chamnanaksorn
U-Thong School, U-Thong District,
Suphanburi Province



BOOSTING STUDENTS' CONFIDENCE IN ENGLISH SPEAKING



Pornchanok Chamnanaksoorn
U-Thong School, U-Thong, Suphanburi, Thailand



Classroom Context
Number of Students: 40
Course Title: Listening & Speaking
Problem: Most students were reluctant to speak English, also some students remained silent.



Exploratory Stage

Q1: What do students think about speaking English in class?
Tools: Questionnaire and open-ended question
Key Finding: Positive attitude - importance of English speaking skills.

Q2: What kind of speaking activities do students like to do?
Tools: Open-ended question/ focus group interview
Key Finding: Collaborative speaking activity in groups with friends.

Q3: What difficulties do students have when speaking English?
Tools: focus group interview/ observation form
Key Finding: Challenges with pronunciation, fear of mistakes and time for preparation/practice.

Q4: How do I support my students when speaking English?
Tools: Observation form
Key Finding: Providing immediate feedback when students make mistakes during speaking.

Action Stage

Pre-Speaking

- Emphasizing pronunciation by consulting with Cambridge Dictionary website
- Providing speaking patterns and extra time for practice

While-Speaking

- Using collaborative tasks and games
- Group work/Pair work with friends

Post-Speaking

- Praising students' efforts and progress, even if small!

Evaluation

Q1: How does consistent pronunciation practice help reduce students' anxiety and enhance their confidence in speaking activities?
Findings:
+ 100% of students agreed that emphasizing on correct pronunciation boost their confidence
+ 89.5% agreed it reduced anxiety

Q2: How does implementing a specific speaking model impact students' confidence and participation in speaking activities?
Findings:
88.5% felt more confident performing speaking activities when speaking models were used.

Q3: How does incorporating games into speaking tasks affect students' engagement in speaking activities?
Findings:
Games are highly effective in making learning enjoyable, with 94.3% of students agreeing.

COLLABORATIVE TASKS

- Telephone (Whisper) Chain
- Walk & Talk
- Information Gap
- Pronunciation Bingo



TOOLS



Questionnaire



Open-ended question



Observation Form

experience

- "Improve my teaching" ★
- "No one solution can fix all classroom challenges" ★
- "Small changes matter" ★

How do students feel about learning to speak English?



Category	Percentage
Confidence Boost	~94.3%
Pronunciation Improvement	~89.5%
Enjoyable Learning	~88.5%
Engagement	~100%
Games	~94.3%

EXPLORATORY ACTION RESEARCH

My teaching situation

I teach at an extra-large school in Suphanburi with around 2,900 students from various areas. For this research, I focused on a Grade 11 Listening and Speaking 2 class of 40 language programme students aged 16–17. The class was diverse, with varying English proficiency levels; some

excelled in reading and writing, while others struggled with basic skills. Students exhibited a range of abilities, learning styles and needs. They had previously completed Listening and Speaking 1 in Grade 10, which served as a foundation for their current studies and development in communication skills.

The problem I faced and my exploratory questions

After three weeks of observation, I discovered that many students were hesitant to speak English. Most remained silent and struggled to express themselves, seemingly due to a fear of making mistakes. When I asked about their attitude towards English, students shared that they wanted to improve their skills but faced significant challenges in constructing sentences. Limited vocabulary made it difficult for them to select appropriate words to form sentences when speaking. This issue, coupled with their fear of errors, further seemed to hinder their confidence in speaking. Many students felt more comfortable writing in English rather than speaking it. Recognising the importance of encouraging students to use the language they are learning, I developed four research questions (RQs) to better understand and address this issue:

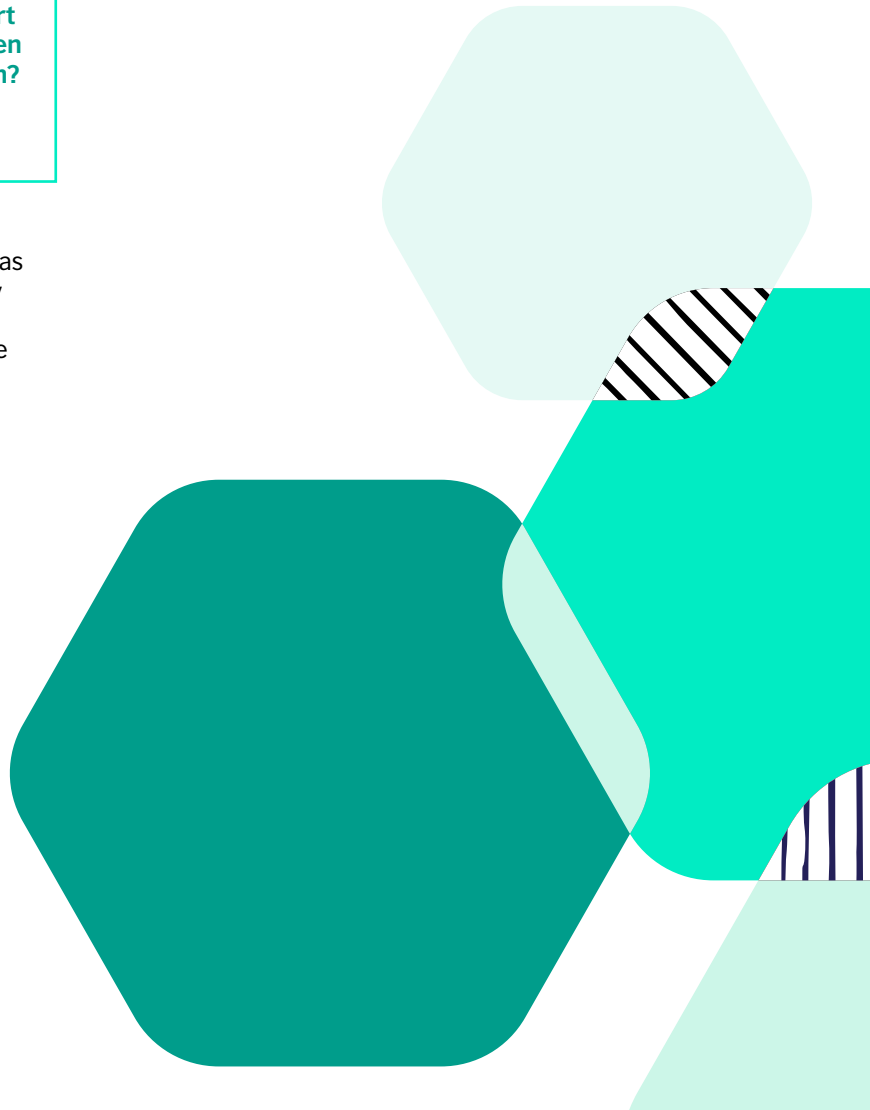
<p>1</p> <p>What do students think about speaking English in class? (students' perceptions)</p>	<p>2</p> <p>What kind of speaking activities do students like to do? (students' perceptions)</p>
<p>3</p> <p>What difficulties do students have when speaking English? (students' behaviour)</p>	<p>4</p> <p>How do I support my students when speaking English? (teacher's behaviour)</p>

These research questions aimed to explore students' perceptions and behaviours as well as my teaching practice. The goal was to identify areas for improvement and then implement strategies that foster confidence and effective communication in English speaking activities.

What I did to explore the issue

To explore students' attitudes toward English speaking activities, I used a student questionnaire with three response levels: agree, indifferent, and disagree (see Appendix 1). Questions addressed whether students feel English speaking skills are essential in daily life and how students feel during speaking activities. Open-ended questions in focus group interviews (see Appendix 2) provided further insights into preferred and disliked activities, challenges faced, strategies to overcome them, comfortable speaking settings, and students' ideas for improving English.

Additionally, a classroom observation by a colleague (see Appendix 3) evaluated aspects of my teaching, such as how I introduced topics, the nature of my instructions, how I taught vocabulary, encouraged fluency, used visual aids, and whether I created a positive, motivating atmosphere (RQ4).



What I found and learned

RQ1: What do students think about speaking English in class?

The questionnaire revealed that 97 per cent of students viewed English-speaking skills as essential for communication. However, while 54 per cent enjoyed speaking activities, they felt anxious and worried about making mistakes. Many preferred not to practise with fluent friends and were uneasy speaking in class. Despite these challenges, 62 per cent felt more comfortable speaking with friends, and they managed their anxiety through preparation and practice.

RQ2: What kind of speaking activities do students like to do?

Students enjoyed engaging, collaborative speaking activities such as group discussions, games and presentations. These activities helped reduce their anxiety and boosted their confidence. Additionally, subtitled content, music and foreign media were seen as both enjoyable and effective tools for improving speaking skills.

RQ3: What difficulties do students have when speaking English?

Students commonly struggled with pronunciation, understanding accents, vocabulary and grammar, especially during spontaneous conversations or in unfamiliar situations. They were particularly concerned about making mistakes, which affected their fluency and confidence.



RQ4: How do I support students in English-speaking tasks?

To better support my students, I realised that I should wait to correct errors until after they had finished speaking. This approach would allow students to maintain their flow and confidence. Additionally, I understood that it is crucial to emphasise their strengths and recognise their progress, fostering a positive and supportive learning environment.

The information gathered during this exploratory stage highlighted the key issue of speaking anxiety.

Primarily due to limited vocabulary, fear of mistakes and unfamiliar settings. Students said they prefer speaking with friends, particularly those who are not fluent in English, and over 70 per cent found group work the most comfortable setting. This research also helped me realise the need to reconsider my approach to correction. I should focus on providing feedback after students speak or privately, always emphasising their progress, no matter how small.

My action plan

In response to my findings, I developed an action plan for speaking lessons.

Pre-speaking

Pronunciation help

I used resources like the online Cambridge Dictionary (dictionary.cambridge.org/) to help students with pronunciation and to give them chances to practise consistently. I made sure they were familiar with and felt comfortable with all the words being introduced before moving to the next step.

Speaking models

I provided speaking patterns, i.e. specific ways of organising words and phrases that students could use in their conversations, to enable them to feel more confident when they speak. For example, patterns included:

- Sentence starters: 'It is made of ____.' 'It's used for ____.' 'Its shape is ____.'
- Question formats: 'What is it made of?' 'What is it used for?' 'What is its shape?'
- Dialogue structures: Predefined exchanges that students can practise, such as greetings, making requests or giving opinions.

While speaking

Extra practice time and group activities

I added extra time for students to practise and included some collaborative games they'd enjoy, such as:

- *Telephone (whisper) chain*: In this activity, students form a line. The teacher gives the first student a sentence in English by saying it aloud. That student whispers the sentence to the next person, who then passes it along, and so on, until it reaches the last student in the line. The last student must then pick the picture that matches the information they heard. For example, if the message is: 'It's made of metal. It's used for draining water.' the student should choose the picture of the object that fits that description. This activity helps students practise both listening and speaking skills in a fun and engaging way.





- *Walk rally*: an interactive game with clues and tasks in English. In this activity, students take turns walking to different stations. At each station, they read a poster and answer questions. A correct answer earns points, and the goal is to collect as many points as possible. The posters contain information about the school schedule, and students may be asked questions such as:

- Who is the teacher for science?
Answer: A is the teacher for science.
- What subject is taught on Monday, first period?
Answer: Biology is taught on Monday, first period.
- What room is for Business?
Answer: Business is taught in Room 565.

Students work in teams and take turns at being questioners at their own station and answerers who visit other stations.



- *Information gap*: pairs have missing information that they have to get from each other in English. Classroom language for students to use includes: What subject does she have first period on Tuesday? What room is it? Who is her teacher? Pardon me? How do you spell that? Could you say that again?

- *Pronunciation bingo*: a fun game that sneaks in pronunciation practice. In this activity, students practise pronouncing numbers. The teacher picks a number and says it aloud for the students to hear. Then, students look at their bingo cards. If they have the number called, they must raise their hand and repeat the number out loud. Only after correctly pronouncing the number can they place a marker on it. The numbers range from single digits up to millions. The first student to complete a line of numbers and shout 'Bingo!' wins the game.



Post-speaking

Recognising small wins

I made a point of praising even students' smallest progress, letting them know that every bit of effort counts. This seemed to give them a boost of confidence. For instance, if a student struggled to pronounce a word correctly in the past but was able to say it with greater clarity this time, I would say, 'Great job on that pronunciation! I can hear you're getting better at it.'

What I found and learned

To evaluate the impact of the action plan, I formed action research questions focusing on three key areas:

1. How does consistent pronunciation practice affect students' anxiety and confidence in speaking activities?
2. How does implementing specific speaking models impact students' confidence and participation in speaking activities?
3. How does incorporating games into speaking tasks affect students' engagement in speaking activities?

I collected the data using questionnaires and having students write their responses to questions I gave them in class, as well as via focus group interviews.

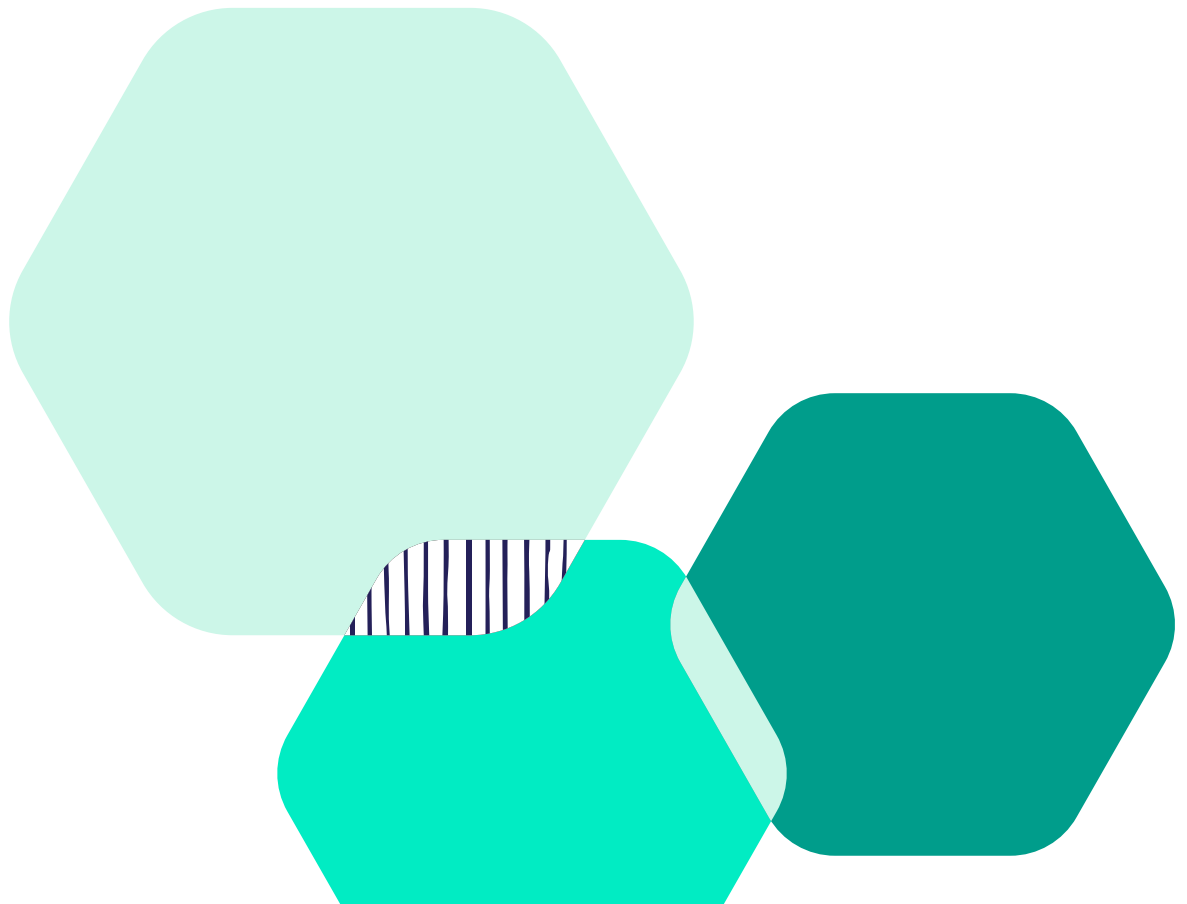
The findings revealed that consistent pronunciation practice before speaking activities was the most impactful strategy. All students (100 per cent) agreed that practising vocabulary pronunciation beforehand reduced their anxiety and made speaking tasks easier.

Providing sentence structures and specific speaking models was also highly effective, with 87 per cent of students reporting increased confidence during speaking activities. However, some students still needed additional guidance, especially when faced with spontaneous tasks or unfamiliar topics.

Incorporating games into speaking tasks created an enjoyable and dynamic learning environment. Almost all students (95 per cent) found games engaging and motivating, encouraging more active participation. However, competitive games presented challenges. Skilled students occasionally grew frustrated with less proficient peers and focused on winning rather than using the language effectively. To address this, I introduced reflection sessions where students discussed what they had learned and repeated key speaking patterns.

Implementing the lesson plans transformed the classroom atmosphere. Students became more relaxed and engaged, and their confidence visibly improved. Preparation and collaborative activities helped reduce anxiety, making speaking English less daunting. However, overlapping school events occasionally disrupted focus, and balancing competition with co-operation in games required thoughtful adjustments.

Before this research began, I had underestimated the importance of consistent pronunciation practice and recognising small progress in boosting students' confidence. Although I then expected games and speaking models to be effective, I additionally learned that these require careful planning to ensure inclusivity and focus on learning. Managing competition in games was vital to avoid discouraging less confident students.



Overall reflections

The EAR process has been a very helpful experience, giving me useful ideas about teaching and learning. I learned the importance of listening to students and including their ideas in lesson planning. By understanding their needs, behaviour and experiences, I was able to create plans that worked better for them. Recognising even small successes was very important for motivating students. These small wins helped them feel more confident, and encouraged them to join in and practise more.

My views about students have changed. I now see them as active partners in learning. Their ideas and opinions can bring real improvements to the classroom.

This made me understand that no single plan works for all classes because each has different needs, learning styles and skill levels.

The process also changed how I think about research. Before, I thought of research as something separate from the classroom. Through EAR, I saw that research can be practical and helpful in solving real classroom problems. It helped me focus on real challenges and work with students to find solutions.

As a teacher, I now see how important it is to be flexible and open to change. EAR taught me that teaching is not about sticking to one plan but about adapting to what students need at the time.

This experience will help me in the future. I will keep listening to students, using their feedback to improve lessons, and celebrating their progress to keep them motivated. I'll also work to create a classroom where students feel heard and respected. Finally, I will look at challenges as chances to learn and grow. The EAR process has made me a better teacher and changed how I think about my role in the classroom.



Appendix 1: Questionnaire

RQ1: What do students think about speaking English in class?

Instruction: Tick ✓ your opinion about speaking activities.

Statements	Agree	Indifferent	Disagree
English speaking skill is important for communication.			
Being able to speak English is essential for using English in a typical day.			
When I find a friend in my class speaking English well, I would like to practise speaking with him/her.			
I like to give opinions during English class through speaking.			
I feel more comfortable to speak English with my friends.			
I enjoy doing speaking activities.			
I feel anxious when speaking English in front of the class.			
I'm worried about making mistakes while speaking English.			
Good preparation helps me to speak English better.			

Appendix 2: Open-ended questions for focus group interview

RQ2: What kind of speaking activities do students like to do?

RQ3: What difficulties do students have when speaking English?

Instruction: Please respond to the following questions based on your experiences.

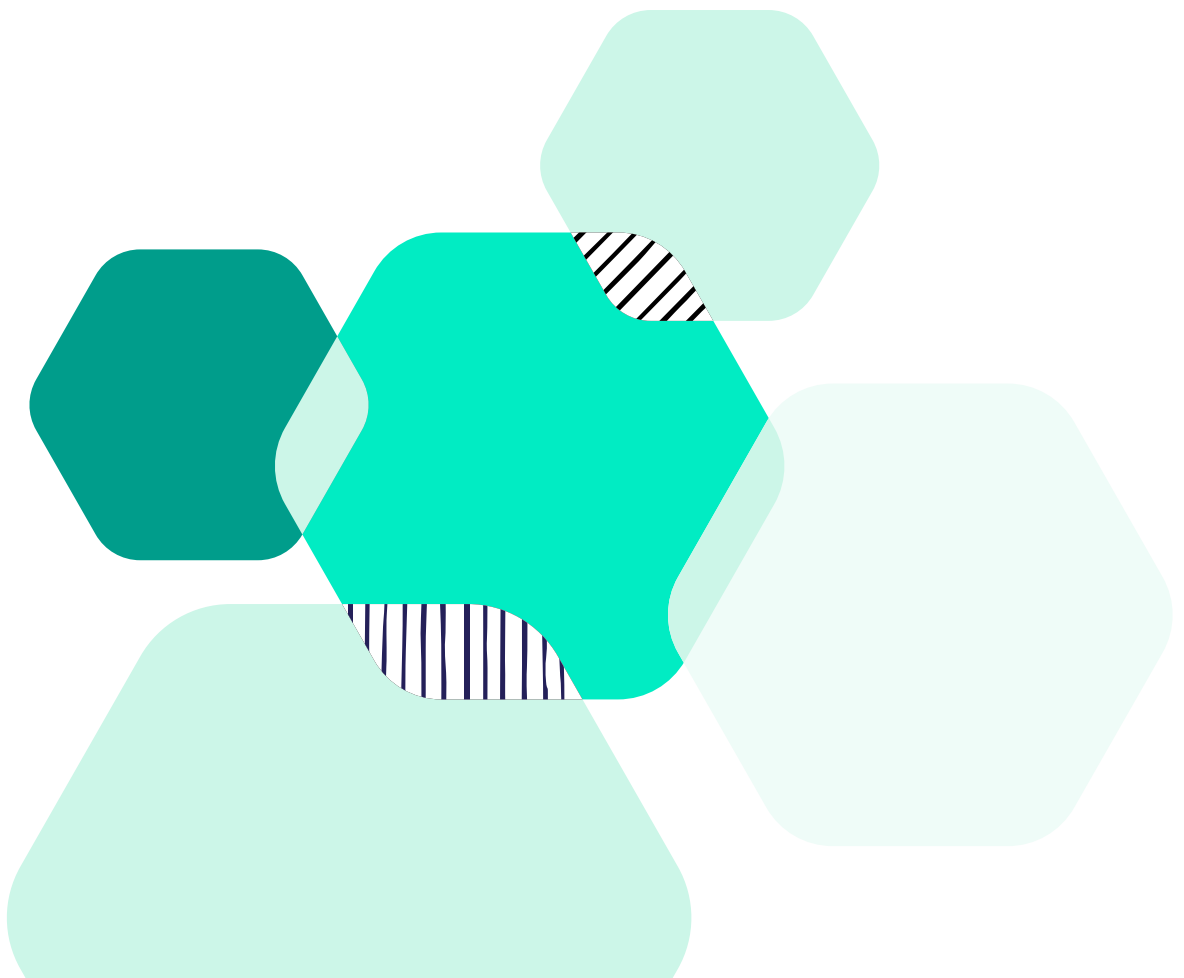
1. What kind of speaking activities do you like to do in class?

Please give some examples and the reason why you like them? (E.g. individual work/pair work/group work)

2. What kind of speaking activities don't you like to do in class?

Please give some examples and the reason why you don't like them? (E.g. individual work/pair work/group work)

3. How do you feel while participating in speaking activities in class? Explain how you deal with that feeling.
4. How do you practise speaking English?
5. What are the challenges you've had when speaking English?
6. Who do you feel comfortable speaking English with?
7. What makes you afraid of speaking English?



Appendix 3: Observation form

RQ4: How do I support my students when speaking English?

Observer: _____

Instruction: Tick the aspects included in the lesson.

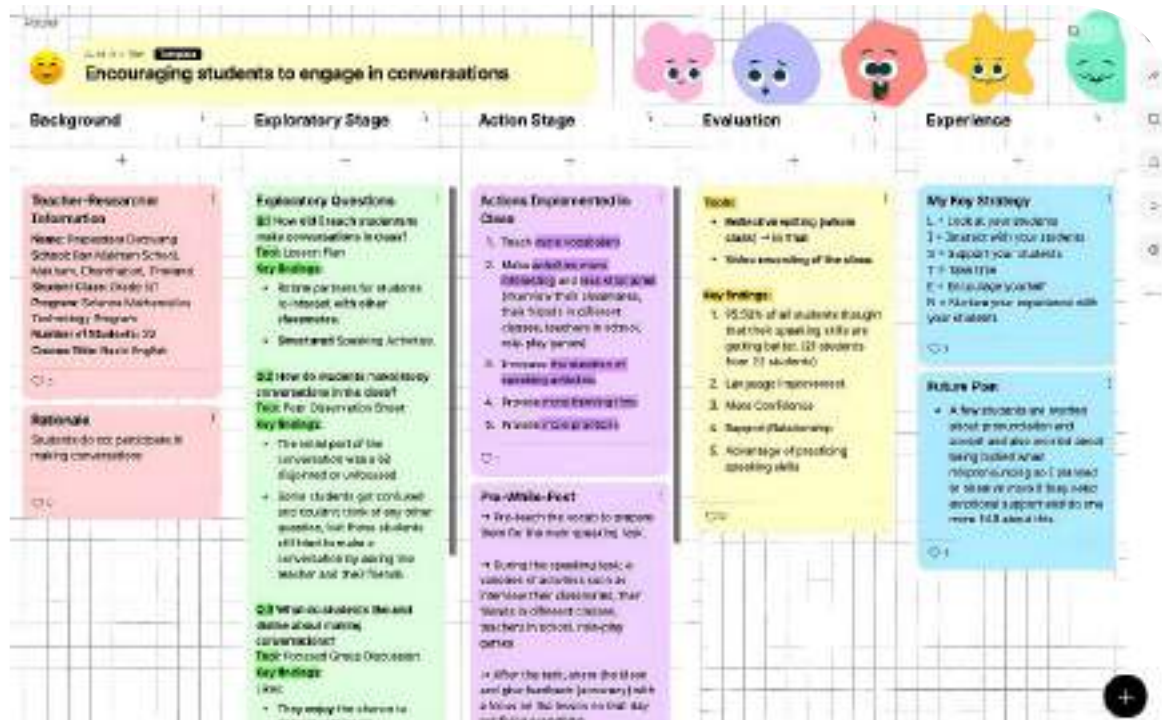
Issues of observation	Yes	No
The teacher gives a clear context for the speaking activity by introducing the topic, theme and objective.		
The teacher provides clear and understandable instructions for speaking tasks and activities.		
The students can use language expressions in speaking tasks because of the teacher's demonstrations and concept checking.		
The teacher helps students understand the meaning and pronunciation of new vocabulary and phrases.		
The teacher praises and motivates students when they speak.		
The teacher helps students to speak by correcting errors after they speak.		
The teacher encourages students to speak English fluently.		
The teacher creates a positive learning atmosphere (e.g. giving big smile, clapping hands).		
The teacher uses visual aids, multimedia or authentic materials to enhance speaking practice.		

Chapter 16

Encouraging students to engage in conversations

Prapassara Daoruang
Ban Makham School,
Chanthaburi Province





My teaching situation

Ban Makham School is a kindergarten/primary level government-run institution located in the rural area of Chanthaburi. It is a moderate-sized school with about 500 students. I teach 22 Grade 6 pupils, aged 11 to 12 years. The English level of my 22 students varies quite a bit, and, while they are generally eager to learn and enjoy the lessons, especially when they play games, they are not very proficient in English, lacking fluency due to limited usage of English in their daily lives. Additionally, their parents or families are generally unable to teach the language at home. Consequently, students perceive English as a distant skill, unnecessary for their personal development.

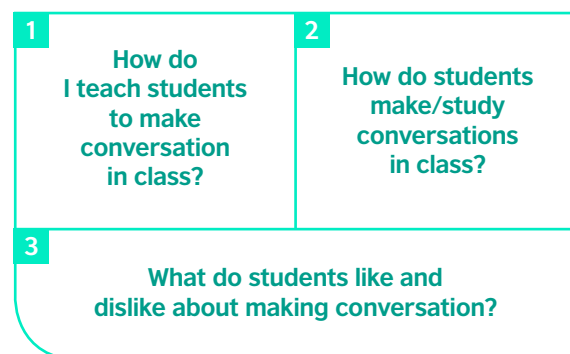
The issue I faced and my exploratory questions

Last semester, I focused heavily on teaching vocabulary and pronunciation, mainly through explaining the meaning of words and reading aloud. However, I realised we didn't spend much time practising actual conversations.

When my students tried to introduce themselves, many struggled to start a conversation. Even when I asked them questions, some avoided speaking and seemed unsure about how to respond. I wasn't

sure if they were holding back because they lack confidence or if they simply didn't know what to say. Looking back at my lesson plans, I noticed that they didn't have any opportunities to interact or practise speaking with one another.

To address this, I started reflecting more on my own teaching practices, trying to identify what worked and didn't work, and consulting with my colleagues. To explore more deeply, I focused on what I genuinely wanted to understand about my teaching, my students and their learning experience, and came up with three research questions:



I came up with these questions to focus on the different aspects of how I teach, how my students learn, and what they think about conversation activities.

What I did to explore the issue

First, I decided to observe my own teaching more systematically to understand how I've been guiding my students. I reviewed my lesson plans to see whether I provided enough opportunities for them to practise having conversations, using the following questions:

1. In which stage do I teach conversation?
2. What activities do I use when teaching conversation?
3. What kinds of practice do I ask students to engage in?
4. How often do I have students practise conversation with friends in a unit?

Next, I wanted to understand how my students practise conversations in class. To get a better perspective, I asked two of my colleagues to observe two of my lessons and give feedback on how my students interacted during activities, in response to the following prompts:

1. Students' behaviour: enjoying or not? Look at facial expressions: smiling, laughing, nodding the head → Count the number of students displaying different kinds of body language, e.g. smiling, laughing, nodding, yawning, frowning, shaking their head, etc.

2. Are they trying to make conversation with each other? Observe how students participate, e.g. speaking, staying silent and still, asking for help from teachers or friends, etc. → Count the number of students speaking: Speaking English? Related to the topic? Asking and answering the questions? Speaking Thai? Staying still and not talking? Asking for help from other students or teachers?, etc.

Lastly, I explored what my students think about making conversations. I wanted to know what they liked about these activities and what they found challenging, so I could adjust my teaching to better meet their needs. I organised a focus group with around eight students and we discussed the following questions in Thai and English:

1. Do you like making conversation in English? Why? Why not?
2. What are the problems when you make conversation?
3. What do you think is difficult when making conversation?
4. What topics do you find easy?
5. What topics do you find difficult?
6. Do you think learning to make conversation is useful for your daily life? Why? Why not?

What I found and learned

From my exploratory research, I found that I introduced conversation skills during the practice stage, where students could actively apply what they had learned. I used interview activities to help them practise asking and answering questions in a structured way. To ensure variety, I encouraged students to rotate partners so they could interact with different classmates and gain diverse experiences.

At first, their conversations were a bit disjointed and unfocused, but as activities progressed,

they became more engaged. Many students smiled and laughed while talking to their friends, wrote notes, and nodded as they spoke. Some students struggled to think of new questions or responses, but they still tried by asking for help from me or their peers.

However, some students felt nervous at the beginning and struggled with a lack of vocabulary or time to think of responses. They also felt they didn't get enough opportunities to practise. Despite these challenges, they grew more comfortable with each round of talking.

My action plan

To address the challenges and improve my students' conversational skills, I decided to:

- teach more vocabulary to build their confidence in speaking
- make activities more engaging and less rigid, such as interviewing classmates talking to friends in different classes, role playing and incorporating games

- extend the duration of speaking activities to allow more practice time
- provide students with more time to think before starting their tasks.

I designed the following lesson framework to implement these changes:

Pre-task (preparation)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pre-teach vocabulary that is relevant to the speaking task. • Use visuals related to students' daily lives to make the lesson relatable and engaging. • Select vocabulary carefully to ensure it will be used during the main task.
While task (speaking activities)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use a variety of interactive activities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Interview classmates ◦ Talk with friends from different classes or teachers at school ◦ Role-playing games. • Emphasise fluency and encourage natural conversations. • Allow students to make choices, such as selecting their own topics, creating their own questions or choosing their conversation partners. • Incorporate fun elements like games to keep the activities enjoyable. • Provide quiet thinking time before starting the task so students can plan their responses.
Post-task (reflection and feedback)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have students share their ideas and experiences from the task. • Provide feedback focusing on the lesson objectives (accuracy) rather than correcting every mistake. • Highlight the progress they made during the activity and encourage them to keep practising.

What I found and learned

As I had planned, I used interview activities to create a more relaxed and natural environment for students to practise conversations. This helped reduce their stress and hesitation when speaking English. As they practised these activities repeatedly, students became more confident in asking and answering questions. They no longer needed a rigid structure and started engaging in conversations more freely.

From students' reflective writing, I found that these activities not only improved their language skills but also strengthened their relationships with classmates. Students felt closer to their peers and enjoyed talking to each other in English. The fun and interactive environment made them more willing to participate, creating a positive and supportive atmosphere in the classroom.

In terms of language improvement, students learned more vocabulary and became more confident in speaking English. They had more opportunities to practise both speaking and listening, which helped improve their overall communication skills. Over time, they became more comfortable and fluent when using English.

What surprised me the most was how much students enjoyed these activities. Many said they found speaking English fun, practical and engaging. They mentioned that these activities not only helped them connect with classmates but also helped them communicate better with international friends in online games.

This experience showed me that with engaging and consistent practice, students can overcome their fears, build better relationships and improve their English skills effectively.



Overall reflections

Through conducting Exploratory Action Research, I have gained valuable insights into my teaching practices and a deeper understanding of my students' learning needs.

In the past, when students struggled with a lesson, I would often rush to find what I thought was the 'best' solution, without pausing to ask for their input or consider their needs.

I rarely revisited my lesson plans or took the time to reflect on the root causes of the challenges they faced. While I recorded the outcomes of my teaching, I seldom analysed problems behind those results.

Now, in my second year of using Exploratory Action Research, I feel much more comfortable with this approach. It has taught me to reflect on my practices and to include my students more actively in the teaching process. This collaborative approach has helped me understand their struggles and needs better, allowing me to create a more supportive and effective learning environment.

As part of this journey, I developed my own teaching framework, the LISTEN model, which continues to serve as a guide for my Exploratory Action Research:

L = Look at your students: Pay attention to their needs and behaviours to better understand their learning processes.

I = Interact with your students: Engage in meaningful conversations and listen to their perspectives through Exploratory Action Research.

S = Support your students: Provide both educational and emotional support to help them overcome challenges.

T = Take time: Don't rush the process; give yourself and your students the time and space to explore and grow.

E = Encourage yourself: Stay motivated and positive, even when teaching, observing or evaluating feels exhausting.

N = Nurture your experiences: Learn and grow alongside your students, building a strong teacher-student bond.

This process has made me a more reflective and adaptive teacher, helping me create a classroom environment where students feel supported and motivated to learn.

Chapter 17

Enhancing complete-sentence conversations in lower secondary English

Shane Smithiwin

Klongyai Wittayakom School,
Trat Province



Enhancing Complete Sentence Conversation Response in Lower Secondary English Classroom

EXPLORATORY ACTION RESEARCH

Mr. Shane Smithtiwin



EXPLORATION STAGE



CONTEXT
This study examines an 8th grade English class at Klongyai Wittayakom School in Trat, Thailand, near the Cambodian border. The class has 18 students of varied speaking abilities. The local context diminishes the perceived importance of English, as many graduates see little use for it in their daily lives, leading to decreased motivation for language learning.

PROBLEM

Despite varying proficiency levels, most students struggle to produce complete sentences in English during conversations. Responses are often limited to single words (e.g., "yes," "no") or short phrases, indicating difficulty in applying English in real-life communication scenarios.



RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. How do I teach to improve students' complete sentence structures during exchanging English conversation?
2. At what times during lessons do my students speak in a complete sentence?
3. Why do I want students to speak with a complete sentence?
4. How do my students feel when they speak in English?



DATA COLLECTION RESEARCH TOOLS

EXPLORATION STAGE
Peer Observation, Teacher's Reflection and Questionnaires.
ACTION STAGE
Video Recording, and Student's Reflection.



DATA ANALYSIS AND KEY FINDINGS

Initial data collection revealed students performed better in small groups, showed anxiety about public speaking, and relied heavily on model sentences for accurate production.



ACTION PLAN - PPP MODEL

1. **Presentation:** The teacher introduces the target language through model sentences or dialogues.
2. **Practice:** Students engage in controlled practice, repeating and drilling the new language.
3. **Production:** students apply the new language in conversational tasks through Peer Practice, which aims to enhance their comfort and confidence in using complete sentences.



ACTION STAGE



STUDENT REFLECTION

EVALUATION & RESULTS

Students demonstrated improved complete sentence use in conversations, increased engagement in small groups, and enhanced speaking confidence. Peer interactions became longer and more meaningful compared to previous whole-class discussions.

REFLECTION

PPP model implementation successfully addressed the initial problem. Students showed significant improvement in producing complete sentences during conversations. The focus on peer practice created a positive, interactive learning environment, boosting both language skills and learning attitudes.



Klongyai Wittayakom School, Trat | The Secondary Educational Service Area Office Chanthaburi Trat

My teaching situation

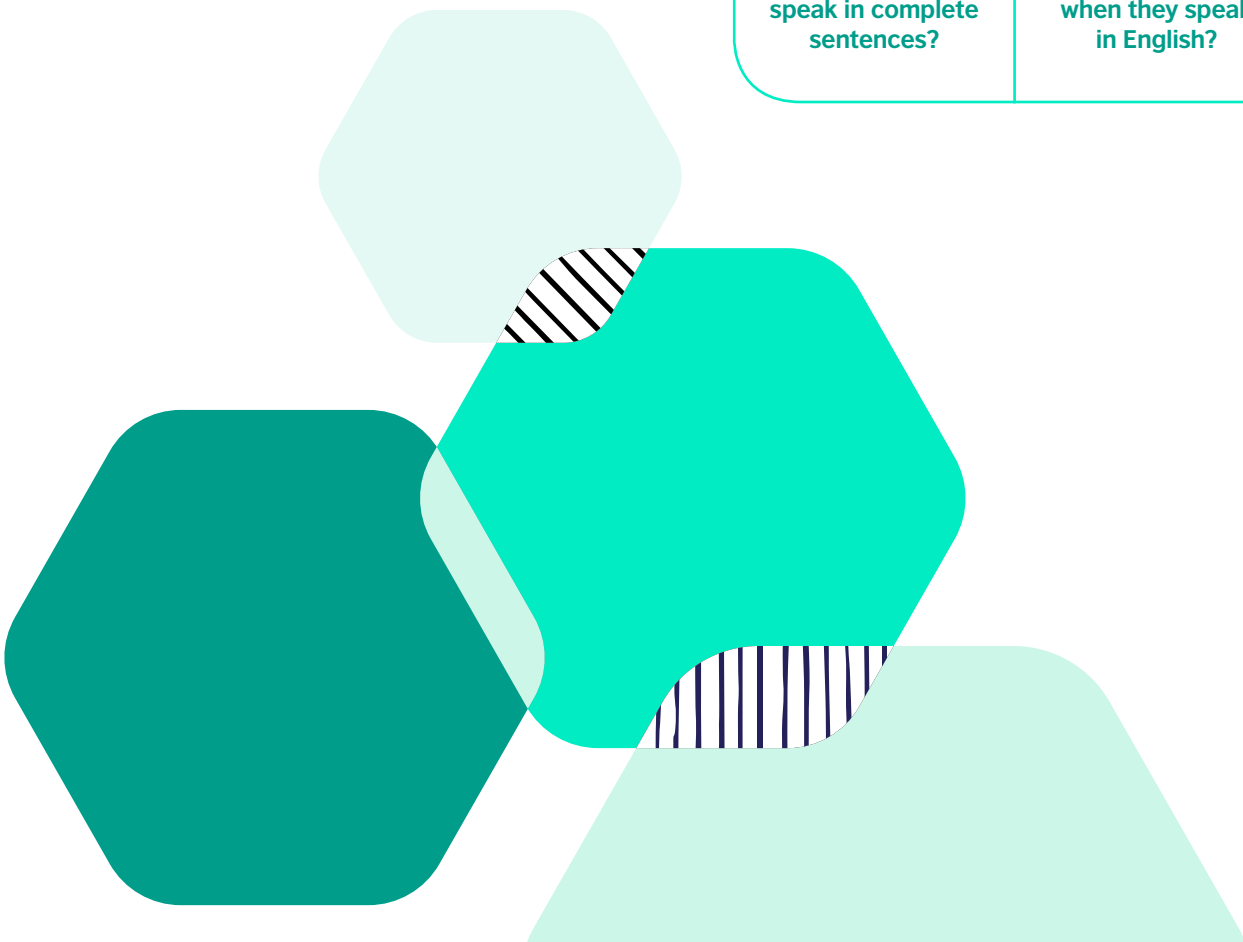
I teach at Klonyai Wittayakom School, located just 20 kilometres from the Thai-Cambodian border. This unique location creates a diverse learning environment, with Thai, Cambodian and Thai-Cambodian students. My research focused on my Grade 8 (Mattayom 2) English class of 18 students with mixed speaking abilities. The proximity to Cambodia influences our linguistic landscape significantly, as English is often perceived as less crucial for students' future endeavours, leading to reduced motivation for language acquisition. Our school serves a community where multiple languages intersect daily, creating both challenges and opportunities for English language learning.

The issue I faced and my exploratory questions

The primary challenge in my classroom was students' difficulty in producing complete sentences during English conversations. Though students could complete written exercises correctly, they struggled with verbal expression, often responding with single words like 'yes', 'no' or simple action verbs. For instance, when asked, 'What did you do yesterday?', a typical response would be 'play football' instead of 'I played football'. While such brief responses might be acceptable in some contexts, my aim was to help students understand and use complete sentences – groups of words expressing full thoughts with both a subject and predicate. This approach would not only help students create more sophisticated responses but also enable them to learn and practise new vocabulary in structured ways.

Through careful observation and reflection, I developed four exploratory research questions:

<p>1</p> <p>How do I try to improve students' complete sentence structures during English conversation?</p>	<p>2</p> <p>At what times during lessons do my students speak in complete sentences?</p>
<p>3</p> <p>Why do I want students to speak in complete sentences?</p>	<p>4</p> <p>How do my students feel when they speak in English?</p>



What I did do to explore the issue

To investigate these questions comprehensively, I implemented various research tools.

Peer observations: My class was observed once by two different colleagues: the Head of the Foreign Language Department and an English teacher. During these observations, they documented how students responded to questions, their sentence formation patterns, and their level of engagement in different types of activities (see completed peer observation forms below).

Peer Observation Form

ชื่อผู้สังเกตการณ์: _____

ชื่อผู้สอน: _____

ข้อ	ประเด็น	ผลการสังเกตการณ์
1.	ครูใช้บทสนทนา	ใช้บทสนทนาที่เกี่ยวกับชีวิตประจำวัน เช่น การซื้อของ การเดินทาง การนัดหมาย
2.	ครูใช้บทสนทนาที่เกี่ยวกับงาน	ใช้บทสนทนาเกี่ยวกับงาน เช่น การประชุม การรายงานผลการทำงาน
3.	ครูใช้บทสนทนาที่เกี่ยวกับกีฬา	ใช้บทสนทนาเกี่ยวกับกีฬา เช่น การเชียร์ทีมที่ชอบ การพูดคุยเกี่ยวกับกติกา
4.	ครูใช้บทสนทนาที่เกี่ยวกับเทคโนโลยี	ใช้บทสนทนาเกี่ยวกับเทคโนโลยี เช่น การใช้อินเทอร์เน็ต การเล่นเกม
5.	ครูใช้บทสนทนาที่เกี่ยวกับวัฒนธรรม	ใช้บทสนทนาเกี่ยวกับวัฒนธรรม เช่น การฉลองเทศกาล การพูดคุยเกี่ยวกับประเพณี
6.	ครูใช้บทสนทนาที่เกี่ยวกับสิ่งแวดล้อม	ใช้บทสนทนาเกี่ยวกับสิ่งแวดล้อม เช่น การอนุรักษ์ธรรมชาติ การพูดคุยเกี่ยวกับมลพิษ

ชื่อผู้สังเกตการณ์: AS

Q1. How do I teach to improve students' complete sentence structures during exchanging English conversation?

Q2. At what times during lessons do my students speak in a complete sentence?

No.	Point of observation	Write what you observe in this lesson
1.	How does the teacher introduce the lesson?	The teacher had the students read the script to prepare for lesson by discussing the script questions.
2.	How does the teacher present the target structure?	Introduction - what the (script) is about, why it is good.
3.	How does the teacher encourage the students to speak English during the lesson?	Explanation - had the students repeat the words correctly & correctly.
4.	How often does the teacher verbally engage with the students in English?	All throughout the discussion.
5.	What level of activity/strategies/techniques are used by the teacher to teach the students about complete sentence speaking?	Students reading script - repeating for students to discuss the script & answer questions to complete sentence.
6.	How well do the students verbally respond with a complete sentence after the teacher asks the activity?	The students usually & spontaneously participate in the lesson after the teacher asks the activity.

Signature: [Signature] Observer: Ms. S. S. S.



Teacher's reflection journal: After each lesson, I recorded detailed observations about which activities elicited complete sentences, noted specific examples of student responses, and reflected on teaching strategies that seemed effective or needed adjustment.

Questionnaire: Students completed an anonymous online survey about their feelings toward speaking English, their confidence levels in different classroom situations, and what helps them feel more comfortable to speak in complete sentences.

What I found and learned

The exploration phase revealed several important insights about classroom dynamics and student behaviour. These findings emerged primarily from my own detailed reflection notes and were corroborated by peer observations. This initial data collection showed that students performed remarkably better in small group settings compared to whole-class activities. During these intimate group interactions, students demonstrated increased willingness to attempt complete sentences and showed more natural engagement with their peers. This finding was particularly evident when students worked in pairs or groups of three, where the pressure of public speaking was minimised.

The questionnaires unveiled considerable anxiety about public speaking, particularly regarding mistake-making. Many students expressed fear of judgment from their peers, which they said often prevented them from attempting longer, more

complex sentences. This anxiety was most pronounced during whole-class activities but noticeably decreased in smaller group settings. Students consistently reported feeling more comfortable practising with close friends or peers of similar ability levels.

Furthermore, my own in-class observations and reflective notes revealed that students relied heavily on model sentences for accurate production. When given clear examples and structures to follow, their confidence and accuracy improved a lot. This dependence on models wasn't merely about memorisation; students used these examples as scaffolds to construct their own sentences. It also revealed that students' ability to form complete sentences varied significantly based on topic familiarity and personal relevance.

These findings helped me understand that the issue wasn't solely about language ability but encompassed broader factors,

including confidence, comfort in speaking environments, and the relevance of discussion topics to students' lives.



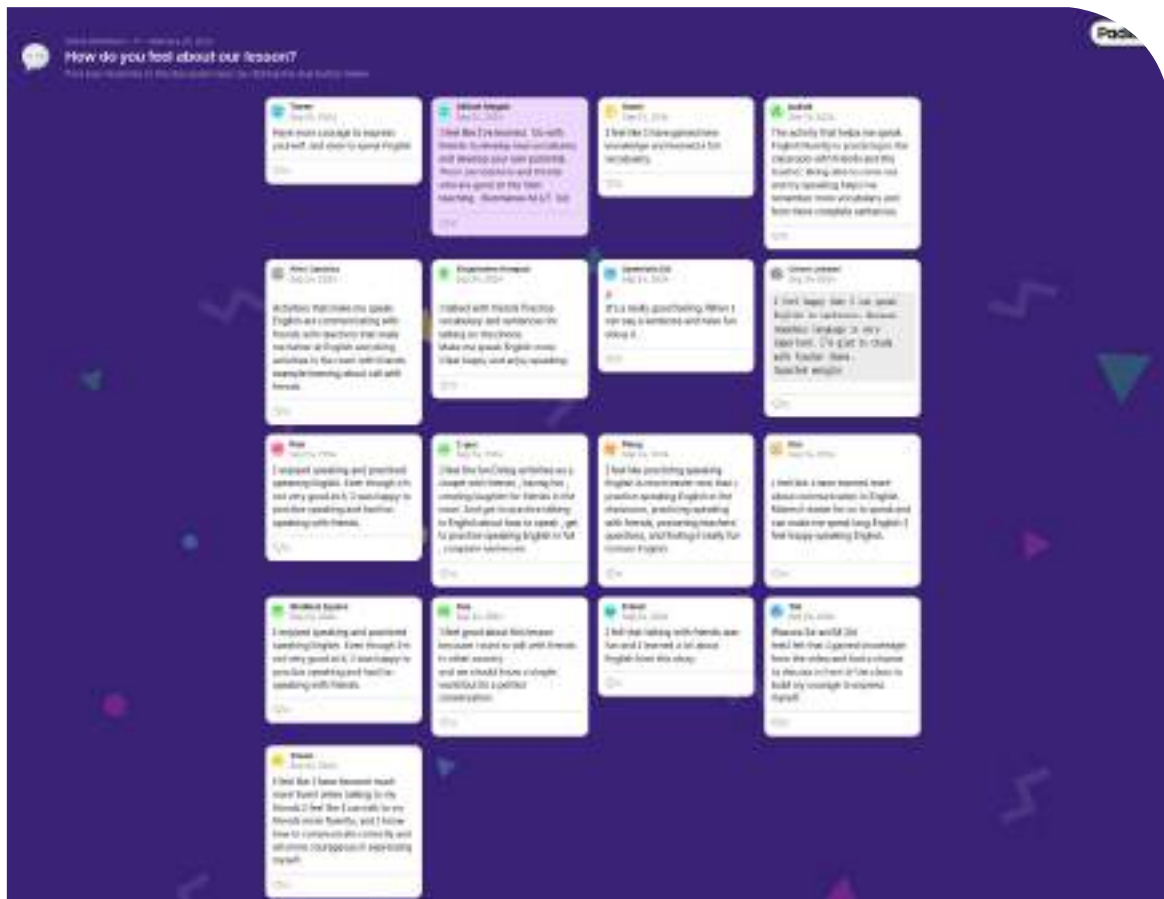
My action plan

Based on these findings, I developed and implemented an action plan adopting a PPP (Presentation, Practice, Production) model, with a special emphasis on peer practice activities. The presentation stage focused on introducing target language through carefully selected model sentences and dialogues that reflected real-life situations relevant to my students' experiences. I ensured these examples were clear, contextually situated and directly applicable to students' daily lives.

During the practice stage, students engaged in controlled practice activities, systematically working with the target language structures. This included guided repetition drills, but we moved beyond simple mimicry to include meaningful practice activities where students could personalise the language while maintaining the correct structure. I incorporated various practice formats, from choral repetition to pair work, ensuring students received ample opportunity to work with the new language patterns.



The production stage, which proved most crucial, was carefully structured to maximise peer interaction while maintaining a supportive learning environment. Students worked primarily in pairs or small groups, applying the newly learned language in increasingly free conversations. For instance, one key activity was 'Junior Detective.' In this game, each student was randomly given a classmate's name and the others in a group had to discover that person's identity by asking questions about their appearance and personality. This encouraged natural communication, while the requirement to use specific question-and-answer structures we had learned subtly reinforced the use of complete sentences. Throughout the implementation, I faced and addressed several challenges, particularly managing different proficiency levels during this production stage. This required careful student pairing and the provision of additional support materials for those who needed them, ensuring that all students could participate meaningfully in the activities.



What I found and learned

To evaluate the effectiveness of the implementation, I focused on two key data sources: video recordings of class activities and students' reflective writing in Padlet. The video recordings proved invaluable, allowing me to observe and analyse student interactions multiple times, catching subtle improvements in sentence formation that might have been missed during live teaching. I could clearly see the progression from hesitant, fragmented responses to more confident, complete sentences, particularly during peer practice activities.

Students' reflective writing provided deep insights into their learning experience and emotional journey. Their written reflections revealed growing confidence and changing attitudes toward speaking English. One student wrote, 'I feel like I have more courage to express myself now', while another noted, 'I used to think English was just for tests, but now I see how I can use it to talk about things I like'. These personal accounts helped me understand the impact of my intervention from the students' perspective.

Thus, through analysis of both the recordings and the reflective writing, several key findings emerged. Students demonstrated marked improvement in their use of complete sentences during conversations, progressing from single-word responses to more complex sentence structures. The peer interaction component proved especially successful, with students engaging in longer, more meaningful conversations than previously observed. These extended dialogues often included multiple exchanges of complete sentences, showing that students were not only producing but also maintaining conversations in English. Most significantly, the reflective writing revealed that students felt more comfortable attempting complete sentences, even if they weren't perfectly formed, suggesting a positive shift in their approach to speaking English.

Overall reflections

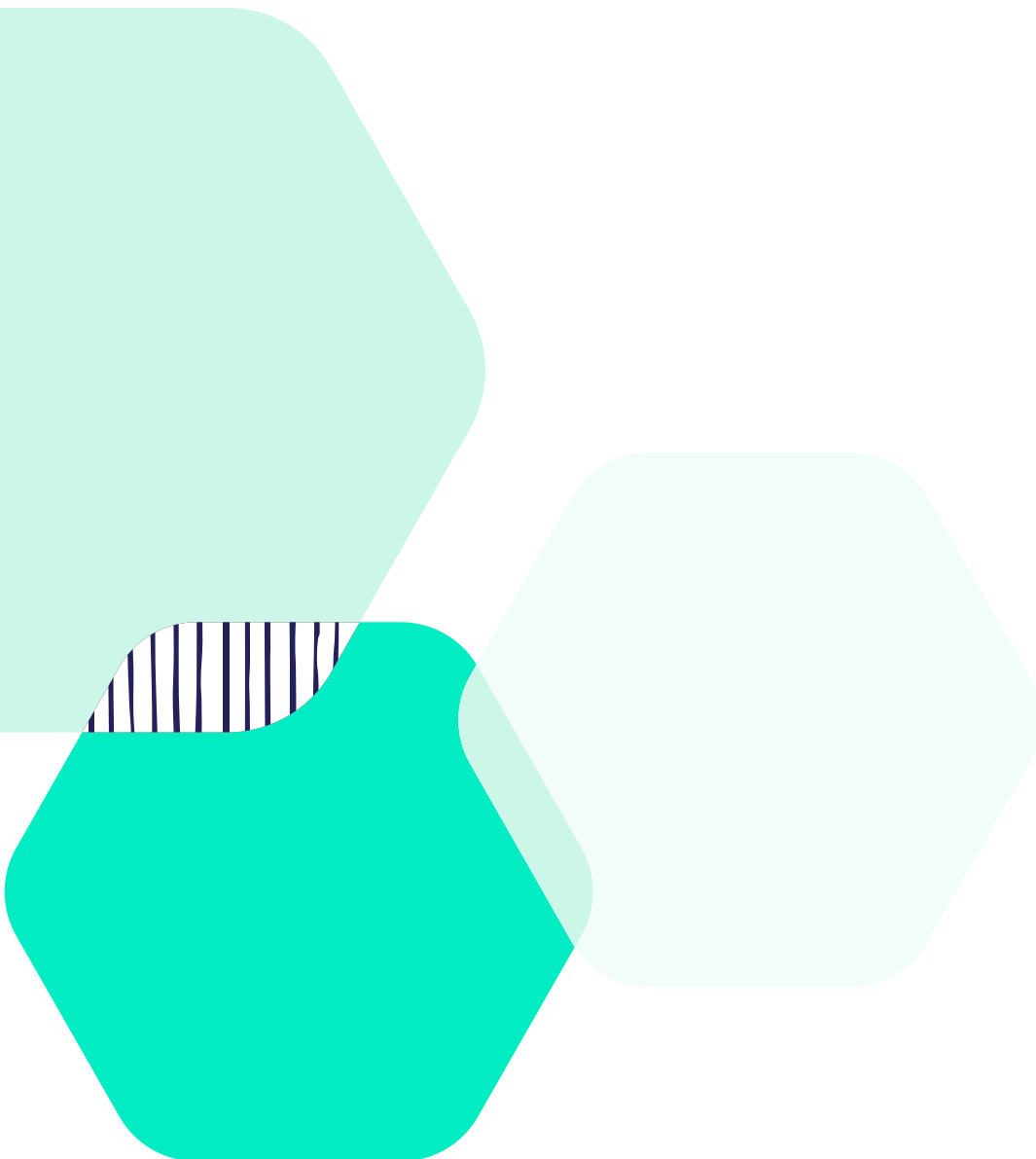
This Exploratory Action Research process has fundamentally transformed my understanding of language teaching and student needs. Through systematic observation, intervention and reflection, I've gained valuable insights into the complex dynamics of classroom interaction and language acquisition.

The journey has taught me that effective language teaching requires much more than just grammatical instruction.

It demands a careful balance of structured support, confidence building and meaningful practice opportunities.

The success of the PPP model, particularly its emphasis on peer practice, has demonstrated to me the importance of creating safe, supportive learning environments. I've learned that students' emotional well-being and comfort level play crucial roles in their willingness to attempt more complex language structures. The progression from controlled practice to free production must be carefully scaffolded, with ample opportunities for students to build confidence through successful interactions with peers.

Looking forward, I plan to continue refining this approach by incorporating more differentiated activities for varied proficiency levels, extending the production stage to include more real-world scenarios, and better integrating local contexts and cross-cultural elements into my lessons. The experience has reinforced my belief in adaptive, student-centred teaching and the importance of creating opportunities for meaningful language use in real-world contexts. Most importantly, this research has shown me that when we create the right conditions for learning, students can overcome their fears and develop genuine confidence in their ability to communicate in English.



Chapter 18

Enhancing student engagement in speaking activities

Faisa Wantaha


Wat Nanglao School, Sathingphra,
Songkhla Province



Exploratory Action Research

HOW TO ENHANCE STUDENT ENGAGEMENT IN MY SPEAKING ACTIVITIES?

BY FAISA WANTAHA, THAILAND



1 CONTEXT

The Major challenge arises in a class of 4 students in grade 3. Students do not engage in speaking class. The class has not dynamic and not fun.

2 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Main Question
How to enhance student engagement in my English-Speaking activities?

Sub Questions

1. What are the students' perceptions toward my English-speaking activities, and how do these perceptions affect their engagement?
2. What are the reasons for students' lack of involvement in speaking class?
3. What kinds of support, materials or methods can I provide to enhance student engagement in my speaking activities.

ACTION RESEARCH IMPLEMENTATION

5 Ideas of Creating Activities to enhance student engagement

- focusing on retaining vocabulary and more creative activities
- giving affective and positive feedback.

Action plan

pre-speaking --warm up activities/listen and sing

- review the previous lesson using Brain Boots Board
- Brainstorming

while-speaking - picture description

- information gap activities
- role play/dialogue
- hunting game/outdoor activities

post-speaking --group summary discussion/use Brain Boots Board

- peer feedback/self-reflection
- follow-up activity

• teacher carefully and effectively give feedback

3 DATA COLLECTIONS

- 1.in-depth interviews
2. peer observation.
- 3.Reflective journal

4 FINDINGS

1. limited vocabulary and forgotten the previous lessons
2. Boredom and disinterest
3. teacher's feedback and assessment

6 EVALUATION TOOLS

1. interview
2. peer observation
3. reflective journal

7 RESULTS

INCREASED VOCABULARY RETENTION AND RECALL

HIGHER ENGAGEMENT AND ENJOYMENT IN ACTIVITIES

BETTER PEER INTERACTION AND COMMUNICATION SKILLS

ENHANCED SELF-CONFIDENCE AND POSITIVE ATTITUDE TOWARD FEEDBACK

****ENGAGEMENT INCREASE THROUGH**

IMPROVEMENT OF VOCABULARY

INTERESTING ACTIVITIES

PEER SUPPORT

EFFECTIVE FEEDBACKS

My teaching situation

Wat Nanglao School is a public primary school located in the suburbs of Sathingphra, quite far from the city centre. The school is relatively small, with 72 students and seven teachers, who teach seven grades, including pre-school. Students' parents mostly work in agriculture and fishing and

their monthly income level is generally low, below 10,000 baht. Half of the students are Muslim and half are Buddhist, but they coexist peacefully.

Thai is the native and official language in school, with English as a second language according to the basic education core curricula, and most of the students are at A1 level.



The major challenges

The class I found most concerning is my Grade 3 class, which has just four students, making it the smallest class in the school. This class consists of two boys and two girls, who are neighbours. Living so close to each other has fostered a close-knit community in the classroom, but such a small class size has also created challenges in terms of individual attention and group dynamics, social interactions and overall classroom experience.

I teach two subjects: Foundations of English and English Speaking. Foundations of English is a three-hour-a-week course that covers the basics of reading and writing, including the English alphabet, phonics and basic English vocabulary. The English Speaking class, which is two hours a week, emphasises developing conversational skills and building confidence in speaking English. While the Foundations of English course prioritises reading and writing, the English Speaking course focuses on enhancing verbal communication and practical language use.

From my initial observations, I noticed that my students paid good attention during the foundational English lessons and were able to write and read the alphabet. However, they did not seem to enjoy the speaking classes as much. They were quiet and lost focus, showing signs of boredom and often asked me to change the activities. When it came time to review previous lessons, they struggled to recall what they had learned, meaning that review required a lot of time. This made the students' progress in learning slower than it should be.

To confirm what I had noticed in this class, I shared the issue with colleagues who also teach this class: a maths teacher, a PE teacher and a Thai language teacher. All of them had also experienced the same issue, and they were more than happy to help me fix it.

To summarise, here are the challenges I identified:

- students not being engaged in class, especially during speaking activities
- students easily losing attention and not responding during class
- students struggling to remember previous lessons.

Through Exploratory Action Research, I hoped to overcome this challenge.

With the main question 'How can I enhance students' engagement in my English speaking activities?', I came up with three exploratory research questions:

<p>RQ1:</p> <p>What are the students' perceptions of the current English speaking activities, and how do these perceptions affect their engagement?</p>	<p>RQ2:</p> <p>What are the reasons for students' lack of involvement in speaking activities? What factors contribute to the lack of engagement and participation? Why do students tend to be quiet in speaking class?</p>
<p>RQ3:</p> <p>What kinds of support, materials or methods can I provide to enhance student engagement in speaking activities?</p>	

To gain precise and accurate information, I used the following data-collection tools:

- Peer observation, inviting my colleagues to observe one class and give me suggestions
- My reflective journal (I wrote reflections immediately after two lessons.)
- An in-depth interview with four students and four colleagues, including a school director, a maths teacher, a Thai language teacher and a science teacher. (See Appendices 1 and 2 for the questions I asked students and staff members, respectively.)



What I found

What I found from this exploratory phase was as follows:

RQ1: What are the students' perceptions of the current English-speaking activities?

The students I interviewed had a relatively positive attitude to the English speaking class. One said that she is really happy in speaking class because she loves talking with the teacher. Two were less positive; they thought the class was okay but felt it could be more exciting or better tailored to their interests. The fourth student informed me that he did not like the English speaking class because he did not like learning English. This feedback highlighted mixed satisfaction and areas for improvement.

RQ2: What are the reasons for students' lack of involvement in the English speaking class?

Three main reasons emerged from interviews. First, students have a limited vocabulary and often forget what they have learned in previous lessons, making it hard for them to express themselves. Second, some students feel bored or uninterested during activities, which reduces their motivation to participate. Last, my feedback and assessment methods were found to be not very effective in encouraging students to improve. These issues highlighted a need for better strategies to build vocabulary, more engaging activities, and more supportive and constructive feedback to help students stay motivated and engaged.

RQ3: What kinds of support, materials or methods can I provide to enhance student engagement in my speaking activities?

Most of the students I interviewed wanted me to create a more exciting and fun environment, and to help them feel confident and interested in participating by creating various kinds of activities. They said they love it when I give them supportive feedback and clear suggestions, and encourage peer feedback.

I then reflected on my findings and their implications further:

- Limited vocabulary: Students might not have enough vocabulary to express themselves comfortably, leading to frustration or withdrawal from participation.
- Boredom or disinterest: If the content or activities are not interesting or relevant to the students' lives, they may lose motivation and disengage.
- My feedback and support: If students do not receive adequate support or encouragement from me, they may not feel motivated to engage in class discussions or activities.

At this stage, I also consulted those colleagues who had supported me by being interviewed and observing my lessons. With their support and my students' feedback, I came up with some ideas to try.

My action plan to enhance student engagement

To enhance student interest and engagement and increase their confidence in speaking activities, I focused on three areas. First, I used vocabulary games and engaged in regular review sessions, setting up a 'Brain Boots Board' (a board, next to the blackboard, containing vocabulary already learned, making it easier for students to recall words and connect new words to old ones). Second, I attempted to make lessons more fun and interactive, using games, role plays and outdoor activities to reduce boredom and make learning more enjoyable. Finally, I attempted to improve feedback by being more supportive in general, giving clearer suggestions and encouraging peer feedback.



I implemented this plan over three weeks (15 hours of lessons), using the following activities and strategies and taking care to give effective feedback:

Pre-speaking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • warm-up activities/listen and sing • review of previous lesson using 'Brain Boots Board' • brainstorming
While speaking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • picture description, flashcards • information-gap activities • role play/dialogue
Post-speaking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • group summary discussion/'Brain Boots Board' • peer feedback/self-reflection • follow-up activity



During the implementation, I encountered some challenges. In the first three lessons, there was limited participation; some students were reluctant to engage, so I assigned clear, manageable roles and encouraged teamwork. I also faced time constraints as some activities took longer than expected. To address this, I used timers and streamlined tasks to focus on key objectives. After the first week, I was able to manage the timing and engage the students better so that the lessons ran smoothly.

What I found and learned

As in the exploratory phase, I asked colleagues to observe two of my lessons, and I wrote my own notes in a reflective journal after two of the lessons. I also re-interviewed the same four students, asking about their perceptions of the changed activities.

Here is what I discovered from this phase:

1. *Increased vocabulary retention and recall:*

As a result of the use of the 'Brain Boots Board', warm ups and brainstorming, vocabulary review became an interactive routine and students showed improved recall of vocabulary.

2. *Higher engagement and enjoyment in activities:* With creative and varied activities like role plays, hunting games and outdoor interactions, students become more enthusiastic and interested in speaking activities. I clearly observed higher energy, laughter and active participation, and less boredom and disinterest.



3. *Better peer interaction and communication skills:* Activities that required collaboration, such as information-gap and peer feedback fostered stronger peer relationships and communication. Students started supporting each other more openly and showed improvement in expressing their thoughts, even outside of structured tasks.

4. *Enhanced self-confidence and positive attitudes to feedback:* The consistent, positive feedback I provided boosted students' self-confidence. Over time, students showed willingness to speak up without fear of mistakes, indicating that they are starting to view feedback as a learning aid rather than criticism.

Overall reflections

This Exploratory Action Research highlighted to me the importance of designing engaging, varied activities to maintain student interest and motivation. Addressing vocabulary retention seemed to be key, as it directly impacted speaking confidence. Effective feedback fostered a supportive learning environment, boosting self-reflection and peer interaction. Furthermore, I learned the value of being adaptable, as monitoring and adjusting strategies in real-time were crucial to meeting students' needs. Ultimately, the research showed me that a combination of creativity, structured support and positive reinforcement can enhance student engagement in speaking activities.

Reflecting on my Exploratory Action Research journey with EAR-Thailand, I am profoundly grateful for the invaluable experience and support that shaped my growth as a teacher-researcher. This research project, centred on enhancing student engagement in my Grade 3 English speaking class, provided me with both challenges (for example, time management due to my workload in the school) and opportunities for professional development.

One of the most valuable lessons I learned was the importance of understanding students' needs.

By identifying the reasons behind their lack of involvement, such as limited vocabulary and boredom, I was able to design activities that were more engaging and effective.

Through this project, I developed my skills in planning, observing and evaluating classroom activities. I also gained a better understanding of how qualitative data can reveal important insights about student experiences. These findings not only helped me solve problems in my class but also gave me tools to improve my teaching in the future.

I am sincerely grateful to the project organisers and mentors for providing me with this opportunity. Their guidance and resources made this research possible and meaningful. The support I received has inspired me to continue exploring with innovative methods to create a better learning environment for my students.

Overall, this experience has strengthened my belief in the power of reflective teaching and research. I feel more confident in my ability to face challenges in the classroom and more determined to help my students achieve their goals. This journey has been a rewarding milestone in my teaching career, and I am excited to apply the knowledge I have gained to future projects.



Appendix 1: Exploratory interview question for students

RQ1: What are the students' perceptions of my English speaking class and classroom activities?

1. What do you think about English class? Do you like the English class? Why?
2. Do you like or dislike English speaking class? Why?
3. Can you describe a specific English speaking activity that you particularly enjoyed or disliked? Why?
4. What kinds of activities or lesson do you love to do in the English speaking class?
5. How would you rate your satisfaction of the English speaking class?

RQ2: What are the reasons for students' lack of involvement in English speaking activities?

1. How does the classroom environment (e.g. teacher support, peer interaction) affect your engagement in English-speaking activities?
2. Do you feel more engaged when activities are conducted in groups or individually? Why?
3. How do you think the number of students in the class is relevant to their involvement in the classroom?
4. How do you think the small size of the class affects students' involvement in the classroom?

5. What are the main challenges you face during English-speaking activities?
6. How do you overcome these challenges, and what support do you need to feel more engaged?
7. How comfortable do you feel speaking English in front of your classmates?
8. Do you think the classroom environment affects your willingness to participate in speaking activities? If so, how?
9. How confident are you in your English-speaking abilities?
10. What factors contribute to your confidence or lack of? Why?

RQ3: What kinds of support, materials or methods can I provide to enhance student engagement in my speaking activities?

1. What types of materials do you find most engaging or interesting for speaking activities (e.g. videos, articles, real-life scenarios)?
2. Are there any specific topics or themes that you would like to see more of in speaking activities?
3. What suggestions do you have for improving speaking activities to enhance your engagement?
4. What kind of feedback do you find most helpful after participating in a speaking activity?
5. How do you prefer to receive feedback (e.g. written, verbal, peer, teacher)?

Appendix 2: Exploratory interview questions for colleagues

RQ1: What are the students' perceptions of your subject and classroom activities?

1. How would you describe the level of engagement in your classroom activities?
2. What activities seem to capture the students' interest the most? Why do you think that is?
3. Are there specific activities that students seem to disengage from? Can you provide examples?
4. Have students provided any feedback on your subject or the activities you conduct? What kind of feedback have you received?
5. How do students express their feelings about the activities in your class (verbally, through body language, etc.)?

RQ2: Are students actively involved in your class? If not, what are the reasons for students' lack of involvement in your class? Please explain and give me some sample situations.

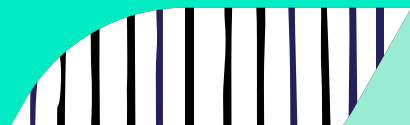
1. How do you think the number of students in the class is relevant to their involvement in the classroom?

2. How do you think the small size of the class affects students' involvement in the classroom?
3. How would you describe the atmosphere during your classroom activities?
4. How do you motivate your students to participate in your classroom activities?
5. How do you think peer dynamics affect student participation in speaking activities?
6. Do you use any group work or peer assessments? If so, how effective do you find them?

RQ3: What kinds of support, materials or methods can I provide to enhance student engagement in speaking activities?

1. What kinds of materials (e.g. worksheets, multimedia resources, real-life materials) have you found to be effective in engaging students during your activities?
2. How do you select or create materials that cater to different learning styles and needs?
3. Can you provide examples of materials that have worked well or not worked well in your experience?

Part III. Reading and writing



Chapter 19

Addressing students' challenges in recognising uppercase and lowercase letters

Atikah Alilateh
Ban Yuelapae School,
Narathiwat Province




Addressing Students' Challenges in Recognizing Uppercase and Lowercase Letters

Teacher-Researcher Information


Name: Aekwan Akkhan
School: Ban Yulabai School
Class: 4/2
Number of students: 23

Rationale




Problem: Students had been struggling to recognize English alphabets both uppercase and lowercase. They can remember ABC song, but they don't know how to write English alphabet.

Exploratory Stage



- Exploratory questions:
 1. What are difficult approaches and techniques being used by students for recognizing?
 2. What do students know about uppercase and lowercase?
 3. What activities did I use to teach uppercase and lowercase?
- Tools: Worksheet, ECR, Interview, LCD, Interview lesson plan, etc.
- Finding:
 - The most difficult approaches and techniques were:
 - The easiest approach and technique was:
 - The student used color and drawing activities in the lesson at home.
 - Many letters were not memorable. They need to hear your reading.
 - Student can sing ABC song but can't write and recognize letters.
 - Students find hard to pronounce letters.
 - Students lose continuity in practicing letters.
 - Only 2 times teaching English alphabet.
 - Consequences of writing letters in the class.

Action Stage



Learning activities:

- Singing
- Drawing
- Reading
- Interview activities
- Visual letter
- Matching letter
- My writing
- Tracing letter
- Reading sentences

Evaluation

Interview questions and other things (LMB)

- Before using LMB, the student did not remember 20 letters both uppercase and lowercase.
- After using LMB, only 8 letters that they cannot remember and only 3 students can't recognize.

Observation checklist:

- They focused on themselves.
- They want to participate in the lesson.

Teacher observation:

- The students prepared themselves for learning.
- The students have finished all tasks.
- The students love reading when they read.
- The students concentrate on learning.
- They enjoy to sing activities.
- Students enjoy participating in their learning.

Experience

- More confidence in my students.
- Find new ways to help my students.
- Enjoy learning by students.
- Understand the process of ECR.

My teaching situation

My school is a public primary school that combines an intensive Islamic Studies programme with the regular Thai programme. This means my students need to study more than three languages, namely Thai, English, Malay and Arabic. Moreover, my school separates students into two groups: relatively 'fast learners' and 'slower learners'.

Students in class 4/2, which I focused on in this research, are classified as 'slower learners'. There are 23 students in this class, 16 boys and 7 girls. They are around 10 years old and have been learning English for almost three years. My students love listening to stories, drawing and moving around, but when assigned a task, they often can't finish it on time. They only seem to be able to concentrate on the lesson for around 10–20 minutes.



The problem I faced and my exploratory questions

My students need to learn different writing systems for different languages and, perhaps as a consequence, they seem to struggle to recognise English letter symbols. After two teaching sessions, I observed that while my students could sing the ‘ABC song’, they were unable to recognise both uppercase and lowercase letters.

Mastering uppercase and lowercase letters is fundamental for learning English, as it forms the basis for reading and writing. I realised that, if my students continued to struggle with this foundational skill, it would lead to difficulties in their future learning and comprehension. Addressing this issue early on seemed crucial to ensure that they could progress effectively in their English language learning journey.

I began by drafting exploratory research questions, refining them three times. Eventually, I decided on three questions to better understand my students’ difficulties and so come up with a way to improve the situation:

<p>RQ1</p> <p>What are difficult uppercase and lowercase letters for students to recognise?</p>	<p>RQ2</p> <p>What do students think about uppercase and lowercase letters?</p>
<p>RQ3</p> <p>What had I been doing to teach uppercase and lowercase?</p>	

What I did

I started designing my data collection tools based on my exploratory research questions. For RQ1, I collected data using ABC flashcards. I showed the letter cards to my students. They picked up and matched the uppercase and lowercase letter cards, then told me what the letters were. For RQ2, I created three questions to guide interviews with my students, namely:

1. How often do you practise uppercase and lowercase letters?
2. What factors make it hard for you to remember uppercase and lowercase letters?
3. How do you feel when you learn uppercase and lowercase letters?

Answering RQ3 involved reviewing what I had done when teaching uppercase and lowercase letters, by writing reflective notes on my lesson plans.



What I found out and learned

Twenty students took the test using flashcards to identify the letters (RQ1). The findings showed that the most difficult uppercase and lowercase letters for my students were j/J, while the easiest were z/Z (see Appendix 1). Additionally, I was surprised that two students didn't know the capital letter A, which I had thought would be the easiest for my students.

One thing I learned from this is not to judge or make assumptions until you see the truth. What seems easy to me may be difficult for my students.

After seeing the results, I felt that I could and should come up with a better way to help my students remember uppercase and lowercase letters.



The findings for RQ2 showed that my students had not been practising uppercase and lowercase letters in their free time or at home. They mentioned that it is easy to forget these letters and that they can't keep focus for long during the lessons. They found remembering the letters challenging because there are too many to recognise. One suggestion was to just learn five letters per class, since they couldn't pay attention to more, and having a variety of games and fun activities in the classroom.

What I learned from this experience was that sometimes I assume that students can absorb all the information I provide, without considering their perspective or how they receive and understand that information. The ideal classroom atmosphere would be one where teachers and students collaboratively design the learning process to meet each other's needs and goals.

The findings for RQ3 showed that I had taught the letters twice at the beginning of the semester. During those sessions, I had used an activity to assess my students' writing, checking if they could write the letters of the alphabet correctly and properly. Additionally, I had played an easy game with them to observe their skills, behaviour and learning, and I had got them to write the letters in their books. However, these two lessons had clearly not been sufficient.

What I planned to change

In light of the findings above, I planned to make my class more active and practical. I decided that all my students should work hand in hand and help each other. No one should be left behind during activities and learning. If some of them could not remember or write the letters, I would help them individually until they could recall and write them correctly. In addition, I would continue to ask my students about the activities they liked and how I could help them learn uppercase and lowercase letters.

As a plan of action to remedy the situation, I designed a new model for teaching uppercase and lowercase letters to my students, which I called the '4R' procedure. The first 'R' stands for *Review*. In this stage, I would review the letters that students had already learned. The second 'R' stands for *Repeat*. In this stage, students would repeat the letters they had learned. The third 'R' stands for *Rewrite*, where students would write the letters they had learned. Finally, the last 'R' stands for *Remember*. In this stage, students would practise the letters until they knew and could recognise them confidently. I intended this procedure to engage their long-term memory by linking back to their existing knowledge in every session. In addition to implementing the 4R procedure, I decided to implement various activities to make my class more engaging and enjoyable for students.

What I did

I began by teaching my students the more challenging letters, focusing on five letters per session, adjusting as needed based on my students' abilities. For easier letters, I introduced more letters per session. I utilised visual letter activities, showing how the letters could resemble objects in the students' surroundings. For example, the letter 'S' was likened to a snake. To help students who struggled with writing uppercase and lowercase letters, I incorporated air writing exercises, where students move their head or hand in the shape of a letter, engaging muscle memory and allowing students to feel the motion of writing in the air or on a surface. I also introduced matching and finding letters activities once my students had become able to recognise many letters. The final activity was reading short sentences, which helped students become accustomed to seeing uppercase and lowercase letters in context. I utilised the 4R procedure in each session, beginning by reviewing the letters the students had previously learnt, repeating and rewriting them to check if they still remembered them. Once all the students demonstrated that they remembered the letters, I introduced new activities and taught new letters. Before concluding the class, I referred to the 4R procedure again, ensuring that the students could recall all the letters I had taught.

What I found and learned

Before I used the 4R model and engaged in the above activities, there were 25 letters that not all of my students could recognise (Appendix 1). I designed the activities and selected the letters to be taught based on students' suggestions. In a repeated test using flashcards, after I had used the 4R model and the new activities, all of my students could now recognise 17 letters and there were only 9 letters they could not all recognise, namely H/h, K/k, N/n, Q/q, R/r, T/t, V/v, Y/y and X/x, with only two students still struggling with these (Appendix 2).

I interviewed students again and this showed that they felt happy and proud of themselves because they could now remember many letters. Some of them expressed a desire for phonics instruction for the next steps in practising reading, and an interest in learning how to read English short stories or short sentences.

The findings from the reflective notes I took on my lessons showed that my students were more concentrated on doing activities and learning. They were more active and eager to learn, and they were self-prepared, finishing all the tasks that were given. This contrasted with the situation before I began to adopt the 4R procedure, when my students didn't interact with learning; they only wanted to play and often muttered that they had no energy to learn or do tasks.

An additional thing I learned from this part of my research is that, as a teacher, I need to have plenty of energy in creating a good atmosphere for my students. Cheering students up for doing easy things is necessary. I always believe that my students have the ability to learn in their own ways. It depends on their readiness.

Asking and talking about their problems and asking them to help made them feel challenged, and they wanted to prove that they could do it.

Overall reflections

Firstly, I want to express my gratitude to myself for having taken the brave step of applying for this project. Initially, Exploratory Action Research (EAR) seemed daunting, and I doubted my ability to conduct the research. I was concerned about time constraints, the tools needed to help my students, and anxiety about the results. However, as I familiarised myself with the EAR process, it became a guiding light, showing me how to systematically address issues and support my students in learning English effectively.

EAR transformed my approach to teaching. It made me enjoy observing and interacting with my students, and it honed my skills in systematic thinking, planning and designing activities that catered to my students' needs and levels. It changed my view of my students significantly. Even though this class comprised relatively 'slow' learners, I've learned that, by teaching without rushing and going slowly, and by always reviewing the lesson, my students can learn effectively and grasp everything I teach them.

EAR has transformed my role as a teacher, showing me not only how to deliver lessons but also to empathise and compromise with my students.

It has encouraged me to seek out new tools, activities, knowledge, and technology that can enhance my teaching. Additionally, it has sparked a greater love for reading articles and research papers, enriching my understanding of effective teaching practices.

Finally, I am confident that my experience will greatly influence my future work. I plan to incorporate the EAR process into my Performance Agreement (PA) with the school authorities for the next semester. I believe EAR will be an effective approach for addressing my students' problems in the future.

Appendix 1: Findings for RQ1 (performance before implementation of the 4R strategy)

The table shows the numbers of pupils able to recognise particular uppercase and lowercase letters.

Uppercase letters			Lowercase letters			The letters from most difficult to easiest	
Letter	Recognised	Not recognised	Letter	Recognised	Not recognised	Uppercase letters	Lowercase letters
A	18	2	a	7	13	J	j
B	14	6	b	6	14	H	o
C	12	8	c	10	10	L	p
D	9	11	d	4	16	M	q
E	8	12	e	5	15	Q	h
F	9	11	f	4	16	G	m
G	4	16	g	4	16	K	s
H	2	18	h	3	17	W	t
I	5	15	i	8	12	Y	d
J	1	19	j	0	20	I	f
K	4	16	k	5	15	N	g
L	3	17	l	5	15	R	v
M	3	17	m	3	17	S	w
N	5	15	n	5	15	T	e
O	17	3	o	17	3	U	k
P	8	12	p	1	19	V	l
Q	3	17	q	2	18	X	n
R	5	15	r	7	13	E	b
S	6	14	s	3	17	P	y
T	6	14	t	3	17	D	a
U	6	14	u	9	11	F	r
V	6	14	v	4	16	C	i
W	4	16	w	4	16	B	x
X	7	13	x	8	12	O	u
Y	4	16	y	6	14	A	c
Z	19	1	z	18	2	Z	z

Appendix 2: Performance after implementation of the 4R strategy

The table shows the numbers of pupils able to recognise particular uppercase and lowercase letters after the intervention.

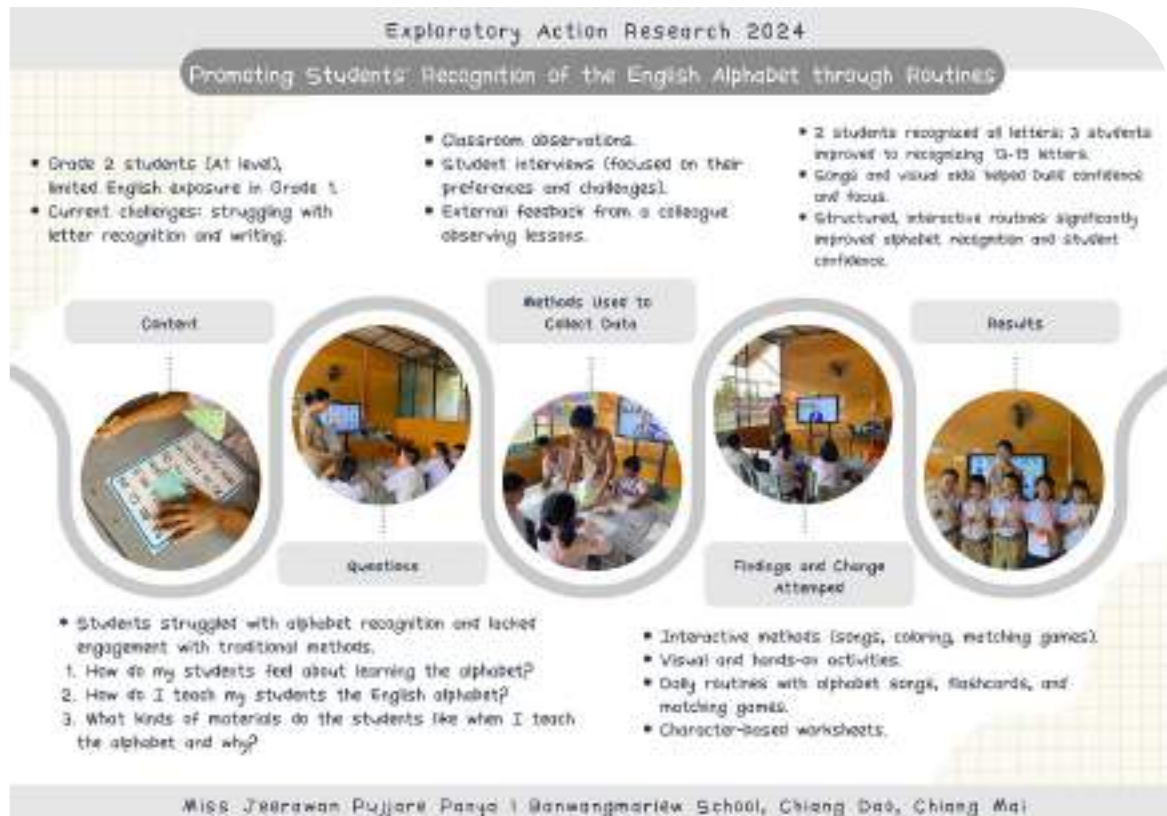
Uppercase letters			Lowercase letters			The letters from most difficult to easiest	
Letter	Recognised	Not recognised	Letter	Recognised	Not recognised	Uppercase letters	Lowercase letters
A	20	0	a	20	0	H	h
B	20	0	b	20	0	K	k
C	20	0	c	20	0	N	n
D	20	0	d	20	0	Q	q
E	20	0	e	20	0	R	r
F	20	0	f	20	0	T	t
G	20	0	g	20	0	V	v
H	18	2	h	18	2	Y	y
I	20	0	i	20	0	X	x
J	20	0	j	20	0		
K	18	2	k	18	2		
L	20	0	l	20	0		
M	20	0	m	20	0		
N	18	2	n	18	2		
O	20	0	o	20	0		
P	20	0	p	20	0		
Q	18	2	q	18	2		
R	18	2	r	18	2		
S	20	0	s	20	0		
T	18	2	t	18	2		
U	20	0	u	20	0		
V	18	2	v	18	2		
W	20	0	w	20	0		
X	19	1	x	19	1		
Y	18	2	y	18	2		
Z	20	0	z	20	0		

Chapter 20

Promoting recognition of the English alphabet through routines

Jeerawan Pujjare Panya
Banwangmariew School,
Chiang Mai Province





My teaching situation

I teach Grade 2 in a small primary school in Thailand and there were five students in my class. This was my first year teaching in primary school and it was challenging. The students didn't learn much English in Grade 1 as the focus was on Thai and maths for the RT-Reading Test. While they could sing the English 'alphabet song' (learned in kindergarten), they struggled with recognising and writing the letters of the alphabet. The impact of the previous year had reduced their confidence in learning English, particularly in reading and writing the alphabet. My goal was to create an engaging, supportive environment for them.

The problem I faced and my exploratory questions

Since my school is small, teachers have to teach every subject to the pupils in their grade, so I'm responsible for all subjects with Grade 2 pupils. Because my students didn't learn much English in Grade 1, most of them couldn't write or even recognise the letters of the English alphabet.

To help them with writing, I used worksheets in class, but some found it boring and disengaging, so I usually assigned worksheets as homework. While some students paid attention when writing, others didn't. I realised that worksheets alone were not effective in helping them. To understand the situation better, with a focus on alphabet activities, I came up with three exploratory questions:

<p>RQ1</p> <p>How do my students feel about learning the alphabet?</p>	<p>RQ2</p> <p>How do I teach my students the English alphabet?</p>
<p>RQ3</p> <p>What kinds of materials do the students like when I teach the alphabet, and why?</p>	

By answering these questions, I hoped to identify effective teaching methods to improve students' engagement with the alphabet and design materials that would suit their preferences.

What I did

I used several research tools to gather detailed information to explore the above issue:

- *Self-observations*: I observed my students during English lessons, focusing on their engagement and how they responded to different alphabet-learning activities. During each class, I took brief notes on specific student behaviours and interactions. After the lesson, I expanded these notes with more detail and reflections to evaluate the effectiveness of the different strategies I used.
- *Student interviews*: I conducted informal, small-group interviews with students during breaktime to understand how students felt about learning the alphabet, their favourite activities and any challenges they faced. I used the following open-ended questions:

- How do you feel about learning the English alphabet?
- What activities do you enjoy when learning the alphabet? Why?
- What challenges do you face when trying to recognise or write letters?
- How can I make learning the alphabet more fun for you?

- *Peer observations*: I invited two colleagues to observe my English lessons using a structured guide (see Appendix). I felt their feedback would provide an outside perspective on my teaching methods and how students engaged with the alphabet-learning activities.
- *Teacher interviews*: I conducted informal interviews with two teachers to gather insights into what they felt were effective strategies for teaching the alphabet.

These tools helped me collect a variety of data to answer my research questions and find ways to improve my teaching. The most useful were the self-observations and peer observations because together they gave me both my own view and an outside view of my teaching.



What I found and learned

During the exploratory stage, I learned some important things about my students' learning preferences and challenges.

- *Interactive activities:* Students preferred interactive and fun activities instead of traditional writing tasks. During interviews, many said they found writing boring and difficult. They enjoyed activities like singing songs, colouring and watching videos, which made them feel more relaxed and motivated.
- *Phonics songs:* My self-observations showed me that students appeared more focused and actively engaged when singing phonics songs in class. Their attention improved during these interactive activities compared to working on worksheets or independent tasks.
- *Visual aids:* Observations from both myself and my colleagues, as well as feedback from students interviews, indicated that using pictures or flashcards to introduce new words or ideas helped students pay more attention and remember the material better.
- *Routine and repetition:* According to my observations, revisiting what we had already learned through different activities helped students improve their letter recognition and pronunciation.
- *Movement:* My self-observations also showed that including movement in lessons made students more engaged. Simple physical activities kept them active and improved their listening skills and vocabulary.
- *Personalised feedback:* Based on my observations, giving students specific, positive feedback about their efforts increased their confidence. When they felt supported, they were more willing to participate and try new things.

I also gained some practical ideas from teachers I interviewed, such as incorporating movement-based games and using visual aids.

The above insights, gathered from my-self-observations, peer observations, student interviews and teacher interviews, helped me understand how to teach my students more effectively, specifically how to improve their alphabet recognition and increase engagement in English lessons.

My action plan

Based on what I had learned in the exploratory stage, I created an action plan to make learning the English alphabet more engaging and effective for my students. My plan focused on using routine activities, and incorporating interactive and visual elements, which they preferred. I incorporated these activities into every English class for two weeks.

Action plan	Routine activities
<p>Start with a song: to make letter recognition and pronunciation more enjoyable.</p> <p>Use visual aids: to help students understand and remember new words. Use interactive tasks and movement-based learning: to keep students active and engaged and to make letter recognition more enjoyable.</p>	<p>Warm up: We sang the 'alphabet song' with gestures, changing the pace each day (slow, normal, fast). Students used alphabet mats to point to the letters while singing.</p>
	<p>Flashcard review: I reviewed previously introduced letters by showing the letter, saying it aloud and having students repeat.</p>
	<p>New letter introduction: I showed the letter on the board in both uppercase and lowercase, pronounced it and had students repeat it. I then introduced 2–3 words that start with the letter using pictures (e.g. 'A is for apple, ant, alligator').</p>
	<p>Colouring activities: I designed worksheets with characters that students could colour, connecting the alphabet to fun visuals.</p>
	<p>Interactive matching: I gave students cut-out letters to match with words or pictures displayed around the classroom.</p>
	<p>Closing recap: I used flashcards as 'exit tickets' by randomly asking students to identify letters before leaving class.</p>



I also assessed student understanding through my own observations during warm-up activities and 'exit tickets' at the end of each class, as well as through observations by my colleagues.



Challenges and solutions

—
One challenge was managing the higher energy levels during interactive activities and ensuring all students participated equally.
—

I addressed this by setting clear routines and expectations for each activity and using a rotation system to give everyone a fair chance to take part. Another challenge was creating enough new materials to keep lessons fresh. I worked with colleagues to share ideas and resources and dedicated time to preparing materials in advance.

By observing students' reactions and gathering feedback, I made small adjustments to the plan as needed. For example, when I noticed some students losing focus during a worksheet activity, I introduced a quick, interactive game, which helped to re-engage them. This flexible approach helped maintain engagement and ensured we worked towards our learning goals effectively.

What I found and learned

To check how well my changes worked, I used different tools to track student engagement and progress:

- *Reflective notes:* After each lesson, I wrote down my observations about how students participated, how enthusiastic they were, and any problems I noticed.
- *Student interviews:* At the end of each week, I had short, informal chats with students individually during break times. Each interview lasted around 5–10 minutes and I asked about their thoughts on the new activities and their learning experience.
- *Participation checklist:* I created a simple chart to keep track of each student's involvement in the different activities during lessons. This tool was useful in identifying which students were actively engaged and which ones needed additional support or encouragement.
- *Pre- and post-tests:* I gave students a basic alphabet recognition test at the start and end of the two-week period to measure any improvement.
- *Peer observation:* I invited a colleague to watch one of my lessons and provide feedback on student engagement and the activities, using the same structured observation form that I had used during the exploratory stage.



The results were very positive:

- **More engagement:** Both my self-observations and peer observations showed that students were more involved and excited during interactive activities, especially when singing phonics songs and doing colouring tasks.
- **Better letter recognition:** Post-tests showed a clear improvement in how well students could recognise and name letters compared to the pre-tests. Before the lessons, students recognised an average of 10 letters, which increased to an average of 18 letters afterwards. Two students recognised all letters and three students improved to recognise between 13 and 15 letters.
- **Increased confidence:** In interviews, students said they felt more comfortable with the English alphabet and were more willing to try reading simple words.
- **Improved retention:** The daily phonics songs, as recorded in observation notes, helped students remember letter sounds much better.
- **Positive classroom atmosphere:** My notes and my colleague's feedback showed that the classroom was more relaxed and enjoyable.

Before these changes, students had found it hard to recognise and write letters and weren't interested in worksheet-based activities. The new approach made lessons more engaging and helped students make visible progress in learning the alphabet.

Strategies that worked especially well included:

- Using movement and multi-sensory activities (e.g. visuals, sounds and physical actions). This seemed to be the most important change I introduced for this age group.
- The character-based worksheets were surprisingly popular; students enjoyed connecting letters to familiar pictures.
- The daily phonics song during the warm up was a routine that made students feel confident at the start, encouraging them to participate in the following activities more eagerly.

Overall reflections

This experience showed me how important it is to adapt teaching methods to students' preferences and learning styles. For young learners learning a foreign language, developing routines which make lessons interactive and fun can make a big difference.

The process of conducting Exploratory Action Research (EAR) has been both enlightening and transformative for my teaching. Through this experience, I have gained valuable insights into my students' needs, preferences and learning processes, which have had a big impact on how I teach English.

One of the most important things I learned was the power of student-centred, interactive learning. By observing how my students responded to different activities, I found that applying a multi-sensory approach – phonics songs, character-based worksheets and interactive games – is much more effective than traditional methods. This discovery has changed how I see my students. I now view them as active participants in their learning journey, not just passive listeners.

My perspective on research has also changed a lot. At first, I thought research was a formal, academic process that didn't relate to daily teaching. But EAR has shown me that research can be a practical and ongoing tool to improve teaching in real time. Observing, reflecting and adjusting have become regular parts of my routine, helping me to respond better to my students' needs.

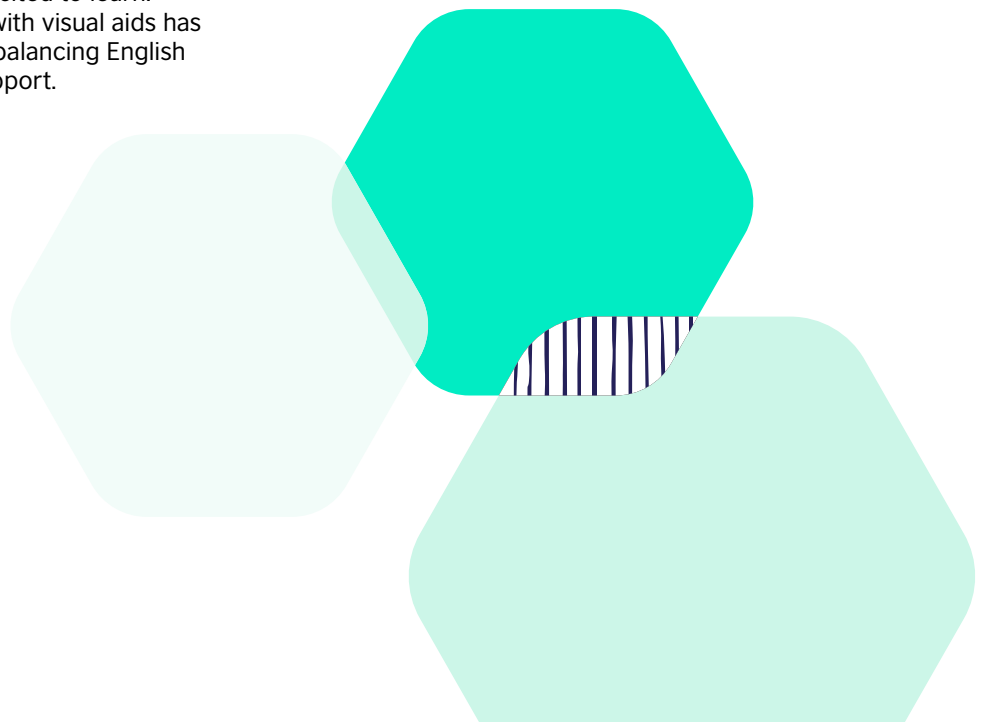
This experience has also changed my understanding of what it means to be an effective teacher. I've learned that good teaching isn't just about giving information; it's about creating an environment where students feel engaged, confident and excited to learn. Using more English along with visual aids has strengthened my belief in balancing English exposure with bilingual support.

Looking forward to how this experience will guide my future teaching, I plan to continue using action research principles, such as regular observations and student feedback, to improve my lessons. I'm committed to keeping a flexible, student-centred approach that respects students' preferences while helping them build English literacy skills.

I've also realised how important routine and consistency are for language learning. Daily phonics songs and structured activities have shown me the value of creating a predictable but engaging environment.

Overall, this EAR process has not only helped me improve my teaching methods but also rekindled my passion for teaching. It has reminded me of the joy of seeing students grow and the satisfaction of growing as a teacher.

Moving forward, I'm excited to seek out more ways to make English learning fun, accessible and effective for my young learners.



Appendix: Observation form

Observation form: Alphabet recognition and student engagement

Observer's name: _____ Date: _____

Class observed: _____ Time: _____

1. Teaching methods used (check all that apply):

- Phonics songs
- Flashcards
- Character-based worksheets
- Interactive games
- Movement activities
- Visual aids
- Other (please specify): _____

2. Student engagement (rate from 1–5, where 1 is low and 5 is high):

Overall engagement: 1 [] 2 [] 3 [] 4 [] 5 []

Participation in activities: 1 [] 2 [] 3 [] 4 [] 5 []

Interest in learning materials: 1 [] 2 [] 3 [] 4 [] 5 []

3. Alphabet recognition:

How effectively did the teacher introduce new letters?

1 [] 2 [] 3 [] 4 [] 5 []

How well did students recognise letters by the end of the lesson?

1 [] 2 [] 3 [] 4 [] 5 []

4. Teacher-student interaction:

How well did the teacher respond to student questions/difficulties?

1 [] 2 [] 3 [] 4 [] 5 []

5. Most engaging activity observed:

6. Least engaging activity observed:

7. Additional observations:

8. Suggestions for improvement:

Chapter 21

How to enhance student engagement in reading lessons?

Damkerng Mungthanya
Satri Si Suriyothai School,
Bangkok



Enhancing Student Engagement in Reading Lessons Through Collaborative Group Activities and Technology Integration

Context/Background

- In Bangkok, Thailand, a high school English teacher at Satri Si Suriyothai School in Bangkok, Thailand.
- I teach reading classes to secondary students in 12th grade students.
- There are 37 students, aged between 17 years with different English proficiency. They are at 80%.
- Challenging Situation faced by the students do not actively participate in the reading lessons. In addition, those who do not actively participate in the reading lessons always get scores during the exam.

Data Collection

Research questions (RQs)

- What do I mean by 'active participation' during a reading lesson?
- What do I do to encourage their participation?
- What do my students do during a reading lesson?
- How do my students feel about my reading instruction?

Tools

Teacher's Reflection Notes, Student's Reflection, Focus Group Interview

Key Findings from the Exploratory Stage

- Students don't like reading long passages and looking to skip articles.
- They like vocabulary games, some competitions, or any group activities that help them interact with friends.

Action Plan

Planning

Identify a short passage relating to students' life.

Pre-reading Stage

- Play a vocabulary game to activate students' background knowledge.
- Play a word search game to provide pictures of words associated with the passage.
- Give students a list of discussion questions to be discussed before the reading.

While reading Stage

- Form students into groups.
- Let a student be students to explain, e.g. any information.
- Use various collaborative group activities e.g. jigsaw reading.

Post-reading Stage

- Engage the knowledge learned during the game or task to discuss students' comprehension.
- Ask students to summarize the text and make their summary on Twitter.

Results

- Participation in reading lessons only answering the teacher's questions, but it can be students joining various activities e.g. playing games, sharing ideas with friends, or collaboratively summarizing the text.
- Students actively answering teacher's questions, I increase student's participation to using shorter texts relevant to students' own (jigsaw readings) and technology such as Quizziz and Kahoot.
- Most students pay the ideas activities, e.g. guessing meaning of new vocabulary words, sharing ideas in a group, playing games and summarizing the texts is a greater engagement while a few of them prefer to work alone.

Despite different English proficiency, students indicate that games like Kahoot and Quizziz help them review vocabulary, while group activities like Jigsaw Reading enhance text comprehension and summarizing skills and enhance their practices.

Students' reflection

- "I have not understood the content more clearly and learn new vocabulary (after the other reading)".
- "It's more fun, and I have more chances to work in a team".
- "I have the new words introduced in class and will share your vocabulary words, so that I can complete the game at the end of the class".
- "I get inspired more because my group had their own reading and answering questions".

My teaching situation

I have been teaching English for over seven years at Satri Si Suriyothai School in Bangkok, Thailand. It's a public all-girls secondary school with a total of around 1,800 students. Currently, I teach students in Grades 10 and 12, aged between 16 and 18. I conducted research with one of the Grade 12 classes – there were 37 students in the class and they were on the Science and Mathematics Programme. The students have varying levels of English proficiency and I teach them twice a week, with each period lasting 50 minutes.

The problem I faced and my exploratory questions

One of my teaching goals is to develop students' four skills: listening, speaking, reading and writing, and I believe that students will enhance these skills when they actively engage with the lesson. However, I realised that the students in this particular class participated less, especially during reading lessons. Only a few students answered questions in class, while others remained quiet.

Even though I tried different techniques, such as randomly calling students by their student number, allowing them more time to answer questions, or giving choices instead of using open-ended questions, what I heard was only the same voices answering questions. Additionally, I found that many students had low scores in the mid-term exam, prompting me to wonder what was wrong with my teaching. Therefore, I decided to explore the issue of active participation further by creating exploratory research questions. The first two questions focus on the teacher; the other two focus on the students:

1	What do I mean by 'active participation' during a reading lesson? (teacher's perception)	2	What do I do to encourage student participation? (teacher's behaviour)
3	How do my students feel about my reading instruction? (students' perceptions)	4	What do my students do during a reading lesson? (students' behaviour)

What I did

I used three main tools to help answer the research questions:

My own reflective journal

I wrote a reflective journal at the end of each of two lessons (only two, due to time constraints) to help me reflect on what happened during my teaching, and help me understand my perceptions and the students' behaviour. I used these questions to guide my reflections each time:

1. How do I manage my reading classes?
2. What do I do to encourage student participation?
3. How do the students participate when I teach them to read?
4. What activities do I use to support my students to read?
5. What went well and what didn't?
6. What could I have done better?

Student reflective writing

I asked students to submit a reflective piece of writing to help me gain more understanding of their behaviour during a reading lesson, and their perceptions of my teaching. I asked the following questions in Thai and allowed students to give their answers in Thai as well:

1. How have the activities influenced your comprehension of the lesson?
2. How have the activities influenced your interest in the lesson?
3. What do you think about your participation in the class?
4. What is something you like?
5. What is something you don't like?

Focus group interviews

I conducted three focus group interviews (each one comprising four students of mixed high, mid and low English proficiency) to delve deeper into students' perceptions of my teaching, asking the following questions:

1. What kinds of activity do you enjoy doing in reading lessons? Please give some examples and explain why you like them.
2. What kind of activity do you not enjoy doing in reading lessons? Please give some examples and explain why you don't like them.
3. Do you like English reading lessons? Why?/Why not?
4. If you could change the activities your teacher wants you to do in reading lessons, what would you like to change?
5. What are your preferred reading activities?

What I found out and learned

The three tools mentioned above led to some interesting initial findings. Firstly, data from my reflective journal clarified to me that I viewed 'active participation' as students responding to

activities that I engage in to encourage them to think, read, answer questions, share ideas or engage with the lesson. The responses might be either individual, group- or team-based, but they must involve all students and assist me in checking whether they understand the lesson.



I was already employing various techniques to encourage students to answer questions, such as giving bonus points, calling on students by number, providing options and playing vocabulary games. However, data from student reflective writing and focus group interviews revealed that, while a few students with high English proficiency typically answered questions individually, more students engaged when they could share answers simultaneously with others, as they felt less embarrassed. This was possible in my classes because, being blind, I sometimes ask students to clap their hands together with others to choose an answer from several choices, calling these 'a', 'b', 'c' or 'd'. Conversely, some students did not engage much at all due to sleepiness or the difficulty of the content. Additionally, regardless of their level of English proficiency, students do not enjoy long passages. And, finally, students with moderate to high English proficiency seemed to prefer competitive or varied vocabulary activities, while those with

lower proficiency enjoy any activities they can do with friends without too much pressure.

I was not very surprised that students did not enjoy the content of lessons, because the passages I used were long and contained a lot of difficult vocabulary. I also often read the text together with students and asked questions to the whole class to check their comprehension, which actually made students feel sleepy. What did surprise me was the extent to which students like to share ideas with others anonymously, for example through clapping hands to indicate choice of an answer. This made me realise that some students may feel shy and prefer not to be identified when answering questions: they do not want their friends to know when they get answers wrong. Therefore, I concluded that it would be helpful if I allowed my students to answer questions anonymously and if I gave them more opportunities to interact with friends.

What I planned to change

Data from the exploration stage revealed that students do not enjoy reading long passages or listening to long lectures. Instead, they prefer vocabulary games, competitions and any group activities that facilitate interaction with friends. Reflecting on this finding, I asked myself,

'What activities can I implement to increase students' participation in a reading lesson?'. In accordance with my exploratory research findings, I revised the reading texts to be more relevant to students' lives and added collaborative activities and technology, i.e. Quizizz and Padlet. I decided to integrate the following activities during each stage of the lesson:

Pre-reading stage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Play a vocabulary game to activate students' background knowledge. • Pre-teach 5–7 new vocabulary words by providing pictures or sample sentences, and let them guess meaning from the context. • Teach students reading strategies related to the text they are going to read.
While-reading stage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Divide students into groups. • Provide a task for students to explore, e.g. find key information. • Use various collaborative group activities, e.g. jigsaw reading.
Post-reading stage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integrate technology such as Quizizz, games or tasks to check students' comprehension. • Ask students to summarise the text and share their summary on Padlet.



What I did

I taught four lessons using the steps listed above during November and December 2023. The theme for the first two lessons was the environment, so I chose a passage on natural disasters and particle pollution involving PM2.5, as this was a problem at that time in Bangkok. The theme for the third and fourth lessons was health, and I chose a passage related to causes and effects of stress on health, and reducing anxiety during exams.

Two main challenges occurred during the third and fourth lesson. Since it was close to the university admission exam time, I realised how stressed my students were. Even though they joined in class activities, I felt they were not as lively as usual. Fortunately, since I was their homeroom teacher and many students were open to me, I was able to encourage them during the homeroom period. Moreover, due to many school activities, I needed to finish each lesson within one period, so I tried to finish the pre-reading stage within 10–15 minutes to give students more time to read and share ideas with friends.

I used the same three main research tools to assess the effects of my action plan as I had done for the exploratory research. First, I kept a *reflective journal* for four weeks to reflect on and explore what happened during my teaching. In addition, I had *students write their reflections*, and I conducted *focus group interviews* at the end of the implementation phase to learn more about students' opinions on the adapted content and activities. For each of these, I used the same questions as I had used during the exploratory phase.

What I found out and learned

Data from the students' reflections and focus group interviews indicated that the adapted content and activities made students more interested in the lesson because the texts were shorter and the activities were fun, thereby increasing participation. Seventy per cent of students said they participated more in class because their role was clear and they knew what they had to do; others said that their level of participation was the same as it had been the previous semester.

—

From my exploratory research, I had realised that 'active participation' is not limited to only answering the teacher's questions.

—

It can also be that students join in in other ways, for example, playing games, sharing ideas with friends or collaboratively summarising the text. So, I used more techniques to increase student participation of these kinds. I managed to increase student participation by using shorter texts of relevance to students, jigsaw readings, and technology such as Quizizz and Padlet. Most students joined in class activities like guessing the meaning of new vocabulary words, sharing ideas in a group, playing games and summarising the texts in a graphic organiser, while a few students preferred to work alone. Regardless of different levels of English proficiency, students indicated that games like Kahoot! and Quizizz had helped them review vocabulary, and that group activities like jigsaw reading enhanced text comprehension and summarising skills, while reducing pressure on them because they could share ideas in groups before sharing with the whole class. However, some students worried that they would not fully understand just by doing work in groups, and some felt uncomfortable working with less familiar classmates.

I learned that using technology can be genuinely helpful in promoting students' participation. Realising that some students may not want to be identified, especially when they provide incorrect answers, I found that online technology such as Quizizz can solve this problem, as answers can be uploaded anonymously. Additionally, when students had more chances to collaborate with friends, it gave them more time to think, making them more confident in sharing their answers, resulting in increased student participation.



Overall reflections

Through conducting this Exploratory Action Research, I realised that I gained opportunities to talk to and learn from my students. Similarly, students understand my perspective more now, which helps them feel comfortable when they need to talk or ask me for support. This has really improved the classroom atmosphere. Certainly, there can be other factors that affect my teaching, such as student anxiety, students not coming to school, school activities, and so on, and I cannot solve all these problems at once; but I realised that I need to prioritise and reflect on what happens, and deal with what I can handle first.

—

Furthermore, I used to be unhappy when my action plans did not work as expected, but now I realise that it's fine. If something doesn't work, reflect on it and try something different.

—

I believe that successful teaching and learning come from both teachers and students. When we are open to each other, this can help us gain valuable insights. In the past, the only tool I used to use was a survey to ask for students' feedback at the end of the semester. It helped me understand what I should improve, but sometimes the feedback came too late since I received it after I no longer taught those students. Doing Exploratory Action Research (EAR) allowed me to ask myself, 'Wouldn't it be better if I could use feedback to improve my teaching for current students?'. I now realise that there are various tools I can use to collect data besides a survey, many of which I already use in class – I just need to organise the data effectively.

If I receive any negative feedback in the future, I know that I can address the situation immediately rather than waiting until it becomes unmanageable. Engaging in EAR provided me with opportunities to learn together with my students, and this has helped me become a more professional teacher now and in the future.

Chapter 22

Secondary school students' difficulties in summary writing in English

Kanchanokchon Woodeson
Sichonkunatanvittaya School,
Nakhon Si Thammarat Province





My teaching situation

My school is a secondary Thai government institution, situated in the suburb of Sichon District, Nakhon Si Thammarat Province in the southern part of Thailand. There are 1,700 students and 75 teachers. My students, who are 17 years old and in Grade 11, are enrolled in my English Reading and Writing course. The curriculum emphasises reading as a precursor to writing, which inspired the direction of my research. Despite their interest in learning English for future educational and occupational opportunities, these students' proficiency in English was falling far short of my expectations.

The problem I faced and my exploratory questions

In my classroom, I observed that students were struggling with writing summaries in English. They clearly hadn't mastered the necessary vocabulary or sentence structures. However, the difficulty seemed to extend beyond just finding the appropriate words – it also seemed to involve challenges in comprehending complex texts that required summarising.

In order to confirm the root causes of students' difficulties with summary writing, I formulated five exploratory questions to investigate and begin to address the issues involved:

1	What do my learners think about summary-writing in the classroom?	2	What strategies do learners use to write a summary in English?
3	What do learners find difficult in summary writing?	4	What techniques do I use to teach them how to write summaries?
5	What difficulties do I have when I teach summary writing?		

How I explored the issue and what I found

To answer these exploratory questions, I mainly used focus group interviews and observation by a colleague.

I interviewed 12 out of 39 students in this Grade 11 class, asking focus groups these questions:

1. Do you like writing in English?
2. Do you understand the original reading passage used for summary writing in the classroom?
3. What do you do when you're going to write a summary?
4. How is your summary writing?
5. Do you find it difficult? If yes, what makes it difficult? If no, what makes it not difficult?
6. What activities help your summary writing?

7. If you don't know what to write for a summary, what do you do?
8. Do you use AI to help write the sentences? What platform do you use?
9. How does it help you? Do you find it useful?
10. What support do you want from the teacher to help with your summary writing?

In answer to these questions, the students said that they didn't like writing in English. The most interesting answers were to question 5. Students said that writing in English was very difficult for them because of their level of language proficiency. They couldn't understand the complex vocabulary or sentence structures in the readings, so they struggled to distinguish the main ideas from details. Students' responses therefore confirmed a lack of confidence regarding vocabulary and grammar skills, with many finding difficulty in understanding complex texts and using precise language in their summaries. This confirmed my initial concern about the impact of general language proficiency on summary-writing abilities.



I also asked my colleague who taught the same subject to observe my class, filling in the observation form in the Appendix.

My colleague's direct observations revealed a pattern where students relied heavily on translation tools and dictionaries, yet still faced challenges in applying these resources effectively for summary writing. My colleague

agreed that my students were lacking in vocabulary and that they didn't understand the sentence structures.

The key findings overall were that the students don't have the vocabulary they need for understanding a text in order to summarise it. Also, students were not at all confident about their grammar when writing a summary.



Making a change

In accordance with the above findings, I designed teaching strategies to teach vocabulary and sentence structure, to help my students to understand the text so they could write a summary better.

The new teaching procedure I followed was as follows:

Pre-writing

1. Give the whole class 10 minutes to guess the meaning of the vocabulary. (4–5 words). I provided clues by asking questions, showing them pictures or using gestures. I modelled the pronunciation of these words, followed by students reading the words aloud two to three times to become aware of the pronunciation and spellings.

2. Teach students how to guess meaning from the context using a story/text, by modelling thinking aloud, visualisation and other techniques. Also, teach the meaning of the new words from roots, prefixes, and suffixes.
3. To help with recall of the spelling and pronunciation, use Quiz and other vocabulary games, for example, Kahoot!, Live Worksheet, Spelling Bee or online pronunciation games using syllable and word stress.
4. Students read the text and answer the questions from the text.
5. I correct their answers to make sure they understand the text. Then I help them to identify and note the essential points that support the main idea.

While-writing

6. Students start writing the first draft of their summary. The summary begins with a sentence that states the text's main idea. Then students restate the original text's ideas in their own words focusing only on the main points.

Post-writing

7. As a last step, I ask students to get feedback from teacher, peers, or through self-assessment, to identify areas for improvement. Students evaluate their own and their peers' writing in the following ways:
 - Compare with the original: After writing the summary, compare it with the original text to ensure all important points are included and accurately represented.
 - Check for coherence: Ensure the summary flows logically from one idea to the next, maintaining the original text's intended meaning and emphasis.
 - Revise for clarity and brevity: Look for ways to make the summary clearer and more concise, removing unnecessary words or complex sentences.

Findings

To evaluate changes in my students' writing skills, I collected and analysed various pieces of evidence.

I compared their initial and final summaries, which showed clear improvements in identifying main ideas and using accurate grammar. Additionally, I asked for written reflections, and these highlighted their growing confidence, with one remarking, 'I now feel more confident summarising long texts'. Indeed, most students reported having improved in identifying key points. These findings, combined with improved performance on comprehension tasks, demonstrated that the strategies I had implemented were effective in enhancing students' writing skills.

I found overall that when students understood the English text fully, they show a marked improvement in their ability to use a varied vocabulary and to construct complex sentences more accurately in their summaries. Also, my focused lessons on vocabulary and grammar specific to summary writing seems to have led to a noticeable improvement in the quality of students' summaries. It is clear that direct instruction in these areas had been crucial for enhancing students' writing skills. Additionally, students had become more confident in their use of translation tools, using them to supplement rather than replace their learning.



Compared to the initial situation, students now showed greater confidence and competence in summary writing, with fewer instances of basic vocabulary and grammar errors. The findings highlighted the importance of integrating reading into writing instruction and the value of creating a collaborative and supportive learning atmosphere. A surprising insight was that students' motivation and engagement could be enhanced through well-structured group activities and the careful integration of technology into learning. These strategies not only improved language skills but also fostered a more positive attitude towards learning English.





Overall reflections

Engaging in the Exploratory Action Research (EAR) process was a profoundly enlightening experience, offering me invaluable insights into both my teaching practices and my students' learning experiences. This journey not only refined my understanding of specific challenges in teaching English summary writing but also deepened my appreciation of students' overall language learning, insofar as this affected their writing skills.

From this process, I gained more understanding of the multifaceted nature of language acquisition, especially the interplay between vocabulary, grammar, and the cognitive and affective aspects of learning. Seeing the improvements in my students' writing and confidence affirmed the value of targeted, evidence-based teaching strategies and the importance of fostering a supportive and engaging learning environment.

The EAR process has also reshaped my understanding of research, from exploring the problem in the classroom to forming exploratory questions and research tools that can inform me of causes of the problems in my classroom.

I've learned that research is not just for academics but is a vital component of reflective teaching, allowing for continuous improvement and innovation.

Furthermore, the success of the interventions implemented has motivated me to seek out additional professional development opportunities, to network with other educators for ideas and inspiration, and to maintain a learner-centred approach in all my teaching endeavours. This EAR process has been a reminder of the dynamic and ever-evolving nature of teaching, and the profound impact we can have on our students' learning.

In conclusion, I am dedicated to continuing Exploratory Action Research (EAR), and this is due to what I have found to be its substantial benefits for students, especially in improving their English and academic writing skills. EAR can not only facilitate a deeper understanding of language use in English contexts but also empower students to engage with their learning processes and to explore their learning strategies. My commitment to EAR is driven by its potential to significantly impact students' English development, preparing them for success in their scholarly pursuits and beyond.

Appendix: Observation form for the exploratory stage

Exploratory questions:

- What teaching techniques do I use to teach students how to write summaries?
- What difficulties do I have when I teach summary writing?

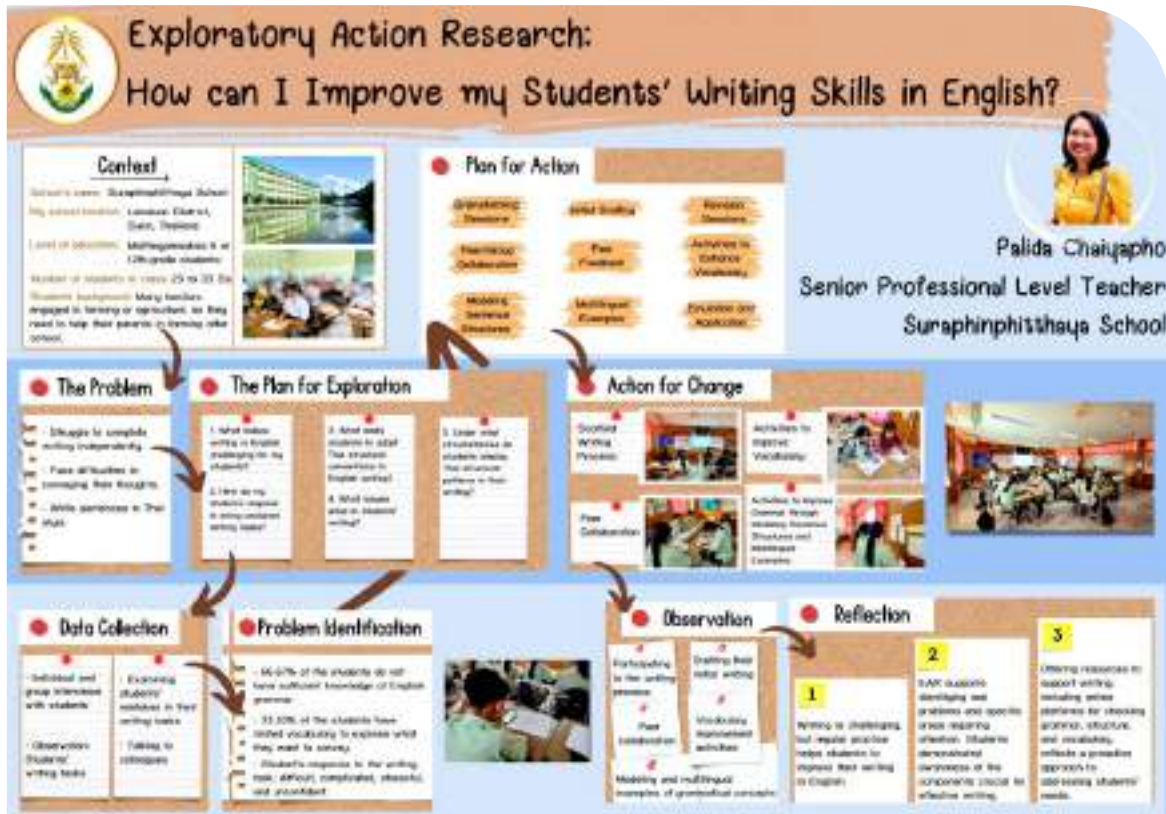
Questions	What happened?
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Does the teacher teach how to write in the classroom? 2. When does she teach writing (before or after a reading activity)? 3. Does she provide examples? 4. Are the examples from the passage? 5. What kinds of activities does the teacher engage students in in the classroom? 6. What is the students' reaction when she teaches writing? 7. How does the teacher teach a reading passage? 8. What does the teacher do to check if the students understand the passage? 9. Does the teacher give any extra handouts to the students to learn about writing? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If yes, can the students complete the worksheet? 10. Can students answer the questions in the classroom? 11. What kinds of questions do students ask in the classroom? 12. What kinds of resources do students use to write their texts? 	

Chapter 23

How can I improve my students' writing skills in English?

Palida Chaiyapho
Suraphinphitthaya School,
Surin Province





My teaching situation

I am a senior teacher, having taught for 19 years, and I teach in a public secondary school. My research focused on a specific group of Grade 12 students, consisting of 27 individuals, all 18 years old. Many of these students come from families engaged in agriculture. Consequently, besides their academic commitments, they often assist their parents with farming activities after school. This results in their English proficiency being below the intermediate level, particularly in writing skills. Due to this context and their limited exposure to English, they rarely have the chance to use or practise the language. Recognising this, I decided to focus my research on enhancing their writing skills.

The problem I faced and my exploratory questions

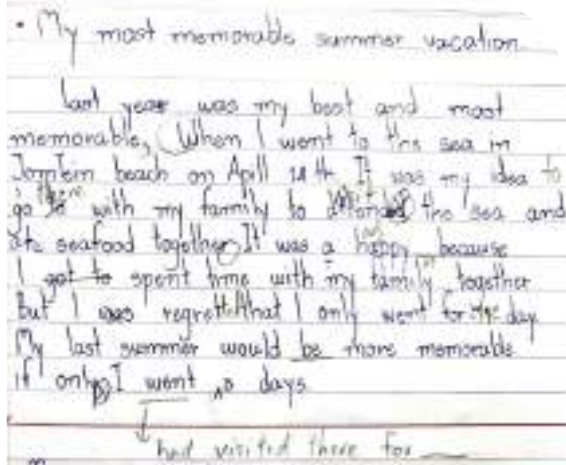
When I assigned writing tasks to my students, many struggled to complete them independently. Even among those who managed to finish the assignments, there were difficulties in conveying their thoughts clearly. I observed that a common issue was the tendency to use Thai language structures in their English writing. For example,

they often combined two main verbs in a single sentence, such as 'went buy food', 'went watch', 'went go see flowers', or 'went walk on the beach'. This indicated a need for guidance in transitioning from Thai to English grammar rules, with better targeted instruction and practice to help them develop proficiency in expressing themselves fluently and cohesively in written English. Based on these observations, I formulated the following research questions with the help of my mentor to explore the underlying issues:

- | | | | |
|---|--|---|---|
| 1 | What makes writing in English challenging for my students? | 2 | How do my students respond to assigned writing tasks? |
| 3 | What leads students to adopt Thai structural conventions in English writing? | 4 | What issues arise in students' writing? |
| 5 | Under what circumstances do students employ Thai structural patterns in their writing? | | |

Exploring the issue

I initiated this research by carefully observing the writing work of my students. I confirmed that most of them wrote incorrectly, struggled to write, or produced writing that was inappropriate for their grade level. I compiled a list of common errors students made when assigned writing tasks.



To address my research questions, I then engaged in a series of *individual and focus group interviews*. The purpose was to understand students' difficulties, emotions, and the influence of Thai language structures on their writing. The interview questions included the following:

1. What makes writing in English challenging for you?
2. How do you feel when you are assigned writing tasks?
3. Why do you write English using Thai structures?
4. What topics do you want to write about?

I asked the interview questions in both individual and focus group settings, allowing for a comprehensive exploration of students' writing challenges. While the individual interviews, conducted with 27 students, delved into personal experiences and specific obstacles, the focus group discussions provided a platform for students to share common struggles and collaborate on potential solutions. For the individual interviews, I tailored additional questions to address personal difficulties, such as:

1. Can you describe a time when you found an English writing task particularly difficult? How did you handle it?
2. What strategies or techniques do you use to complete your English writing assignments?

I also analysed individual student's work, using the following grid. While analysing, I compiled a list of examples of use of Thai grammatical conventions. Following this, I conducted a group interview with the entire class to investigate the reasons behind the most frequent writing mistakes further. During the research process, I assigned writing tasks to the students and continued to use the writing assessment rubric to evaluate their work. I provided each student with their individual scores and feedback, enabling them to understand their performance and make improvements in their subsequent writing assignments.

Criteria for assessment of students' writing	Rating scale				Comments
	4 Excellent	3 Good	2 Fair	1 Poor	
1. Grammar and sentence structure <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Correct use of verb tenses • Proper subject-verb agreement • Correct use of articles (a, an, the) • Sentence variety (simple, compound, complex) 					
2. Vocabulary and word choice <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appropriate use of vocabulary • Variety of vocabulary • Precise and descriptive language 					
3. Organisation and coherence <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear introduction, body, and conclusion • Logical flow of ideas • Use of transition words and phrases 					
4. Content and ideas <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relevance to the topic • Depth of content • Creativity and originality 					
5. Spelling and punctuation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Correct spelling of words • Proper use of punctuation marks • Consistent formatting 					

What I found out and learned

The combination of individual and focus group interviews provided a well-rounded perspective on the students' writing challenges. The individual interviews revealed personal struggles, while the focus groups highlighted shared experiences and potential strategies for improvement. I felt that I could use these insights to develop better instructional methods to support students in overcoming their writing difficulties.

From the exploratory research, I found that around two-thirds of the students interviewed felt the most challenging thing in writing in English was insufficient knowledge of English grammar, while about a third mentioned a lack of vocabulary. When asked, 'Can you describe a time when you found an English writing task particularly difficult?', the students explained that when tasked with writing in English, they often struggled to recall relevant vocabulary. Even when they could think of appropriate words, they were uncertain about how to construct sentences correctly due to their lack of confidence in English grammar rules.

When students were asked, 'How do you feel when you are assigned writing tasks?', many of them responded, 'It's difficult' or 'I don't feel like writing'. Furthermore, when I asked them, 'Why do you write English using Thai structures?', they responded that they write based on how they typically speak in Thai. For example, they might write 'I like, curtains pink' instead of 'I like pink curtains'. In the Thai language, adjectives follow the nouns they modify but in English, adjectives precede them. Differences in structure often seem to lead students to apply Thai syntax when writing in English.

My analysis of the students' writing further confirmed these concerns. Many students struggled with sentence structure, often producing fragmented or run-on sentences. For example, a common mistake was writing 'I cooking yesterday' instead of 'I cooked yesterday'. Another example was 'I sleep all time and eat' instead of 'I slept all the time. After that, I woke up and found something to eat.' Errors in verb tense and subject-verb agreement were common, making their writing unclear and grammatically inconsistent. For instance, a mistake was writing 'Yesterday, I go to university' instead of 'Yesterday, I went to the university', showing confusion with past tense forms. Additionally, limited vocabulary led to repetitive word usage, and some students avoided complex sentence structures, relying on overly simple expressions. These difficulties resulted in writing that lacked fluency and coherence, further reinforcing their hesitation to engage in English composition.

These findings suggested to me that I should engage in targeted interventions to bolster grammar and expand vocabulary to foster better writing skills and language fluency, as well as to help students gain confidence.

Making a change

Students had informed me that they didn't know how to correctly structure English sentences. Therefore, I realised that I needed to provide guidance on how to write English sentences in different forms and tenses. I provided them with the most commonly used verbs in different forms to help them generate ideas for sentence construction, preparing a visual representation of all 12 sentence structures as examples for students to use as a guide in their writing. Additionally, I provided commonly used verbs in various forms. Before the writing practice, I provided examples of past simple tense and expressions like 'I wish/If only', through illustrative sentences, encouraging students to analyse and emulate these examples in their writing to enhance their grammatical accuracy.

At first, I thought that to improve my students' English skills I needed to encourage them to think, brainstorm, write, and organise their thoughts in

English, especially in writing and speaking. I thought that by doing so, their skills would improve. However, I soon realised that it would be better to encourage them to think in both Thai and English to develop their writing ideas, after which I could review their ideas and help them expand their vocabulary related to the writing topic. I also permitted them to use Thai–English bilingual dictionaries or online resources to enrich their vocabulary and choose precise words for their sentences.

Students then composed their initial drafts in English. I allowed them to work in pairs or small groups to engage in collaborative writing tasks, where they were encouraged to provide constructive feedback to enhance each other's writing skills. I also revised the students' writing to show them how to improve clarity and coherence. I decided to observe and note down very carefully what students did during these activities, and I interviewed students after they were over.

What I found out and learned

I observed that my students had become more actively involved in the writing process due to the new way I was scaffolding in both Thai and English to foster idea generation and vocabulary expansion related to the writing topic.

I had also facilitated meaningful peer collaboration, organising students into pairs or groups to collaboratively work on writing tasks, after which I provided constructive feedback to improve their interpersonal skills. This approach seemed to improve students' confidence and reduce their stress when completing writing tasks.

Specifically, I asked students at the end, 'Do you feel more confident writing in English now compared to when you first started learning?' The students responded that they felt more confident when engaging in group discussions because their peers could share ideas and assist in organising sentences.



To enhance vocabulary, I had allowed my students to use bilingual dictionaries, which promoted student autonomy and enriched their language use. Furthermore, I observed that activities aimed at improving grammar through modelling and multilingual examples enhanced students' understanding and application of grammatical concepts. Students gained a better understanding of how to construct sentences using the past simple tense and expressions like 'I wish' or 'If only'. For instance, one task required students to write about a memorable summer vacation experience, incorporating the past simple tense and expressions like 'I wish' or 'If only'. Initially, students would write sentences such as 'this vacation would be more memorable if only I had a chance to visited the whole university', but after targeted practice, their sentences evolved into more accurate forms, such as 'This vacation would have been more memorable if only I had a chance to visit the whole university'.

However, when they began writing sentences and paragraphs, I noticed that most students still struggled to connect two sentences cohesively. Furthermore, when organising their sentences into paragraphs, they seemed to lack knowledge of how to use transition words effectively. Therefore, I realised that I would need to guide them further in using appropriate English transition words.

Through monitoring and interviews, I discovered that while some students initially found writing challenging, others gained confidence as they practised consistently. Additionally, regular writing practice played a crucial role in improving their English writing skills over time.

When I asked the class how they now felt about writing in English, the majority of students replied that they felt more confident about constructing sentences but acknowledged that they still needed to improve their vocabulary, as they tended to use relatively simple words.



Overall reflections

Through the process of conducting Exploratory Action Research (EAR), I discovered that EAR is highly effective in identifying real problems and specific areas requiring attention, such as – in the case I've reported on here – sentence structure, word order, vocabulary and phrases in English. Based on the findings from EAR, I planned and implemented strategies in the classroom to support students in becoming aware of the components crucial for effective writing. This approach encouraged them to address these areas through dedicated study and practice, leading to valuable self-awareness in their learning journey.

Additionally, offering resources to support writing, such as online platforms for checking grammar, structure and vocabulary, was a proactive approach I adopted to addressing students' needs. These resources empowered students to independently review and refine their writing, fostering autonomy and self-directed learning.

Moreover, incorporating peer review sessions into the writing process encouraged them to learn from one another, improve their collaborative skills, and gain insights into different writing styles and techniques.

To effectively improve my students' writing skills, I plan to apply this EAR process across all the classes I teach. By doing so, I aim to provide consistent support and targeted instruction to help students identify and address specific areas of improvement in their writing. Additionally, I have become encouraged to incorporate a variety of teaching strategies, such as differentiated instruction, to meet the diverse learning needs of my students. This will include providing personalised feedback, offering additional practice exercises, and encouraging peer collaboration to enhance their writing proficiency further. Furthermore, I will collaborate with colleagues and attend professional development workshops to stay updated on the latest research and best practices in teaching writing skills.

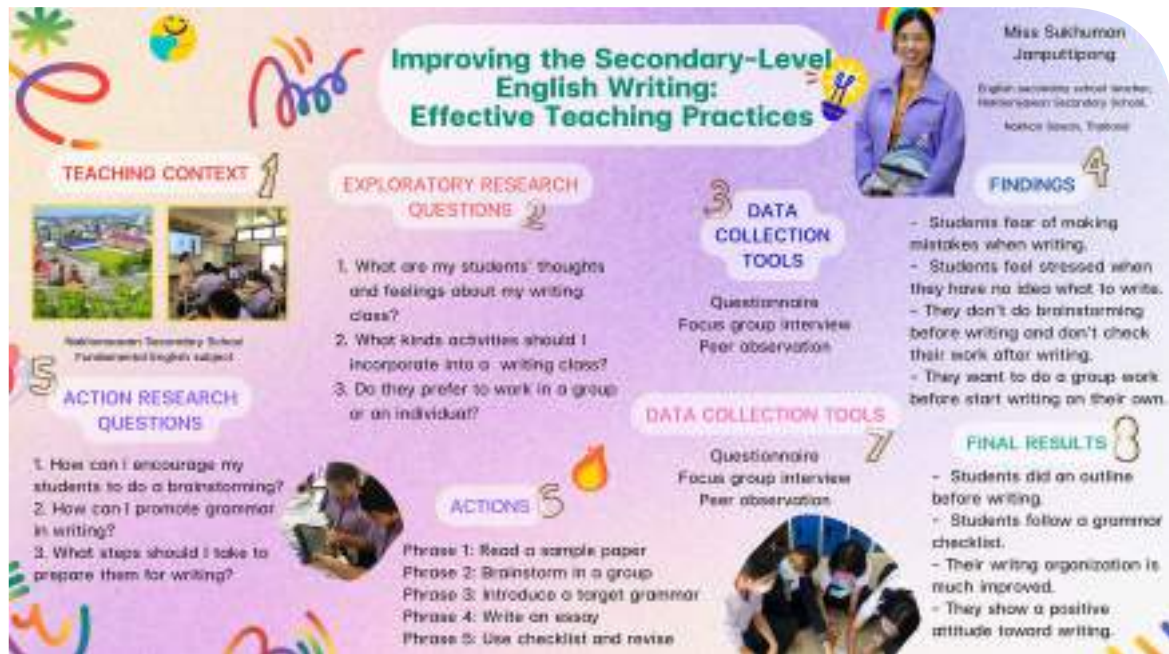
In conclusion, the EAR approach, combined with targeted resources, peer collaboration and interactive activities, proved to be instrumental in improving students' writing skills, enhancing their confidence, and fostering a more autonomous and self-directed approach to learning, as well as increasing my own motivation to develop myself as a teacher.

Chapter 24

Write on: A teacher's journey to enhancing writing skills

Sukhuman Janputtipong
Nakhonsawan Secondary School,
Nakhon Sawan Province





My teaching situation

I teach at the largest secondary school in Nakhon Sawan Province, with approximately 2,500 students enrolled. The school has a focus on the Science-Maths Programme, and all students are admitted based on an entrance examination. Consequently, the students demonstrate strong academic abilities and their English proficiency ranges from A2 to B2 according to the CEFR.

For my research, I focused on writing skills in the Fundamental English course with my Grade 11 students, who are around 16 years old. There are approximately 40 students in each class, arranged in rows. While their English skills are quite good and they are able to convey meaning, their grammar accuracy is somewhat lacking.



The problem I faced and my exploratory questions

I often felt guilty during my reading and writing classes because I realised that I hadn't planned my teaching well. Most of the time, I simply followed the textbook without a clear teaching strategy, and I struggled with organising the stages of the lessons effectively. One significant issue I identified was that my students were reluctant to engage in brainstorming or creating outlines before writing. Additionally, they frequently made basic grammar mistakes, particularly in subject-verb agreement and capitalisation. After completing their writing tasks, they tended to submit their work without thoroughly checking it. I also questioned whether my students were becoming bored with repetitive activities.

To address these concerns, I formulated the following exploratory research questions:

<p>1</p> <p>What are my students' thoughts and feelings regarding my writing class?</p>	<p>2</p> <p>What types of activities should I incorporate into the writing class?</p>
<p>3</p> <p>Do students prefer working individually or in groups?</p>	

These questions aimed to provide insights into how my students perceived the class, what activities they found engaging, and their preferences for collaborative or independent work.

What I did

To address the exploratory questions, I developed three data collection tools: a questionnaire, focus-group interview questions, and a peer observation form. The questionnaire aimed to gather students' opinions on my teaching, and their writing challenges and desired activities. Administered anonymously via Google Forms, I distributed it to all students.

To gain deeper insights, I also conducted a focus-group interview with two groups of four students, one group with lower-level English proficiency and the other with higher proficiency. The questions I asked were:

1. Do you enjoy studying writing?
Why or why not?
2. What types of activities do you enjoy in a writing class? Please provide examples and explain why you like them.
3. Which writing activities do you find the most beneficial, and why?
4. In what ways do you think the activities have helped you improve your writing skills?
5. Are there any writing activities you dislike? If so, please provide examples and explain why you find them unhelpful or uninteresting.
6. If you could change any of the writing activities assigned by your teacher, what would you change and why?



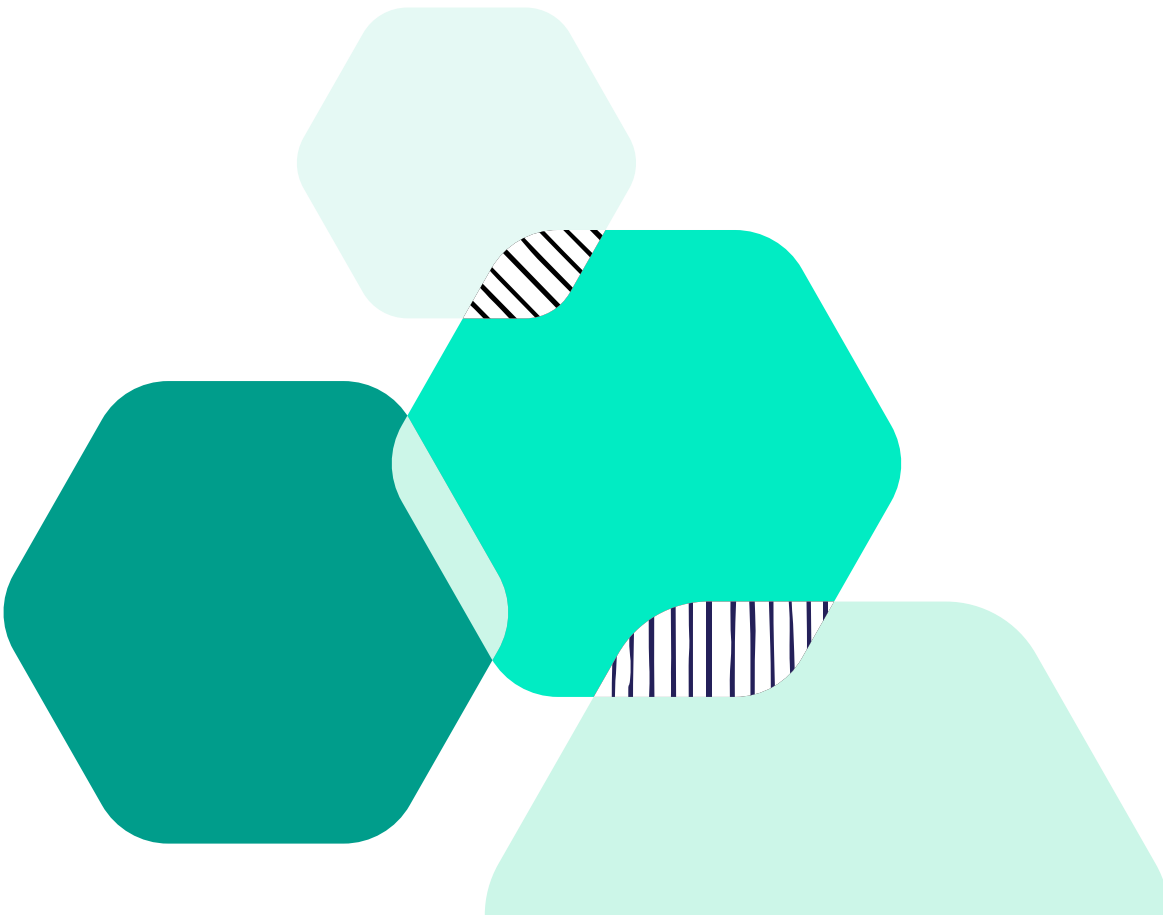
Additionally, I invited another teacher to observe one of my lessons and provide feedback on my teaching and on student engagement.

What I found out and learned

The questionnaire results indicated that many students experience stress when writing due to difficulties in generating ideas. Although I did encourage them to create an outline to help organise their thoughts and plan their writing, I found that students were reluctant to use the outlines when writing. Most created outlines solely because I required them to, rather than using them as a meaningful resource. Additionally, students explained that their ideas often evolved during the writing process, causing them to abandon their initial outlines in favour of newly developed ideas. I was surprised to learn that they view outlines merely as a teacher's requirement rather than a tool for effective writing. Additionally, students expressed a desire for more enjoyable writing classes, suggesting the incorporation of fun games to alleviate stress and boredom. However, they preferred to write alone at home, where they can concentrate better. Contrary to my concern about potential boredom caused by repetitive activities, students expressed a willingness to participate in in-class writing activities, such as picture prompt stories, chain stories, fill-in-the-blanks and running dictation as long as the activities remain interactive and engaging. They found viewing writing samples particularly helpful, as these provide a template to follow and can clarify expectations.

During focus-group interviews, students revealed that they struggle with collecting and organising information, citing time constraints and lack of guidance. They do not prioritise outlining as an important stage since they rarely receive feedback from teachers on their outlines. This comment made me feel guilty for not providing them with enough guidance before writing – for example, on whether their outline was ready to use or how they should reorganise the information. The reason was that I didn't know how to provide feedback on every student's work. Due to the large class size, I couldn't give feedback on everyone's outlines. In fact, I only corrected their final work, focusing on whether they included a thesis statement or topic sentence in their writing. Since my focus was on fluency rather than accuracy, students felt their writing had not improved much, and were not aware of making numerous grammatical errors. However, they appreciated my clear explanations of templates and paragraph organisation, along with clear examples.

Lastly, the colleague who observed me noted that, while my writing samples were clear and easy to follow, the class was quite intense due to extensive explanations on templates and organisation of writing. My peer suggested allocating more time for brainstorming and addressing vocabulary challenges by incorporating interactive games and digital applications on either phones or computers to enhance student engagement. Some students were observed relying on Google Translate instead of writing independently, highlighting the need for more engaging pre-writing activities to foster enjoyment and engagement.





What I planned to change

Reflecting on the exploratory findings, I identified three key areas for improvement: brainstorming activities, grammar instruction, and editing.

Consequently, I restructured my writing instruction into five stages:

1. *Reading a writing sample*: To improve students' understanding of writing genres such as a compare-and-contrast essay, they would read a well-written sample paper.
2. *Brainstorming*: I would facilitate group activities to foster creativity and content generation, for example using a Venn diagram for a collaborative brainstorming session on compare and contrast essay ideas.
3. *Introducing a grammar target*: To address grammar concerns, I would introduce one grammar concept at a time, focusing on accuracy, such as transition words.
4. *Writing*: Offering students three topic options based on interests, I would ask them to work independently. Extra writing time would be allocated to accommodate different concentration levels.
5. *Using a checklist*: To encourage thorough review before submission, I would introduce a checklist covering comprehensibility, grammar and organisation.

What I did

I followed the five-stage plan outlined above but faced challenges implementing the editing stage ('Using a checklist') due to time constraints. To address this, I modified the process by allowing students to submit drafts first and a final version later. Incorporating peer editing further enhanced the approach – students were asked to exchange work and use checklists to review each other's writing before submission of drafts.

To evaluate the success of changes made, I asked a colleague to observe my class and provide feedback. Additionally, I used a new questionnaire and conducted a focus-group interview to gather student perspectives. The questionnaire included both closed and open-ended questions to assess students' experiences with writing tasks, including their confidence, the clarity of instructions, and

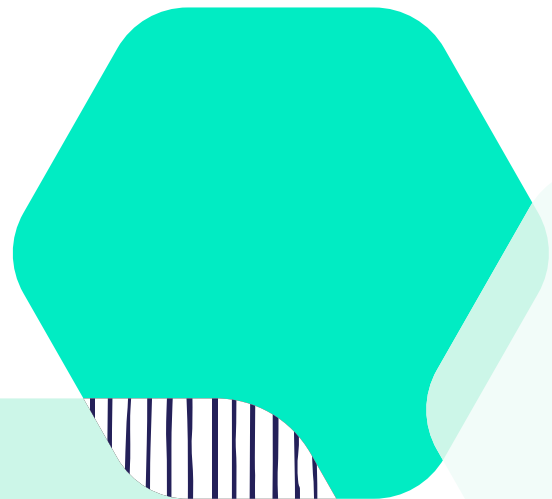


perceived difficulty. It also aimed to explore how effectively they applied writing strategies taught in class. The focus-group interview involved in-depth discussions on specific aspects of the five-stage writing process.

What I found out and learned

Through evaluating implementation of the five-stage writing process and analysing adjustments made to address challenges, I gained several key insights:

- 1. Improved engagement and writing accuracy.* Findings from peer observation and questionnaire responses indicated that students engaged more actively when exposed to well-structured sample papers. The sample papers provided a clear model of writing conventions, aiding students in understanding essay organisation and coherence. Additionally, focus-group discussions revealed that collaborative brainstorming sessions effectively facilitated idea generation, as students found group activities such as using Venn diagrams helpful in structuring their thoughts.
- 2. Challenges with the editing stage.* Despite these positive outcomes, the questionnaire and focus-group interviews highlighted difficulties with the editing phase. Although students had been instructed to use a checklist to revise their work before submission, questionnaire data revealed that many found self-editing tedious and repetitive, leading to disengagement. Additionally, peer observation confirmed that nearly half of the students left editing until the last minute, often skipping checklist review due to time constraints. To address this issue, I had modified the process by allowing students to submit a first draft in one class and complete editing in a later session, which helped distribute cognitive load more effectively. Focus-group feedback suggested that students in fact preferred peer editing over self-editing, as it made the revision process more engaging. Peer-editing allowed students to evaluate different writing styles, receive constructive feedback, and develop a deeper understanding of writing mechanics. Observations during peer-editing activities supported this, as students appeared more engaged in reviewing others' work than in self-revision.
- 3. The role of collaborative learning in writing development.* Findings across all data sources (peer observation, questionnaire, and focus-group interview) underscored the effectiveness of a collaborative learning approach in enhancing writing skills. Peer editing fostered a supportive learning environment where students felt comfortable exchanging feedback. Additionally, the process encouraged students to critically analyse writing, reinforcing the importance of revising and refining their own work. Moving forward, I plan to further refine the peer-editing process by introducing structured guidelines to ensure students provide meaningful feedback. Additionally, I aim to explore new pre-writing activities to make brainstorming more enjoyable and engaging, as focus-group responses suggested that some students still struggled with idea generation despite collaborative strategies.



Overall reflections

Participating in this programme has fundamentally shifted my perspective on classroom research. Previously, I perceived it as a daunting and time-consuming endeavour, especially considering the requirement for Thai teachers to submit an example of such research every semester. However, this training in EAR provided me with a straightforward yet highly effective approach to conducting classroom research. Through this process, I've learnt to systematically address issues by first identifying the root causes using tools such as questionnaires, focus-group interviews and peer observations. The emphasis on experimenting with possible solutions, even if they don't yield immediate success, has been particularly enlightening.

One of the most significant challenges for me was the importance of the exploratory stage, which was entirely new to me.

—

Initially, I believed that solutions could be derived from theoretical knowledge or expert advice alone. However, I've come to realise the paramount importance of prioritising the voices and needs of my students.

—

This approach has led to some surprising discoveries, such as the fact that students often prepared outlines without actually following them during the writing process, highlighting the invaluable nature of the insights gained from the exploratory stage.

Looking ahead to the next semester, I am eager to apply the skills and knowledge gained from this experience to conduct further research following the same methodology. Additionally, I plan to share this approach with my colleagues during Professional Learning Community sessions, recognising the significant benefits that classroom research can offer to both students and teachers alike.

Finally, this training has imparted valuable lessons to me in effective time management. While many teachers may cite busyness as a barrier to engaging in research, I have learnt from my mentor the importance of prioritising wisely and utilising time efficiently. By adopting this mindset, I am confident that I can overcome the challenge of time constraints and pursue meaningful research endeavours that contribute to the continuous improvement of my teaching practice. Overall, this experience has empowered me with the knowledge and skills needed to address classroom challenges systematically and effectively.

Chapter 25

Practising conjunctive adverbs in story-writing tasks

Sirawit Srikheaw

Suwannakuhapittayasan School,
Suwannakuha District,
Nongbualumphu Province



MR. SIRAWIT SRIKHEAW
SUNANWANGKHAJITVAKARAN SCHOOL, MOONG BUA LUKA PRAE.

CONJUNCTIVE ADVERBS IN STORY-WRITING TASKS

Research Questions

- What are students' perceptions about using conjunctive adverbs?
- What do students find problem in using conjunctive adverbs?
- What conjunctive adverbs do students use in writing English story?
- How do I teach my students to use conjunctive adverbs in writing English story?

Tools

- semi-structure interview in Thai (Focus: Groups with students)
- Identifying the usage of conjunctive adverbs in text students' writing tasks
- Teacher's reflective journals

Key Findings

From the interview, most students feel that they are able to make simple sentences in story-writing tasks with limited vocabulary and sentence structures. They have seen the "conjunctive adverbs" before but have not practiced to use them effectively. Moreover, they need more creative and collaborative activities to fulfill the knowledge of conjunctive adverbs usage.

Only 1 students of a class could use the conjunctive adverbs in their previous tasks. Moreover, they aren't able to explain the usage of these words clearly.

I notice that the students feel more comfortable when they are allowed to use mobile phones to help their story-writing tasks mixed with their interest and fantasy thought. Consequently, I need to assign them more tasks in the well-design theme to increase their creativity and participation.

Action Plan

I wanted to provide more activities to improve not only their "knowledge of conjunctive adverbs" but also "their creativity"

Key Actions (4 classes)

- Phase 1 - Reviewing the "TAMBOYS" signs. (Weekly Quiz)
- Phase 2 - Introducing students to conjunctive adverbs. (Weekly Read-Draw-Think)
- Phase 3 - Practicing students to use conjunctive adverbs in story-writing tasks. (Swift Drawing)
- Phase 4 - Assigning students to write their own story based on their interest. (My Favorite Character)

Measurement and Evaluation

- The score results of each activity (in form of KPA) - Qualitative
- The keywords from their feedback after teaching - Qualitative

Hero Time - The task

Swift Drawing

My task (draft-final)

Teaching Material (Class 10)

Result

Findings - Quantitative

- Speedy Quiz: The scores of each group was 63.33 - 100.00 percent (5 Group)
- Hero Time: The task scores of four groups was 3, and a one group was 2.
- Swift Drawing: The scores of each group was 10 - 15 (max) points.
- My Favorite Character: The scores of 29 students was 15 - 35 points.

Findings - Qualitative

- Students understand and apply more conjunctive adverbs in their tasks.
- Students love to share their creative idea and participation in class.
- Students improve their further understanding in other reading passages.

Mr. Sirawit Srikheaw (19-10-2024)

My teaching situation

I'm currently teaching Grade 10 students (15–16 years old) on the special Science Mathematics and Technology (SMT) Programme, which focuses on enhancing students' proficiency in English by integrating it into their daily learning activities. On this programme, students are required to use English extensively, both for

comprehending academic texts and for writing detailed reports. However, many of the students struggle with low comprehension and lack confidence when it comes to using English effectively. This creates challenges in their ability to engage fully with the materials and understand passages, which are critical skills for their academic success.

The issue I faced and my exploratory questions

The issue I decided to focus on in my teaching of this class of 29 students was their limited understanding and use of conjunctive adverbs in English story writing involving: addition ('Moreover', 'Furthermore', and 'In addition'), contrast ('However', 'Nonetheless', and 'On the other hand'), and cause and effect ('Therefore', 'As a result', and 'Hence'). This became apparent through a writing assignment where students were asked to narrate an event and connect ideas cohesively. Many students either omitted conjunctive adverbs or misused them, resulting in fragmented or unclear sentences. For example, instead of using 'however' to contrast ideas, one student wrote: 'He tried hard. He failed.', without any link to clarify the relationship between the two ideas.

In order to investigate and analyse the real issue in my class, I outlined four research questions as follows:

<p>1 What are students' perceptions about using conjunctive adverbs? (student perceptions)</p>	<p>2 What problems do students have in using conjunctive adverbs? (student perceptions)</p>
<p>3 What conjunctive adverbs do students use in English story writing? (student performance)</p>	<p>4 How do I teach my students to use conjunctive adverbs in English story writing? (teacher behaviour)</p>

What I did to explore the issue

To answer my research questions, I employed a variety of tools. For research questions 1 and 2, I conducted *semi-structured focus group discussions* in Thai with students, divided into four groups of six to eight students each. My opening questions were:

- In your previous writing, did you feel happy with your English writing?
- Did you know these words before now? (here, I gave examples of addition, contrast and cause-and-effect conjunctive adverbs as listed above)
- What are your expectations in learning these new words?



To address question 3, I *analysed students' use of conjunctive adverbs in previous writing tasks* to identify patterns and common errors. For question 4, I *wrote in a reflective journal* to document and reflect on my teaching strategies and their effectiveness in helping students use conjunctive adverbs in English story writing.

What I found and learned

From my research, I discovered several important findings that enhanced my understanding of the issues and provided valuable insights into how to improve my teaching.



Questions 1 and 2: What are students' perceptions about using conjunctive adverbs? What problems do students have in using conjunctive adverbs?

During the focus groups, students revealed that they could write simple sentences in story-writing tasks but faced limitations in vocabulary and sentence structure. When asked about conjunctive adverbs, one student admitted, 'I've seen words like 'however' or 'therefore' in books, but I'm not sure how to use them in my writing'. Another added, 'It's easier to write short sentences without connecting words because I don't know the rules'. These responses showed that students were familiar with conjunctive adverbs but lacked practice and confidence. Many students also suggested incorporating creative and group activities to make learning more engaging and practical.

Question 3: What conjunctive adverbs do students use in English story writing?

Through an analysis of students' previous writing tasks, I observed that only two students in the class successfully used conjunctive adverbs such as 'therefore' and 'however'. However, these words were often misplaced, leading to unclear or awkward sentences. For instance, one student wrote, 'He was tired. Therefore, he did not sleep early', which miscommunicated the intended meaning. This highlighted a significant gap in understanding the context and function of conjunctive adverbs.

Question 4: How do I teach my students to use conjunctive adverbs in English story writing?

In my teacher's reflective journal, I noted that I aimed to improve students' reading and writing skills by integrating science passages. The learning process started with activating prior knowledge, followed by answering questions in free writing form. Challenges included: 1) the length of passages; and 2) getting students to write a report outside the lesson. I noted that students were more comfortable and engaged when allowed to use mobile phones to help with their story-writing tasks. As one student wrote, 'Using my phone helps me find better words and ideas for my story'. Also, when I encouraged them to brainstorm ideas and share their fantasy-themed stories, I observed that themes related to their interests sparked creativity and increased participation.

What surprised me most was how much students relied on mobile phones and creative approaches to feel confident.

This realisation shifted my focus toward integrating technology and collaborative activities to bridge the gaps in their understanding and application of conjunctive adverbs.

My action plan

Based on the findings from my research, I developed a structured action plan to: a) improve students' knowledge of conjunctive adverbs; and b) engage their creativity in story-writing tasks. The plan consisted of four key activities: 1. Speedy Quiz, 2. Hero Time, 3. My Favourite Character, and 4. Swift Drawing (see Appendix for details) conducted over four lessons, designed to address the gaps in understanding and engage students in meaningful learning experiences.

Lesson 1 focused on reviewing the concept of 'FANBOYS' conjunctions ('for', 'and', 'nor', 'but', 'or', 'yet' and 'so') through a Speedy Quiz to refresh students' knowledge of basic sentence connectors. This activity aimed to build a foundation for introducing more advanced conjunctive adverbs.



Lesson 2 introduced students to conjunctive adverbs using engaging techniques like Speedy Quiz and Hero Time, making the session interactive and memorable.

Lesson 3 involved practising conjunctive adverbs through story-writing tasks. The activity Swift Drawing encouraged students to connect sentences while illustrating their ideas, fostering both creativity and grammatical accuracy.

Finally, *Lesson 4* allowed students to write their own stories based on personal interests. The activity My Favourite Character gave students the freedom to explore topics they enjoyed while applying their newfound knowledge of conjunctive adverbs.

To enhance these activities, I incorporated group work, vivid handouts, story cards and technology like AI tools. For example, I prompted ChatGPT to design the sentence strip for the activity Hero Time in Lesson 2, which responded to students' needs. I also used a Smartboard in class for the students to illustrate their own drawing in the activity Swift Drawing in Lesson 3, which allowed them to participate in the class effectively and created a dynamic learning environment.

One challenge was students' initial hesitation and lack of confidence in using conjunctive adverbs. I overcame this by fostering a supportive atmosphere through small group discussions and personalised feedback. Another obstacle was time management as some students required additional guidance. To address this, I extended deadlines for specific tasks and encouraged peer support to ensure all students could complete their work successfully.

What I found and learned

To evaluate changes in students' learning, I assessed the students' writing from the activities

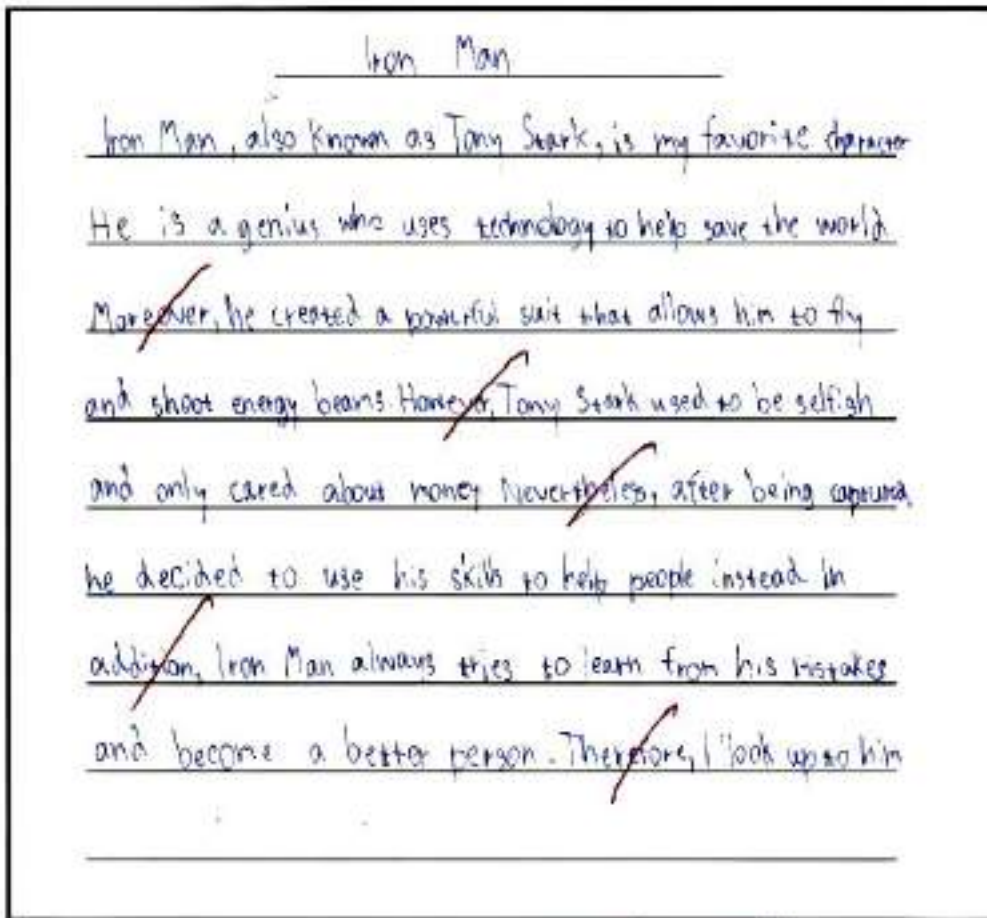
Speedy Quiz, Hero Time, and My Favourite Character to assess knowledge and skills, looking at both group and individual work to get a clear picture of their progress.

Worksheet 3: My Favorite Character

Directions: Write your favorite character story on paper.

Your story should be between 200-300 words and should include:

- o The name of your favorite character from movies, books, or real life.
- o A short story of their adventure or timeline.
- o Use **Conjunctive Adverbs** (e.g., *Moreover, However, Nevertheless, Therefore*) to connect your ideas and explain your thoughts clearly.



S
at the end
check - good

I also considered development in students' attitudes by observing carefully and taking notes during the action plan. The results showed that students improved in many areas.

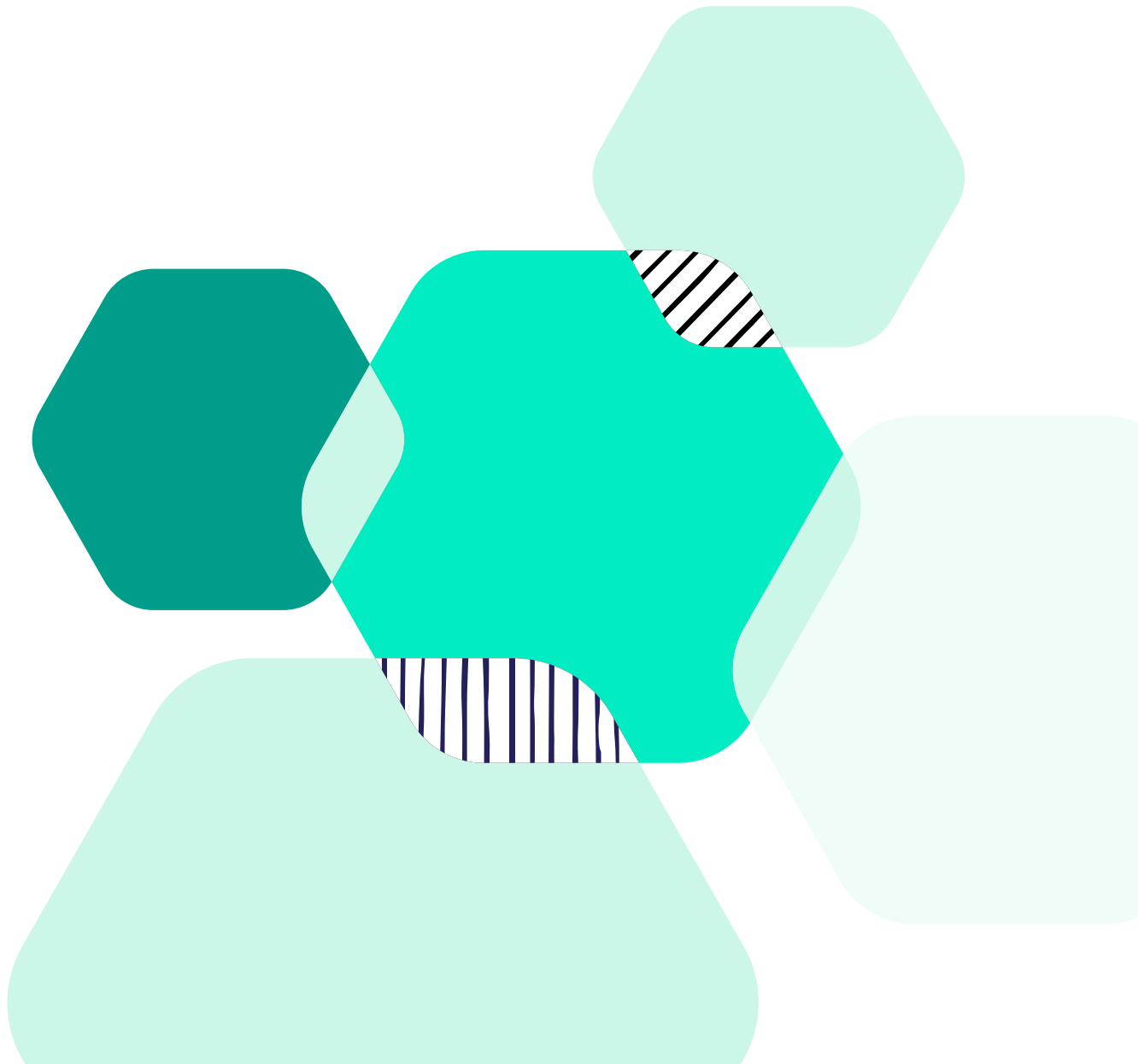
Knowledge: All students were able to use conjunctive adverbs correctly during the structured activities such as Hero Time and creative writing tasks like My Favourite Character. For example, one student wrote, 'Tony Stark is brilliant; however, his arrogance often causes problems', showing proper use of adverbs. However, I noticed that some students still struggled with cause-and-effect adverbs, such as 'therefore', 'consequently', and 'as a result'. For instance, one student wrote, 'He was tired. As a result, he not sleep early', which showed difficulty in forming logical connections, indicating a need for further practice.

Skills: Group activities like Speedy Quiz helped students learn teamwork and communication. 83 per cent of students performed very well in connecting ideas logically in their stories,

while 17 per cent needed more support to improve. These activities also helped students think critically and work with others effectively.

Attitudes: All students showed excitement and creativity. Many used technology such as Padlet to present their stories, which helped them feel more confident and motivated.

Compared to the initial challenges identified – limited knowledge of conjunctive adverbs and low confidence – students showed remarkable progress. The plan not only improved students' understanding of conjunctive adverbs but also motivated them to participate actively and express their creativity in writing. This shift underscored the effectiveness of integrating diverse teaching strategies and technology. Additionally, the results highlighted the value of a structured yet creative approach in addressing linguistic and cognitive challenges, showing that combining fun, creative tasks with focused lessons may be important for helping students fully develop their skills.



Overall reflections

Engaging in the process of Exploratory Action Research (EAR) has been a transformative experience for me, both as a teacher and a learner. Reflecting on my previous approaches during my master's studies and regular teaching practice, I often relied on personal opinions or assumptions to address classroom issues. This approach sometimes led to ineffective solutions that failed to tackle the root causes of problems. However, EAR has completely shifted my perspective.

Through EAR, I gained a deeper understanding of my students, their behaviours and attitudes. Instead of focusing solely on what I perceived as issues, I learned to gather real evidence from the classroom.

This allowed me to identify the actual challenges faced by students and myself. For example, I realised how important it is to differentiate between knowledge gaps and motivational challenges, which significantly influenced my problem-solving strategies.

Another key realisation is that meaningful improvement in the classroom is achievable within a single semester. The structured yet flexible nature of EAR, with its minimal documentation and practical principles, demonstrated how even small, evidence-based interventions can bring about significant changes. This simplicity makes EAR an ideal approach for busy teachers aiming to improve their practice systematically.

Moving forward, my views on teaching and research have shifted. I now see research not as an academic burden but as a practical tool to enhance classroom learning. This experience has motivated me to continuously apply EAR principles in my teaching, ensuring my decisions are grounded in evidence rather than assumptions. Ultimately, EAR has empowered me to approach teaching with greater clarity, confidence and a focus on fostering meaningful learning experiences for my students.

Appendix 1: Instructions for the four new action stage activities

Activity 1: Speedy Quiz

Objective: Reinforce students' understanding of 'FANBOYS' and introduce conjunctive adverbs through an engaging quiz game

Materials: PowerPoint slides with quiz questions, flashcards for conjunction types, timer, group score sheet

Instructions:

1. Introduction
 - Begin by reviewing FANBOYS conjunctions (e.g. 'and', 'but', 'so'). Then introduce conjunctive adverbs (e.g. 'however', 'therefore', 'moreover'), explaining how they are used to connect sentences logically.
2. Game setup
 - Divide the class into small groups of 4–5 students. Each group receives flashcards labelled with conjunction types: addition, contrast, and result.
 - Display a sentence with a blank on the PowerPoint, such as:
He was tired. _____, he kept working.
3. Quiz phase
 - Each group raises the correct flashcard to complete the sentence within 10 seconds.
 - Award 1 point for a correct answer and an extra 2 points if all members of a group answer correctly.
 - Repeat with a variety of sentences covering all three conjunction types.
4. Wrap-up discussion
 - Review the correct answers and discuss why specific conjunctive adverbs fit each sentence.
 - Encourage students to share what they found challenging and provide tips for improvement.

Activity 2: Hero Time

Objective: Foster teamwork and creativity by using conjunctive adverbs to create a cohesive story from disconnected sentences

Materials: Pre-written sentence strips, character sets (e.g. Marvel or Disney), poster boards, adhesive, markers

Instructions:

1. Introduction
 - Explain that students will work in groups to create a story using sentence strips about a popular character. Each strip represents a part of the story, but the connections are missing.
2. Story assembly phase
 - Divide students into groups of 4–5 and give each group a set of sentence strips. For example:



- Ask groups to arrange the strips in a logical sequence to form a story.
 - Using provided conjunctive adverb flashcards, students must insert appropriate adverbs (e.g. 'however', 'therefore', 'moreover') between sentences to make the story cohesive.
3. Presentation phase
 - Groups paste their completed story on a poster board and present it to the class, explaining their choices of conjunctive adverbs.
 - Encourage classmates to ask questions and provide feedback.
 4. Wrap-up discussion
 - Discuss the importance of logical connections in storytelling and the role of conjunctive adverbs in improving clarity and flow.

Activity 3: My Favourite Character

Objective: Develop students' individual writing skills by crafting a story that integrates conjunctive adverbs

Materials: Writing templates, online submission platform (e.g. Padlet), examples of short stories

Instructions:

1. Introduction
 - Ask students to think about their favourite character from movies, books or real life. Explain that they will write a short story about this character, focusing on using conjunctive adverbs to connect ideas.
2. Story-writing phase
 - Provide a template with prompts to guide their writing (e.g. Who is the character? What challenges do they face? How do they overcome these challenges?).
 - Require students to use at least three types of conjunctive adverbs (addition, contrast, result) to connect their sentences.
 - Students write their stories individually in 20 minutes.
3. Submission and feedback
 - Students upload their completed stories to Padlet.
 - Ask each student to read and comment on at least two peers' stories, providing feedback on the use of conjunctive adverbs and overall story structure.
4. Wrap-up discussion
 - Highlight excellent examples of conjunctive adverb usage and discuss how writing about personal interests improves engagement and creativity.

Activity 4: Swift Drawing

Objective: Enhance creativity, teamwork and logical writing by using visual prompts (student-drawn images) to inspire collaborative storytelling with conjunctive adverbs

Materials: Large whiteboard or bulletin board, coloured markers, blank story template for writing

Instructions:

1. Introduction
 - Explain to students that they will collectively create a visual story by drawing pictures on a whiteboard. These pictures will serve as prompts for writing a collaborative story.
 - Emphasise the importance of using conjunctive adverbs (e.g. 'moreover', 'however', 'therefore') to connect ideas logically.
2. Drawing phase
 - Each student takes turns coming to the board to draw one image related to a story idea they imagine.
 - They have 5 minutes collectively to complete this step. Encourage students to keep their drawings simple but clear enough to represent an idea, object, character or event.
3. Pair work
 - After the drawings are complete, pair up the students. Each pair observes the board and selects 3–4 drawings they find most interesting to include in their story.
4. Story-writing phase
 - Give pairs 15–20 minutes to collaboratively write a story based on the chosen drawings.
 - Instruct students to use at least three different types of conjunctive adverbs (addition, contrast, result) to connect their sentences logically.
5. Presentation phase
 - Each pair presents their story to the class, pointing out the drawings they used and explaining their choices of conjunctive adverbs.
 - Allow other students to ask questions or provide constructive feedback.
6. Wrap-up discussion
 - Discuss as a class how the drawings inspired diverse stories and how conjunctive adverbs helped create logical connections between ideas.
 - Encourage reflection on the use of creative and collaborative methods in learning.



Chapter 26

Empowering paragraph writing: Integrating ChatGPT to enhance skills and reduce anxiety in EFL classrooms

Nonglak Kanthamat
Nakhonsawan School,
Nakhon Sawan Province





My teaching situation

Nakhonsawan School is an extra-large and renowned educational institution located in the northern part of Thailand, which serves a diverse student body of over 3,000 students, with 36–40 students in each class. With top-notch facilities and a focus on English proficiency, the school offers core subjects, extracurricular activities, and free self-study resources like Apple classrooms and computer labs. Additionally, it fosters global connections through a student exchange programme. The majority of students are from high-income families, prioritise English

education, and benefit from comprehensive support. They also attend additional English classes after school and engage in online learning, utilising mobile phones and iPads for study and homework. With these abundant resources, almost all students typically meet the school's indicators for overall English achievement in English subjects.

However, paragraph writing challenges most Thai students, including these students, and in this project I set out to identify strategies for improvement in this area through exploration and thoughtful technology integration.

The problem I faced and my research objectives

In my experience as an English teacher at Nakhonsawan School, I have observed persistent challenges in developing paragraph-writing skills among Grade 9 students, despite the structured reading and writing courses they undertake. Several factors appear to contribute to these difficulties, including the absence of dedicated writing courses over the previous six academic years, textbooks that emphasise reading over writing, and the complexities of managing large and diverse classrooms. Additionally, I have noticed that instructional approaches often prioritise rote memorisation over skill-based learning, while assessment methods tend to focus more on grammar than on the actual development of writing skills. Large class sizes make it difficult for me to provide individualised instruction, and the diverse proficiency levels among students hinder effective peer collaboration. Furthermore, limited time within the school schedule reduces opportunities for sustained writing practice and revision, affecting students' overall writing proficiency. Given these challenges, I aimed to systematically investigate the root causes further, explore potential interventions, and implement iterative cycles of reflection and refinement through this Exploratory Action Research to enhance students' writing skills within this learning context.

Seeking to understand the root causes of students' writing difficulties and to identify solutions that would align with their specific learning needs, I undertook this Exploratory Action Research with the following objectives:

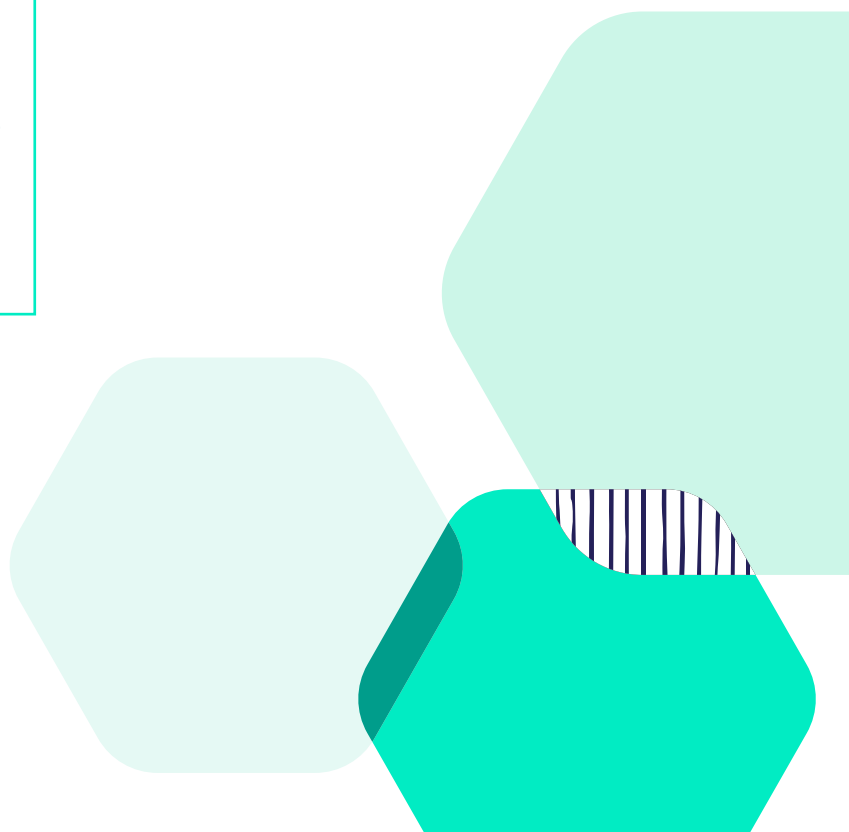
- **to investigate the underlying factors contributing to students' struggles in paragraph writing**
- **to assess their perceptions and emotions when engaging in writing tasks**
- **to evaluate the effectiveness of current teaching strategies based on student performance and reflections.**

Through this process, I aimed to develop context-responsive strategies that would foster meaningful and sustainable improvements in students' writing development.

What I did to explore the issue

In the exploratory phase, I examined the challenges and emotional responses of 36 Grade 9 students in paragraph writing, while assessing the effectiveness of current teaching strategies. Data was gathered through classroom observations, student questionnaires and a reflective teaching journal, complemented by an analysis of students' written work. I carried out observations myself, with additional peer observation from an English colleague to enhance validity, over six sessions within three weeks, using an observation framework adapted from process-based writing instruction to focus on student engagement, writing behaviours, peer interactions, and signs of anxiety or confidence.

The student questionnaire was administered in Thai to ensure clarity and accuracy, and all 36 students completed it during class under supervision, resulting in a 100 per cent response rate. The instrument included both Likert-scale items (measuring confidence and perceived difficulty) and open-ended questions (eliciting challenges and suggestions). I maintained the reflective teaching journal twice per week throughout the three-week period. Prompts for journal entries guided me to reflect on the challenges students encountered, their emotional responses, the effectiveness of instructional strategies, and adjustments for subsequent lessons. Finally, writing samples were collected weekly from all students and examined to identify recurring grammatical errors, organisational problems, and evidence of gradual improvement in paragraph-writing competence.



What I found and learned

Through analysis of data, I identified several key challenges in students' English paragraph writing.

These included grammatical and lexical difficulties, organisational struggles, and writing anxiety.

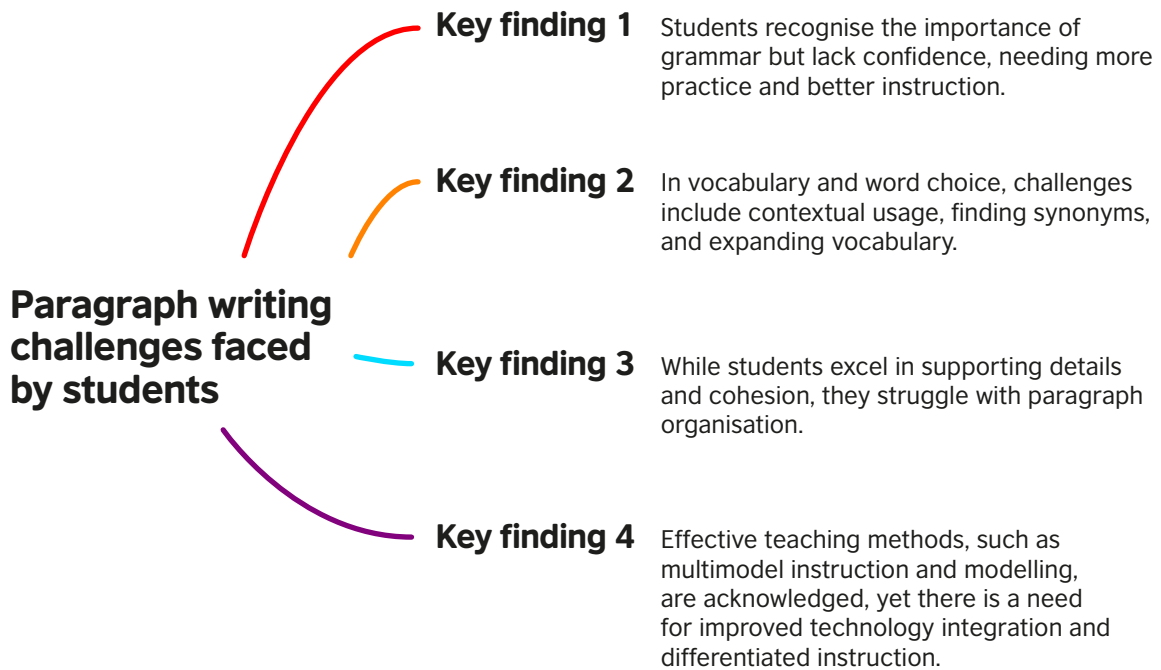
I further identified common difficulties through a systematic analysis of students' paragraph writing, which I conducted weekly with all 36 Grade 9 participants over a three-week period. Each writing sample was collected and examined for recurring patterns in grammar, vocabulary and organisation. In particular, typical sentence construction errors – such as improper word order, preposition misuse and challenges with plural nouns – were identified on the basis of coding and categorised to determine their frequency and persistence across drafts. Evidence from these texts also revealed vocabulary limitations that restricted students' ability to select contextually appropriate words, which in turn reduced coherence and cohesion at the paragraph level. This analysis of actual student writing, rather than self-reports, provided concrete evidence of the linguistic and organisational challenges that hindered students' paragraph-writing proficiency, all of which hinder writing proficiency.

Additionally, vocabulary limitations were evidenced in the students' written texts, where many struggled to select contextually appropriate words and often repeated a limited range of familiar vocabulary. For instance, several students substituted general terms for more precise vocabulary (e.g. using 'thing' or 'good' in place of more accurate expressions), which reduced clarity. Others relied on direct translations from Thai, resulting in awkward or inaccurate word choices. These lexical difficulties, observed consistently across the weekly writing samples of all 36 students, restricted their ability to expand their lexicon and undermined overall coherence within their paragraphs. Finally, despite

demonstrating strengths in providing supporting details and maintaining cohesion, many students struggled with organisational difficulties, often leading to unclear written communication.

The questionnaire analysis revealed that, while students recognise the importance of grammar, many lack confidence in their abilities, necessitating more practice and targeted instruction. Student feedback highlighted an appreciation for multimodal instruction and modelling. For example, one student explained, 'When the teacher shows us a model paragraph, I can see how to organise my ideas step by step'. Another remarked, 'Pictures and videos make it easier for me to understand what to write'. Similarly, several students emphasised the role of technology in supporting their writing, with one noting, 'Using online tools helps me check my grammar and makes writing less stressful'. Others also stressed the need for differentiated instruction, such as one student who said, 'Sometimes the task feels too difficult for me but easier for my friends, so I want simpler examples first'. Overall, these findings gave evidence of students' appreciation for varied instructional strategies, in particular multimodal instruction and modelling, but also highlighted the need for more integrated technology and differentiated instruction to cater to diverse learning needs.

These key findings, which provided a foundation for refining instructional strategies, are summarised here:



Finally, through thematic analysis of student responses to the questionnaire, I identified varied emotional responses to paragraph writing among students. 85 percent of students reported experiencing anxiety and stress, indicating a prevalent sense of apprehension toward writing tasks. In contrast, 15 per cent expressed

a combination of anxiety and growth, acknowledging progress in their writing skills despite ongoing challenges. These findings emphasised the need for targeted instructional strategies to reduce writing anxiety and foster student confidence through scaffolded instruction and a supportive learning environment.

Action plan

The above insights informed the development of an intervention integrating ChatGPT as a revision tool within a process-based writing framework, allowing students to engage in self-directed revisions with AI-assisted feedback. In practice, students first drafted a paragraph on a given topic, then submitted their draft into ChatGPT with guiding prompts such as: 'Please check my grammar and suggest improvements for clarity and organisation.' ChatGPT provided feedback on sentence construction, vocabulary and paragraph coherence, which students were required to review and apply selectively in revising their drafts. Students were not simply told to use ChatGPT in a general way, but were guided through a structured procedure which I modelled first as their teacher. After writing an initial draft paragraph in class, they were asked to identify one or two sentences that they felt uncertain about and to paste these sentences into ChatGPT with a specific prompt designed for revision. The prompt requested ChatGPT to evaluate the sentence(s) according to five criteria: clarity, answering the prompt, use of conjunctions, grammar usage, and conciseness of language. ChatGPT then returned feedback by scoring each area and suggesting improvements. Students were instructed to read the feedback carefully, underline or highlight the parts of their sentences that ChatGPT had flagged, and then rewrite the improved version underneath. Students were also asked to explain in short notes which Chat GPT changes they accepted or rejected and why. This structured integration ensured that ChatGPT was not used as a text generator, but rather as a tool to support critical thinking, self-editing and progressive improvement in paragraph writing.

During the four-week action phase, I collected data through focus groups, interviews and student reflections, using qualitative and quantitative analyses to track progress. Instructional strategies were continuously refined based on feedback, ensuring a dynamic, student-centred approach. Ethical protocols, including informed consent, confidentiality and institutional approval, were rigorously maintained.

I examined the impact of the approach on three key areas: 1) students' writing ability, focusing on grammar accuracy, organisation and coherence; 2) their levels of writing anxiety and confidence; and 3) their experiences with ChatGPT as a revision tool.

To establish change in writing proficiency, I asked 36 Grade 9 students to write an initial open-ended response paragraph and maintain reflective writing logs ('My Writing', 'My Improved Writing', and 'Next Time I Write...') to track their progress over time. For example, in one log entry a student initially wrote, 'My writing is not clear because I forget to use topic sentence. Next time I will try to start with main idea first'. In a later entry, the same student reflected, 'I add more details and use 'first', 'then', 'finally' to connect sentences. My paragraph is easier to read'. These reflections demonstrated students' awareness of their own progress and areas for improvement.

Throughout the action phase, I also collected data through surveys, focus groups and teacher observations, ensuring a continuous cycle of evaluation and improvement. Based on these insights, I made iterative refinements to the action plan, such as increasing modelling of topic sentence construction and providing sentence starters for transitions, thereby adapting instructional strategies to better address students' evolving needs in paragraph-writing instruction.

What I found and learned

Building on insights gained through the action research, this section examines the transformative impact of integrating ChatGPT into the writing process, emphasising how it enhanced students' writing abilities, reduced their anxiety and reshaped their overall learning experiences.

Overall, I found that ChatGPT improved students' paragraph-writing abilities to a great extent, particularly in structuring, grammar and word choice. Students reported that its immediate feedback helped them identify and correct errors effectively, which resulted in clearer and more organised paragraphs. Additionally, ChatGPT supported improvements in both main ideas and conclusions, fostering greater autonomy in the writing process. One student remarked, 'ChatGPT helps make my writing clearer and more structured; I feel like I can identify and fix mistakes on my own'. Its vocabulary suggestions further enabled students to select contextually appropriate words, contributing to concise and coherent writing overall.

This conclusion was not drawn impressionistically, but through a systematic analysis of student data. Writing samples were collected weekly and examined using content analysis to trace changes in sentence accuracy, paragraph structure and lexical variety across drafts. Particular attention was given to the clarity of topic sentences, the use of transitions, and the presence of effective conclusions. Evidence from this analysis showed noticeable reductions in recurrent grammar and word-choice errors after students engaged in ChatGPT-assisted revision. To complement the writing analysis, in-depth interviews and reflective log entries were coded thematically. This qualitative data provided insights into students' perceptions of how ChatGPT influenced their writing process, reinforcing the patterns observed in their written work. Together, the content

analysis of texts and the interview evidence confirmed that ChatGPT's role as a revision tool directly contributed to improvements in structure, grammar and vocabulary use.

The integration of ChatGPT also played a vital role in reducing students' writing anxiety and boosting their confidence. Many students described ChatGPT as a supportive 'assistant', akin to an 'extra teacher' or friend, offering continuous guidance. Immediate feedback reduced their fear of mistakes, enabling them to engage with writing more freely and with less hesitation. The tool's accessibility – providing feedback anytime and anywhere – empowered students to revise their work independently, fostering a sense of control and creating a less stressful environment for writing development.

Students' experiences with ChatGPT were overwhelmingly positive, with many highlighting its convenience and speed in providing feedback. They valued its role as an 'extra teacher' always available to assist them. However, students emphasised the importance of clear and specific prompts to maximise the tool's effectiveness. While ChatGPT provided substantial support, students also recognised the critical role of teacher guidance, especially for complex writing tasks.

These findings underscore the value of combining ChatGPT's real-time feedback with clear instructional design and teacher support to create a balanced and empowering writing experience.

Overall reflections

Through this Exploratory Action Research, I gained valuable insights into my teaching practices and students' writing development, particularly regarding the integration of ChatGPT as a revision tool. Initially, I viewed ChatGPT as a supplementary resource, but this research revealed its potential as a central component of the learning process. Its ability to provide immediate feedback on grammar, structure and word choice allowed students to independently correct errors, fostering greater autonomy in their writing.

One key learning emerged from observing the challenges students faced when first introduced to ChatGPT. For many, it was their initial encounter with the tool, and questions like, 'What is ChatGPT?' underscored the need for orientation and familiarisation. This highlighted the importance of accounting for students' varying levels of digital literacy, requiring additional instructional time to ensure effective use. During this process, I consistently reminded students, 'You have to boss ChatGPT, not let it boss you', encouraging them to take control of the tool rather than passively relying on it. This reinforced the importance of active engagement and critical thinking when using AI in learning.

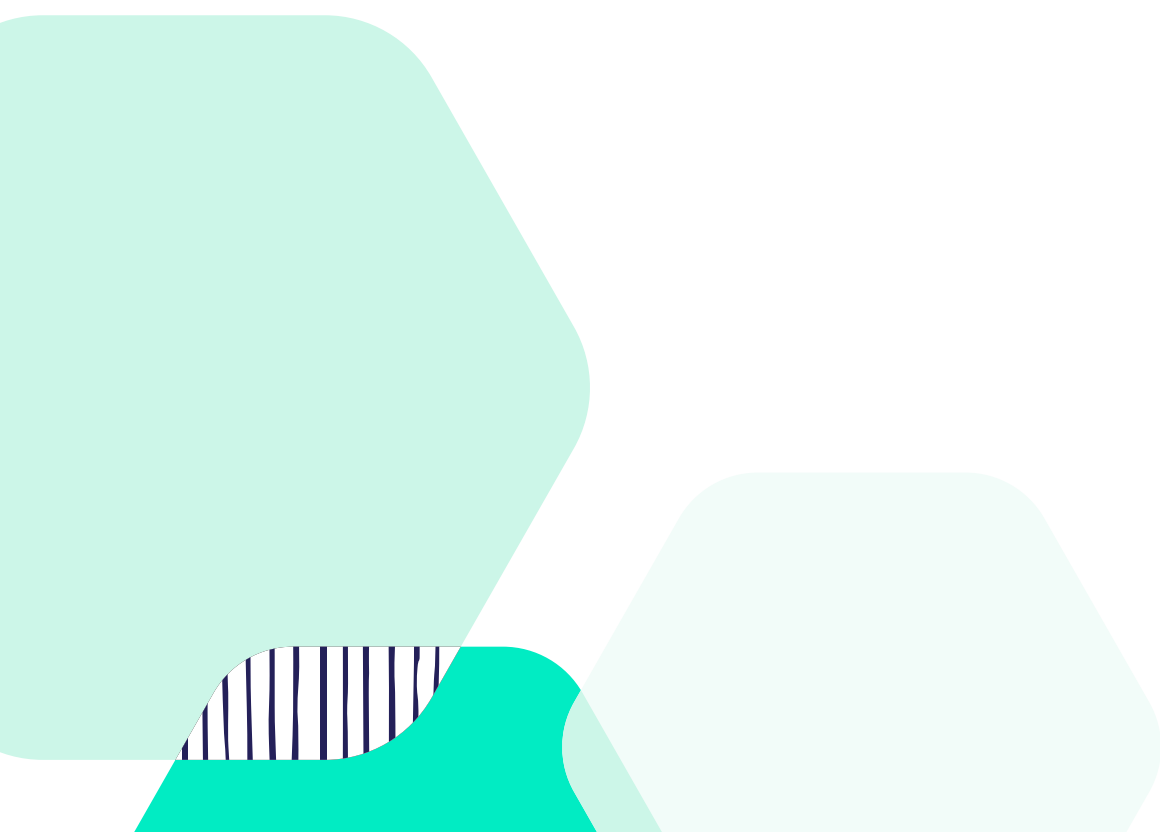
Another significant realisation was the balance between technology and teacher guidance. While ChatGPT effectively supported students with basic writing skills, such as paragraph organisation and sentence structure, it became clear that my role as a teacher was crucial for addressing complex writing challenges. Students depended on

my feedback for deeper explanations and support that extended beyond AI capabilities. This reinforced my belief that technology should complement, not replace, the teacher's role, particularly in fostering critical thinking and comprehensive understanding.

Finally, I observed a marked improvement in students' confidence and reduced anxiety in writing. ChatGPT's accessibility allowed students to revise independently, giving them greater control over their learning.

This sense of autonomy led to increased engagement and growth as writers. Moving forward, I aim to integrate technology thoughtfully, supporting autonomy while maintaining a strong teacher presence to enhance both teaching and learning outcomes.

If there's one thing I've taken away from this experience, it's that *teaching is never a fixed process – it's always evolving*. This has shown me that the key to effective teaching isn't just finding the right method, but rather *being open to constant exploration, adaptation and reflection*. There's no single perfect strategy that works for every student, but by continuously learning from them, I can keep improving my teaching in ways that truly meet students' needs.



Chapter 27

Developing students' writing skills through pictorial writing

Pitchaya Yasadayan

Chiangkhamwittayakhom School,
Phayao Province





Developing Students' Writing Skills through Pictorial Writing: Exploratory Action Research

Pitchaya Yasadayan
Changkhambhayaikon School, Phayao
Email: pitchaya@changkham.ac.th



SCAN

Abstract

I explored the use of pictorial writing to improve sentence construction skills in English major students struggling with writing. Qualitative data were collected through open-ended questionnaires, peer observations, video recordings, and reflective journals. Findings indicated that pictorial writing can enhance students' ability to construct accurate sentences.

Research Questions

1. How do I teach sentence writing?
2. What challenges do students face when doing sentence writing activities?
3. What are the students' perceptions about sentence writing? (How do they feel about writing?)

Methods



Challenges and Solutions

Students hesitated to use AI tools and struggled with limited vocabulary. To address this, I provided demonstrations, step-by-step instructions, and word banks. Technical issues were mitigated by preparing backup activities and ensuring stable internet access. Over time, students became more confident and engaged, resulting in improved writing skills and creativity.



What I found and learned

1. Better vocabulary usage
2. Increased interest and engagement
3. Improved past tense sentence writing
4. Boost in confidence and teamwork
5. Effective use of technology

Reflection

1. Pictorial writing helps students visualize and organize ideas.
2. AI tools boost writing as students enjoy using technology.
3. Expanding vocabulary is key for better writing. I plan to continue refining EAR strategies and exploring ways to enrich students' vocabulary.
4. HR and academic affairs support using EAR in the classroom. Teachers submit 2-3 page EAR research instead of a full report each term.

My teaching situation

I have been teaching in upper secondary school for more than 19 years, and I currently teach at Chiangkhamwittayakhom School, an extra-large institution located in Phayao Province, Thailand. This year, I am focusing on teaching Mattayom 5 students (Grade 11; aged 16 to 17), who are enrolled in the English major programme.

The problem I faced and my research questions

Despite being English majors, students in Mattayom 5 seem to face challenges in constructing grammatically correct sentences. Observing their writing, I noticed persistent grammatical errors, sentence fragments and a lack of coherence. For instance, during a class exercise, many students struggled to use basic subject-verb agreement and form compound sentences correctly. I often heard students expressing frustration, saying, 'I don't know how to make it a complete sentence' or 'This is too hard'. Their difficulties may stem from several factors, such as limited understanding of English grammar, interference from their first language (Thai) or insufficient practice with writing. Whatever the cause, their demotivation was evident, and I felt a strong need to address this gap, both for their academic growth and my teaching effectiveness.

These experiences led me to develop exploratory research questions to better understand and address the issue. Drawing from classroom interactions, peer discussions and reflections, I formulated the following questions:

- | | |
|--|--|
| <p>1</p> <p>How do I teach sentence writing to Mattayom 5 English major students?</p> | <p>2</p> <p>What are students' perceptions of sentence-writing activities?</p> |
| <p>3</p> <p>What challenges do students face when engaging in sentence-writing activities?</p> | |

These questions guided my research to explore my current teaching, gauge their attitudes toward sentence-writing activities and identify specific barriers students encounter, providing actionable insights to help me improve my teaching. By investigating these questions, I aimed to identify practical solutions to improve students' sentence-writing skills, ultimately helping them feel more confident and competent in their use of English.



What I did to explore the issue

My data collection tools were the following:

Questionnaire with open-ended items

Students shared insights in Thai about their experiences, challenges and feelings regarding sentence writing in an online form with the following questions (also written in Thai):

1. Which activity did you enjoy the most in today's English writing class? Why?
2. Which writing activity did you dislike in today's English writing class? Why?
3. What problems did you have when writing in English today (for example: not knowing vocabulary, not knowing grammar, or other reasons)?
4. When you have problems in English writing, how would you like the teacher to help you solve them?

Peer observation

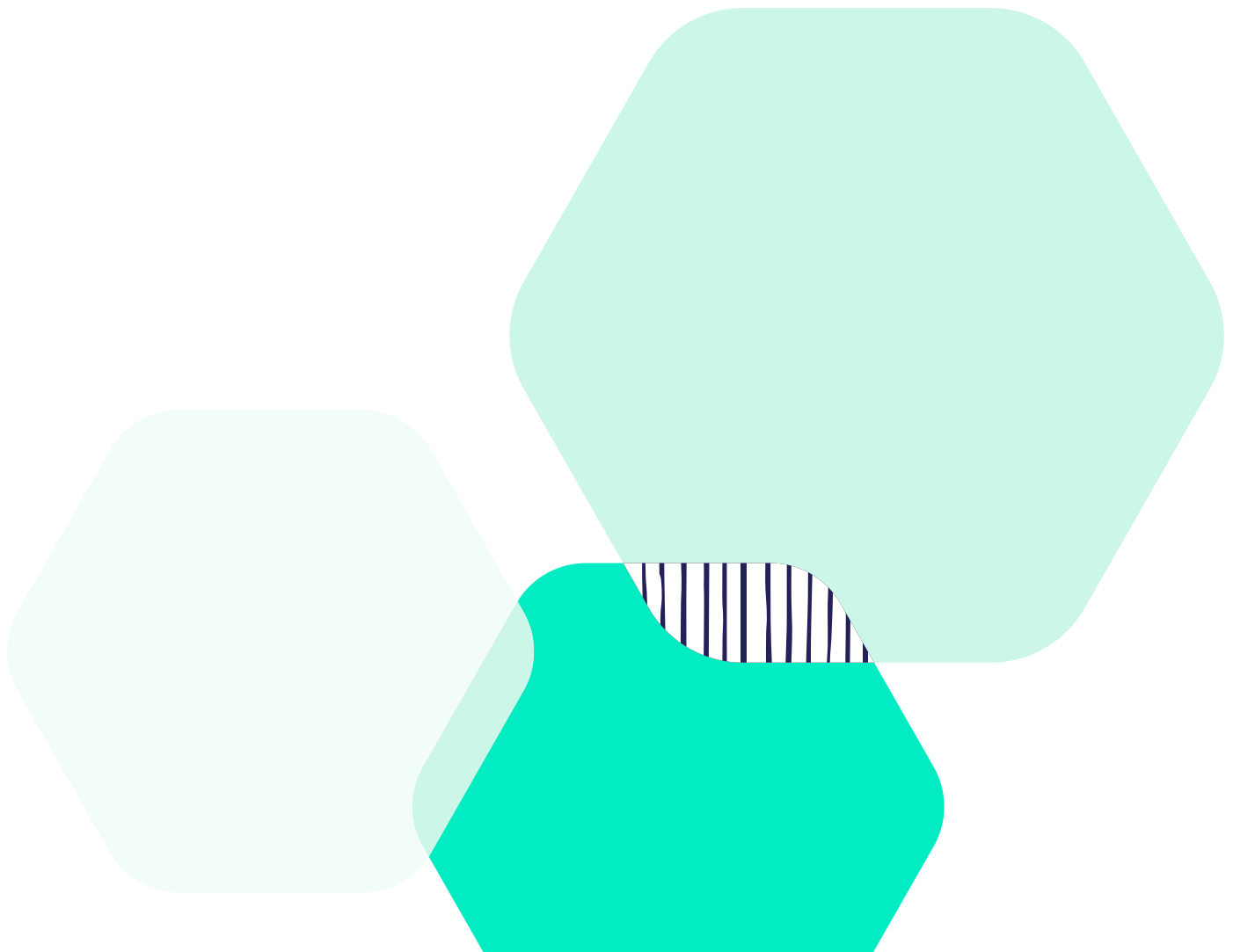
Two of my colleagues observed my class and instructional methods to help me see how I currently teach sentence writing, using a checklist with 20 items focusing on both teacher and student behaviours.

Video recordings

I recorded three classroom sessions for analysis of student-teacher interactions and the implementation of sentence-writing exercises.

Reflective journal

I documented my teaching practices and the effectiveness of different strategies over four class periods (50 minutes each, two periods per week).



What I found and learned

The data from questionnaires, video recordings, reflective journals and observations showed that group work increased student engagement to a large extent. Students were more active in sharing ideas and helping each other form sentences, which boosted their confidence, as they felt less fear of making mistakes in front of others. However, many students still struggled with writing sentences individually, as seen in their writing samples and noted in my reflective journal.

While group work proved to be valuable, I realised that individual practice with targeted feedback was also essential to address their specific challenges. From video recordings, my reflective journal and questionnaires, I also learned that time is a significant factor for my students. They need more time to process concepts and practise writing skills.

The most important insight that I gained, then, was understanding how crucial time for individualised practice was for my students.

It was not only a question of giving them opportunities to work together but also ensuring they have enough time to practise and refine their writing skills. I decided that this realisation should guide my teaching and help me better support my students in overcoming their writing challenges.

I also discovered that a key issue was the use of incorrect verb forms, as revealed in student work and observation notes. Many students struggled with irregular verbs, such as using 'comed' instead of 'came' or 'buyed' instead of 'bought'. This repeated error suggested the need for more practice with these verbs. Additionally, some students confused tenses, mistakenly using the present tense when the past tense was needed. For example, 'I walk to school yesterday' instead of 'I walked to school yesterday'.

To address this, I decided to provide more examples and exercises on past tense sentence formation, planning to give students more time to complete these exercises in order to allow them to practise at their own pace and internalise the rules more effectively.





My action plan

To address students' struggles with sentence writing, particularly with the use of the past tense, I implemented a comprehensive action plan centred on targeted vocabulary building, pictorial writing (using images as prompts to stimulate ideas and support sentence construction), and the integration of generative AI tools that allowed students to generate pictures based on their writing. My goals were to enhance student engagement, expand vocabulary and support their ability to construct accurate past tense sentences.

Steps taken to improve the situation

1. Building vocabulary through pictorial writing

I introduced image-based prompts featuring common actions, nouns and verbs. Students used these visuals to associate words with their meanings, in order to improve recall and vocabulary usage when constructing sentences.

2. Providing examples and practice with past tense sentences

I shared model sentences about real-world scenarios like vacations or daily routines. These examples served as guides, helping students to practise creating their own past tense sentences. In groups they shared and critiqued their own sentences, then rewrote them based on feedback.

3. Using generative AI tools

Students created new pictures based on their sentences, using AI tools. For example, if a student wrote, 'I played soccer with my friends', the AI would create an image illustrating the scene. This was intended not only to make the writing process more engaging but also to enable students to reflect on how well their sentences conveyed their ideas.

4. Reflecting on learning

Students wrote a short journal entry about what they had learned, what was difficult and how they improved. This was intended to help them think about their progress and set goals.

In this approach, vocabulary was first drawn directly from pictures shown to students. Students identified and shared words related to the image, focusing on key vocabulary items that would be useful for sentence writing. Finally,

they used generative AI to create pictures based on their sentences, which was intended to reinforce understanding by linking vocabulary, sentence structure and visual representation. Here is one of the students' creations as an illustration:



1,13

Last year, I went to go **rowing** on the **river** in a National Park. I rented a **boat** and went along the **river**. There were many **people** everywhere. Before going, I stopped by a **shop**. When I stopped out, as soon as I saw birds flying all over the **sky**. The **sky** looked beautiful, and the weather was great. I sat on the **boat**, enjoying nature, and saw various animals in the **river**. The water was so clear that I could clearly see the fish swimming around.

Challenges and solutions

At first, students hesitated to use AI tools and struggled with limited vocabulary. To address this, I provided demonstrations, step-by-step

instructions and word banks. Technical issues were mitigated by preparing backup activities and ensuring stable internet access. Over time, students became more confident and engaged.



What I found and learned

To evaluate the changes in students' sentence-writing skills, I used open-ended questions again, and notes in a reflective journal. The open-ended questions I asked students to answer (in English or in Thai) were as follows:

1. How do you think your sentence writing has changed? Can you give examples?
2. Which activities helped you the most to improve your sentence writing? Why?
3. What methods or ideas helped you learn grammar or new words for writing sentences?
4. What parts of sentence writing are still hard for you? How will you try to get better?
5. How did using pictures and AI-made images affect your motivation and/or sentence writing?

These tools provided qualitative data on students' progress and engagement. My analysis of students' writing showed that they had improved in sentence accuracy, particularly in using the past tense, and the qualitative data highlighted how pictures and AI tools made learning more engaging and

enjoyable. The findings, in more detail, were as follows:

Better vocabulary usage

My students learned and used a wider range of vocabulary in their writing. Pictures seem to have helped them connect words to meanings, making it easier to describe actions, objects and events. This enabled them to write more detailed and meaningful sentences.

Increased interest and engagement

Using AI to create pictures based on their writing made students more excited about the lessons. They enjoyed turning their ideas into images, which motivated them to participate actively and work harder on writing tasks.

Improved past tense sentence writing

Students became better at constructing past tense sentences. With practice and feedback, they made fewer mistakes with verbs and sentence structures, gaining more confidence in their grammar skills.

Boost in confidence and teamwork

Sharing their AI-generated pictures with classmates encouraged collaboration and peer learning. Students felt supported, which built their confidence and made them more willing to write and share their work.



Effective use of technology

Combining pictures with AI tools seemed to help students understand grammar and vocabulary better. The activities were both fun and educational, motivating students to stay engaged.

Overall, the situation had improved a lot compared to the initial challenges. Students had become more confident, engaged and willing to experiment with writing. Pictorial prompts and AI tools effectively bridged the gap between their ideas and written output. I discovered that integrating technology with traditional methods can foster creativity and collaboration in a mixed-ability classroom.

Overall reflections

Engaging in the Exploratory Action Research (EAR) process using pictorial writing, AI tools and vocabulary-building activities brought important benefits to both my students and my teaching practice. These strategies effectively supported my Grade 11 English major students in overcoming difficulties with writing past tense sentences by helping them visualise and organise their ideas more clearly through images, which enhanced their confidence and creativity. The integration of AI tools added an interactive and motivating dimension, providing instant feedback and visual connections to their writing, increasing student engagement and enthusiasm. Vocabulary instruction was equally vital, as expanding students' lexical resources enabled clearer and more accurate expression of past events. Overall, the EAR process deepened my understanding of the value of multimodal approaches and technology in language learning and strengthened my reflective teaching practice.

Indeed, this research experience transformed my perspective on my students, in that I shifted from focusing primarily on their weaknesses to recognising their strengths and potential when provided with appropriate scaffolding. I now better appreciate the diverse ways students construct meaning and express themselves, understanding that difficulties in writing often stem from limited support rather than lack of ability. My view of research also evolved: I now see it as a practical, dynamic and reflective process embedded in everyday teaching, rather than an abstract or distant activity. Furthermore, this process reaffirmed my understanding of teaching as a continuous learning journey, where being a reflective practitioner who adapts to students' needs is essential.

Moving forward, I intend to continue incorporating multimodal approaches such as pictorial writing to support language development, especially for students with varying proficiency levels. The positive impact of AI tools on motivation encourages me to further explore digital resources that personalise learning and provide immediate feedback. I also plan to embed vocabulary building systematically within lessons to enhance both lexical competence and grammatical accuracy. Finally, maintaining a research-informed mindset will allow me to collect and analyse student progress data regularly, enabling me to adapt teaching strategies responsively and foster a more inclusive and effective learning environment.

The support I received from my school's Human Resource Department and Academic Affairs to use Exploratory Action Research (EAR) in all classes was very helpful. Writing short, focused reports for them each term made it easier for me to think about what was working and what needed to improve.

Overall, I'm happy with how these new ideas helped my students. They are now more confident and better at writing sentences. In the future, I plan to continue refining EAR strategies and exploring innovative ways to enhance writing instruction through technology and creativity.

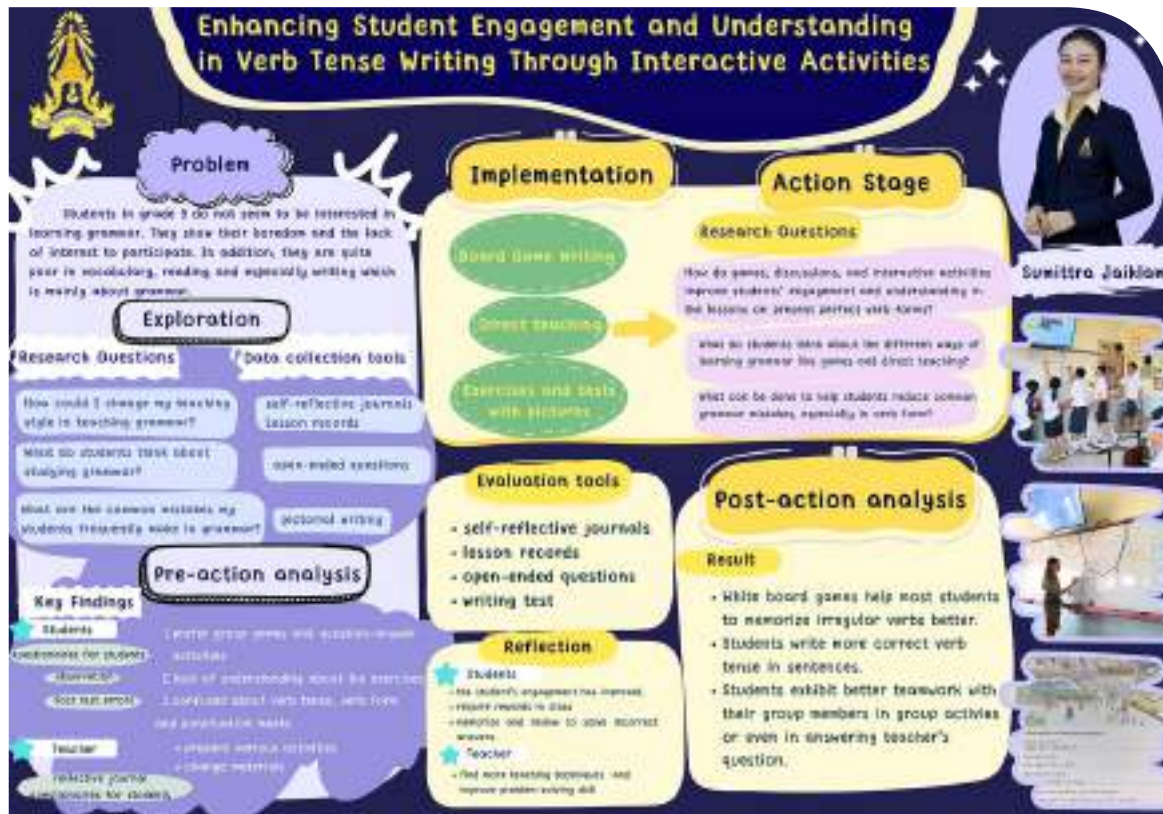
Chapter 28

Enhancing students' use of verb tenses in their writing

Sumittra Jaiklam

Navamindarajudis Matchim School,
Nakhon Sawan Province





My teaching situation

I teach Fundamental English to Grade 9 (15-year-old) students in a regular secondary school in Nakhon Sawan, a province in the lower north of Thailand. The school has about 2,500 students and the average class size is 40 students. I focused on one particular class with mixed-ability students. I've been their English teacher for two years now and have noticed that they don't seem very interested in English, especially grammar. They always seem bored – sometimes sleeping, and not responding or participating in activities.

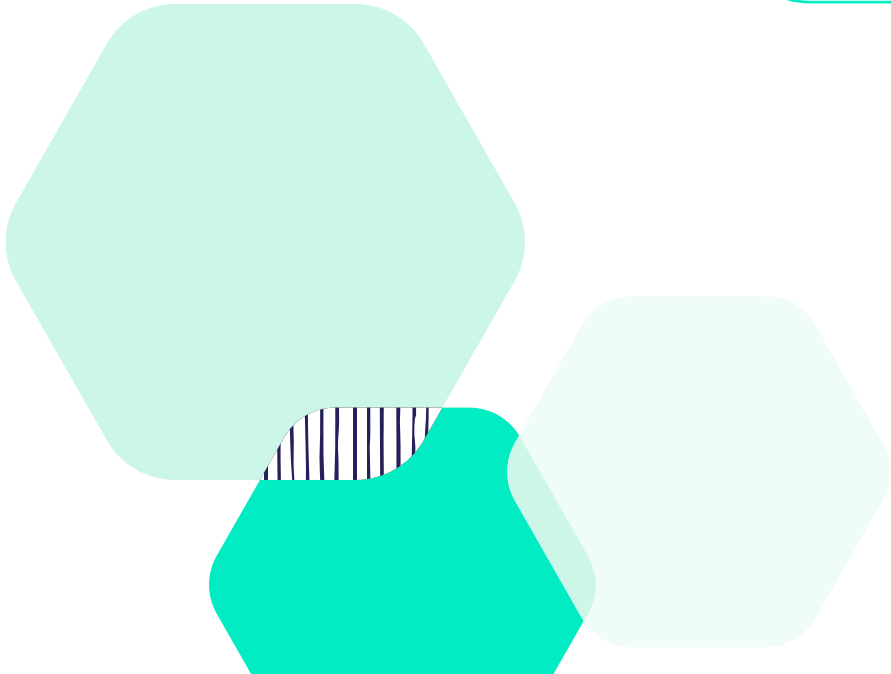


The problem I faced and my exploratory questions

In grammar lessons, I surmised that my students lacked motivation. For example, when questioned during the lessons, most wouldn't respond. Additionally, they didn't seem to even understand basic grammar and were unable to construct simple sentences using verb tenses. On reflection, I realised that it could be the way I teach that was causing negative behaviour and poor performance. And this realisation motivated me to create classroom games and discussions to encourage students and engage them. As a result, I noticed a change in their behaviour and performance, so I decided to explore further what would be motivating and useful activities to support them with grammar and writing sentences using different verb tenses.

I came up with three exploratory research questions to check whether my assumptions had been correct and what I could do to continue to improve:

<p>RQ1</p> <p>How had I changed my teaching style in teaching grammar?</p>	<p>RQ2</p> <p>What do students think about studying grammar?</p>
<p>RQ3</p> <p>What are the common mistakes my students frequently make in grammar?</p>	



What I did to explore the issue

To find answers to these research questions, I designed three tools to collect data:

Questionnaire

I created six open-ended questions to understand students' perspectives on grammar:



I posted these questions in Padlet, an online platform, after the lesson, for three class periods. Students were able to type their responses directly into the Padlet:

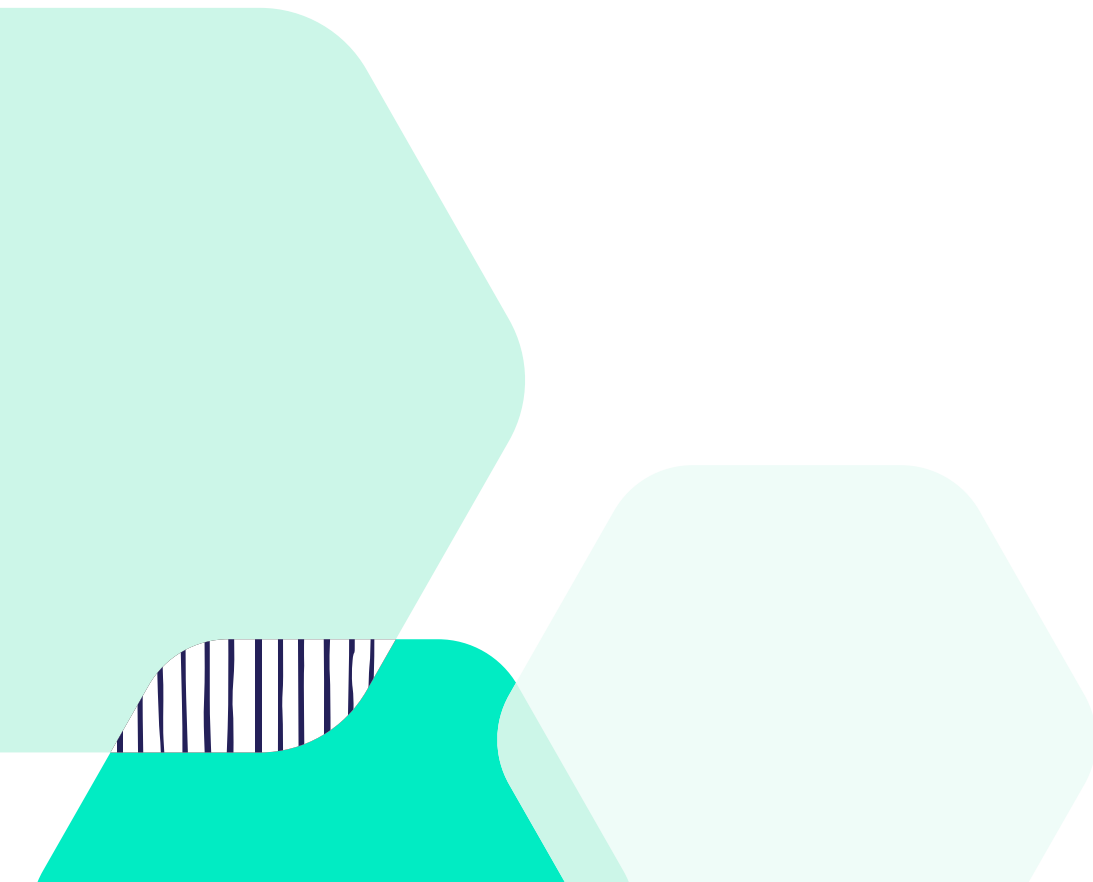


Lesson recordings and teacher’s reflective journal

I video recorded each class to check how I taught and the impact of activities – whether they seemed to result in boredom or if they were enjoyable and motivating. I wrote notes and observations in a reflective journal.

Test

I designed writing tests using pictures and word prompts and then identified common errors in students’ writing. These tests were used as a pre-test before the lesson and as a post-test after the lesson.



What I found and learned

Here are the key findings for each of my research questions:

RQ1: How had I changed my teaching style in teaching grammar?

From the recordings and reflective journal, I was surprised that I used different teaching techniques to engage the students. Whereas in the past, I had tended to lecture more, I found I was now also using games and interactive discussions in addition to direct teaching.

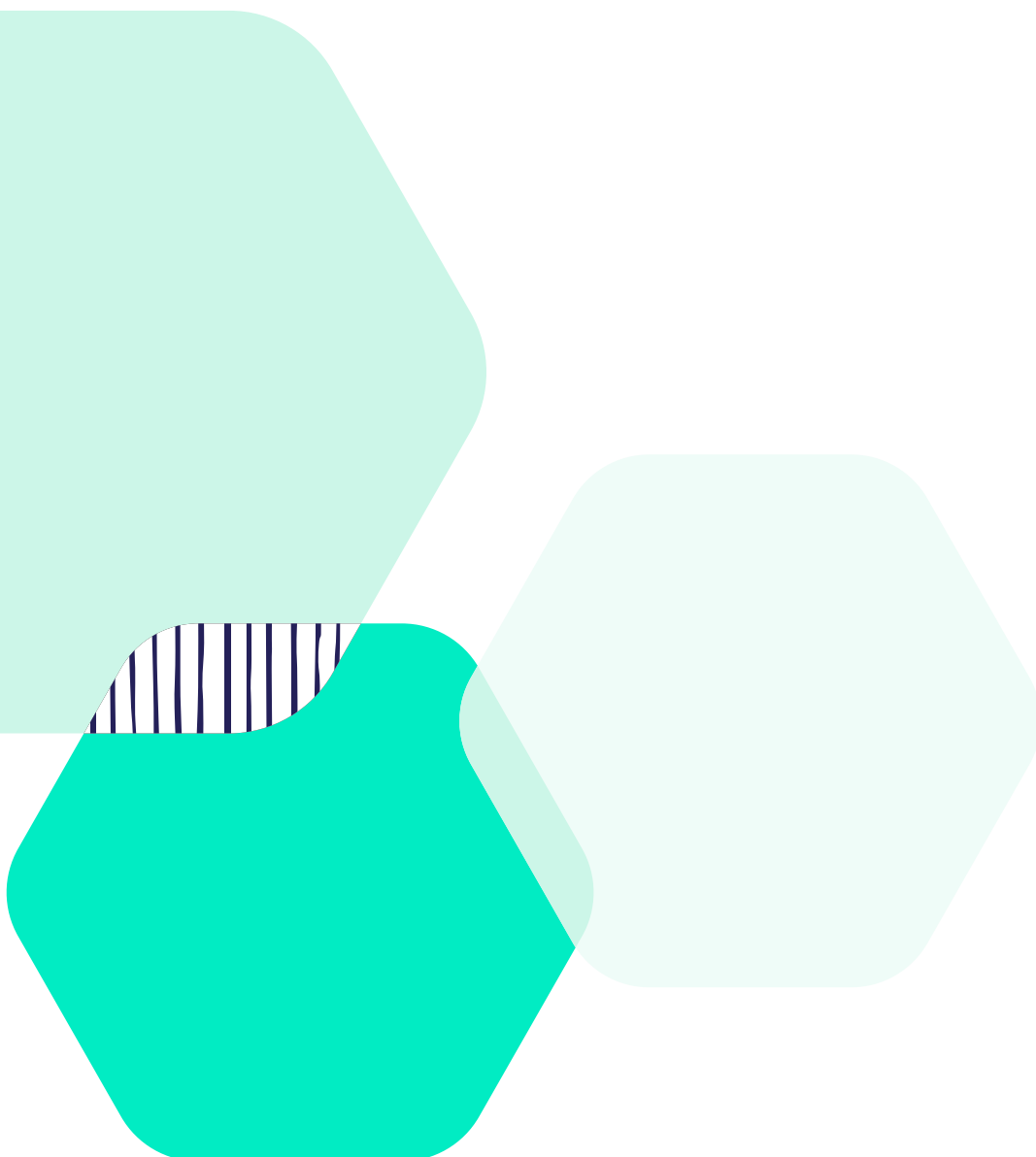
RQ2: What do students think about studying grammar?

From the responses to open-ended questions, I discovered that most of the students had a positive attitude to grammar. However, they

suggested that I integrate more games or question-answer activities. They said that these games allowed group participation, creative thinking and teamwork. They also mentioned that they enjoyed the thrill of competition and that this also provided an opportunity to use the knowledge learned in class. Their feedback was as I had expected. However, they also expressed a desire for teaching materials with pictures and videos, and activities to be more interesting, engaging and fun.

RQ3: What are the common mistakes my students frequently make in grammar?

The common mistakes identified from the tests included grammatical errors, spelling mistakes and punctuation errors. The highest number of errors was in grammar, specifically verb tenses, verb forms and auxiliary verbs.



My action plan

Based on my findings, I wanted to focus my action plan on all the main problems with verbs but, given that time for the action phase was limited, I realised that I could only focus on one area, so I chose verb forms, specifically present perfect forms. In an effort to improve students' use of verb forms and their motivation, I formulated three new questions for the action stage:

RQ1: How do games, discussions and interactive activities improve student engagement and understanding of present perfect verb forms?

RQ2: What do students think about the different ways of learning grammar, like games and direct teaching?

RQ3: What can be done to support students in using verb forms correctly?

I engaged in a two-week action plan consisting of four class periods, each of which followed a similar outline to this:

Lesson plan

Warm up	The lesson began with a video presentation, followed by a whole-class activity using Wordwall, an online platform for interactive question-and-answer games. The open-ended questions allowed the students to discuss their prior knowledge about the topic and review what they had learned during the previous lesson.
Presentation and practice	<p>I showed sentence examples using the present perfect tense. The students learned how to use 'have/has'.</p> <p>I discussed the two types of verbs (regular and irregular). I listed common irregular verbs such as: 'know', 'see', 'be', 'forget', 'drive', 'drink', 'write', 'sing', 'eat', 'read', 'run', 'swim', 'sleep' for them to memorise.</p> <p>I gave some examples on how to use these verbs in sentences. I then supported students in completing gap-fill exercises.</p> <p>Next, the whole class answered the questions together using Wordwall. Then, students participated in a group board game writing activity. Each group collaborated to answer a question displayed on the screen, and one member from each group wrote their answer on the board within the allotted time. Finally, I checked their answers and asked them to explain them.</p>
Production and wrap-up	After the group activity, students completed a similar writing exercise individually on their worksheets. Then, we checked answers and I gave recommendations and comments on their work.

What I found and learned

To evaluate the new procedure, I used video recordings to observe students' engagement during classroom activities and while answering questions. After each lesson, I wrote a self-reflective journal to analyse what worked well and identify

areas for improvement. At the end of the final period, students were given open-ended questions to express their opinions about the grammar class, and they also completed a writing test to assess their performance.

The open-ended questions I asked were as follows:



From these data sources, my main findings were as follows:

RQ1: How do games, discussions and interactive activities improve student engagement and understanding of present perfect verb forms?

Based on the data collected, the students seemed to be motivated by rewards and snacks when doing activities, especially games. Most students preferred games to traditional teaching, and letting them play while establishing the foundation of a lesson made it more interactive. The students could also visually memorise concepts from games better than from their notes from my lectures.



From my observations, the students participated more actively in group activities. They also exhibited better teamwork, helping their group members do whiteboard activities or answer questions. Based on their feedback, their interest in studying English seemed higher than before, and these activities had helped them memorise the sentence structure and improve their mastery of the present perfect tense.

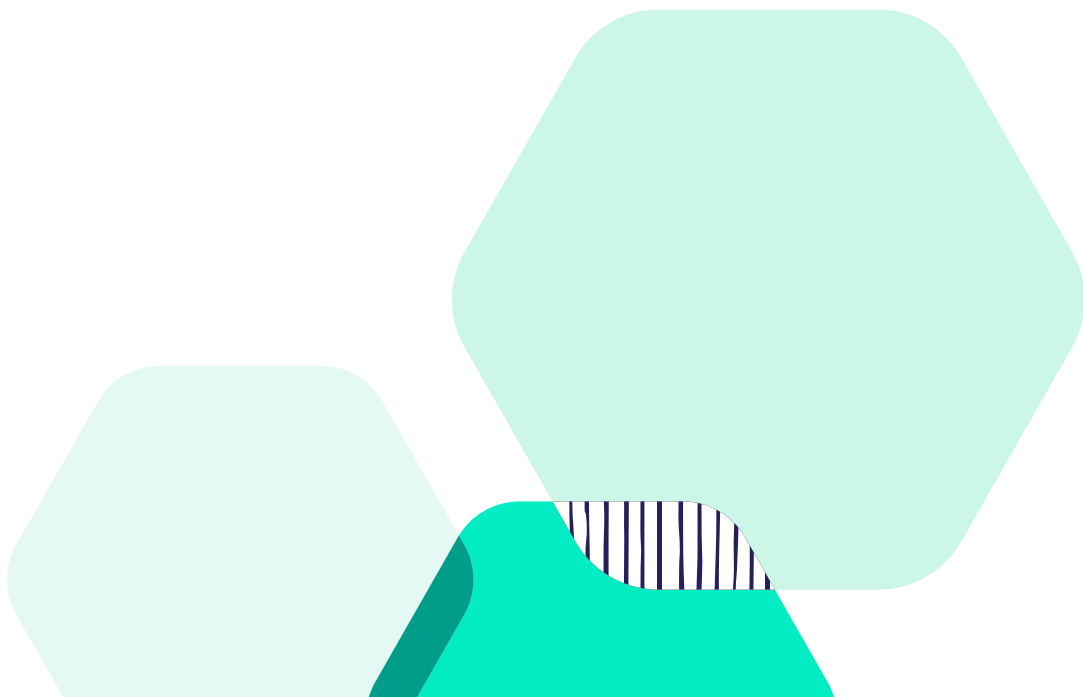


RQ2: What do students think about the different ways of learning grammar, like games and direct teaching?

The students' feedback showed that they are more interested to study English using games and direct teaching, now more than in the past. However, the students also expected the teacher to prepare snacks and rewards at the end of every game. The students also recognise that in learning grammar, whether through games or direct teaching, they had to memorise and review the rules, but unfortunately they are not keen on practising and paying attention in class.

RQ3: What can be done to support students in using verb forms correctly?

It can be deduced from the data that whiteboard games, memorisation and review improved students' performance in this case, and post-test results were encouraging. However, since practice and attention were still lacking in some cases, I will have to find some further activities or games to improve in these areas.



Overall reflections

Exploratory Action Research (EAR) showed me how to find out about students' problems. It also guided me in finding the key factors and choosing the right techniques to address those problems. In addition, the stages of this research helped me to improve my classroom management skills and to sequence activities to avoid problems.

I have gained more experience and a better understanding of problem solving.

I have also learned from the students that working and sharing in group activities can enhance their participation, confidence and memorisation. This approach was more effective, and they were more enthusiastic, than when listening to my explanations at the front. As a relatively inexperienced English teacher, I tend to strictly monitor the number of lessons taught rather than listening to students' preferences and requirements, thus I was hardly aware of these issues previously. I believe that this experience has changed my attitude toward teaching-learning, and I'm also inspired to work harder to improve my students' academic performance while making my lessons enjoyable.

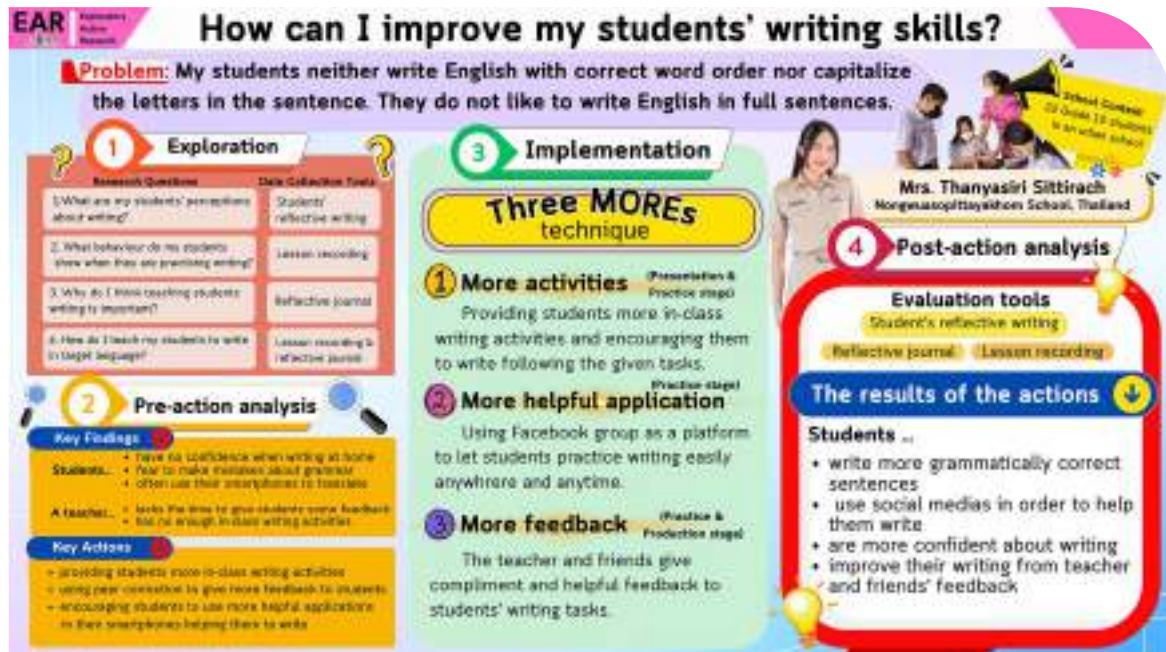


Chapter 29

How can I improve my students' writing skills?

Thanyasiri Sittirach
Nongwasopittayakhom School,
Udon Thani Province





My teaching situation

Nongwasopittayakhom School is an urban secondary school with 856 students and an average class size of 30 students, located in Udon Thani Province, in southeast Thailand. In the academic year 2023, I conducted research with 22 Grade 10 students, aged 16–17, studying on the Science-Mathematics Programme. Twice a week, they studied English Reading and Writing. Overall, they showed a high level of responsibility in relation to given tasks and paid attention to lessons very well.

The problem I faced and my exploratory questions

During the first semester, after checking their writing tasks, I began to observe and find that my students neither capitalised people's names nor the first letter of a sentence, nor did they use correct word order when writing in English, and they did not write full sentences. Definitely, I wanted to know what my students thought about writing in English and whether my teaching was supportive enough to help them write in English effectively. This led me to the following four research questions:

1	What are my students' perceptions about writing?	2	Why do I think teaching students writing is important?
3	How do I teach my students to write in English?	4	What behaviours do my students show when they are practising writing?

Exploring the issue

To explore these questions, I used three data collection tools: *students' reflective writing*, my own *reflective journal* and *lesson recordings*. I collected the data for two weeks, twice a week.

Students' reflective writing

I used this method to understand students' perceptions about writing in English. The prompts consisted of six open-ended questions to let students express their opinions freely (see Figure 1).

Students' reflective writings

Please answer the questions as honestly as possible. For some statements, please tick ✓ one or more into the boxes.

1. Writing is _____ for me.

2. I think writing is important/not important for me because _____

3. In your opinion, the most difficult thing(s) in writing is(are) _____

4. The topic that I would like to write is(are) _____
because _____

5. Do you prefer writing: in class at home
Why?

6. What difficulties do you have in writing in English? (You can choose more than one box.)

- Grammar
- Vocabulary
- Punctuation
- Lack of time
- Fear of making mistakes
- Other: _____

Thank you for your sharing your opinion

Figure 1: Template for students' reflective writing

Teacher's reflective journal

After finishing every writing class, I wrote in my reflective journal to clarify my own perceptions about teaching students writing and the ways I taught them to write in English.

Lesson recordings

To obtain information about my students' behaviour when they were practising writing in class and also about my own teaching behaviour, I recorded my lessons.

What I found and learned

From these sources, here is what I discovered:

Exploratory questions	What I found and learned
1. What are my students' perceptions about writing?	Students think that writing in English is both important and difficult. They realise that writing in English is very important for their further studies and daily lives. The problems they say they have with writing in English are word order, grammar, lack of confidence and not having enough time. However, they feel writing is interesting when they practise writing at school with teachers and friends.
2. Why do I think teaching students writing is important?	I think writing is a very important skill in English because we use it to communicate with others and to convey crucial messages in daily life. I feel the reasons why my students cannot write English correctly lie in me and in themselves. For myself, I tend to skip teaching writing to them because of lack of time to give them feedback. And, as for them, they do not seem to understand grammar rules when practising writing in English. In the future, my students must write for further study, to get a job or to produce academic writing. So, they have to practise writing more and improve their writing.
3. How do I teach my students to write in English?	I try to make my students relax and be ready before practising writing. I usually explain grammar and rules for writing in Thai language because it helps my students to understand better. In practising writing, I encourage them to focus on writing correct sentences. I do not give feedback to my students individually.
4. What behaviours do my students show when they are practising writing?	Students pay attention to the lesson very well and participate in the activities readily. They often use their smartphones to help them write. Furthermore, they feel better when practising at school than at home because of having a teacher and friends to help them.



Making a change

From the above, I found that my students' problems with writing in English were word order, grammar, lack of confidence and not having enough time.

On the other hand, they felt writing was interesting when they practised it at school with teachers and friends. And I, myself, did not have enough time to give my students feedback.

Understanding these things, I planned to implement what I called 'Three MOREs' to improve my students' writing skills. 'Three MOREs' referred to the three things my students mentioned that they wanted more of.

First, in the presentation and practice lesson stages, I decided to provide more time for writing, giving my students more in-class writing activities and encouraging them to write following the given tasks, including exercises in a book and responding to given prompts. Second, at the practice stage, I used a Facebook group as a platform to motivate students and let them practise writing easily anywhere and anytime. Here, I would give them some questions and let them answer with their own opinions in two or three sentences. After that, I replied and provided some feedback on their writing. And last, at the practice and production stages, to increase feedback, I planned for both I and friends of each writer to give compliments and helpful feedback on the students' writing production and to motivate them to edit their writing tasks themselves.

I applied the 'Three MOREs' approach to improve my students' writing skills for three weeks, twice a week. I put my heart into this work with my students and encouraged them to practise writing by following the given tasks and using the Facebook group. However, I encountered one challenge, namely that there were too many school activities and holidays in the second semester. This negatively impacted both my students and myself, resulting in a lack of focus on learning and teaching. I coped with this challenge by keeping in touch with my students via the Facebook group and motivating them to practise writing by encouraging them to share their stories in two or three sentences. To evaluate what I did, I used the same three data collection tools I had used in the exploration step – reflective writing by students, my own reflective journal and lesson recordings.



What I found and learned

According to my analysis of the collected data, I found that my students came to write sentences correctly. They said that in-class writing activities helped them practise writing in English. They enjoyed participating in activities with me and their friends. Moreover, the in-class writing activities helped them improve their writing skills. Easy writing tasks engaged my students to participate in activities. They also learned how to use social media – the Facebook group – to help them write better. Now, they say that they feel more confident to write in English because they receive not only their teacher's but also their friends' feedback, which helps them edit and improve their writing.



Unexpectedly, the other important thing that I found among the changes I made was that giving compliments was the best thing to motivate the students. No matter whether my students did their writing tasks correctly or incorrectly, they seemed to be happy when I gave them some compliments. It made me realise that my students needed more encouragement. Giving more compliments made them have more confidence to do all activities. So, more in-class writing activities, more encouragement to use Facebook and more feedback resulted in apparent improvement of my students' writing skills, together with increasing the amount of positive feedback I gave to them.



Overall reflections

In the past, I thought I had been using the right ways to teach my students to improve their writing skills. I also believed that the problems with writing were only with my students. But now I realise that the problems were also with me. I used to teach my students without asking them what they thought, what they wanted to do, or what they needed from me. From doing this Exploratory Action Research (EAR), I have learned many valuable things.

EAR led me to try different things I had never done before. Furthermore, it helped me to explore the real problems, to see great challenges in my classroom, to learn to listen to my students more and to think differently.

I learned how to be a good listener, supporter and creator. These were the great things I learned most.

For my future work, I will use the experience that I gained from the process of doing EAR to explore further problems in my classroom and find ways to make great things happen for my students, not only in relation to writing but also other skills. Small steps can result in great things. I, as a teacher, should know what the real problems are, what the real needs of students are, and what I must do to address them. Joining the EAR project was a great thing that I did for my students and for myself.



British Council


254 Chulalongkorn Soi 64, Siam Square,
Phyathai Road, Pathumwan, Bangkok 10330

T 02 460 6950

info@britishcouncil.or.th

Follow us on

 [BritishCouncilThailand](#)

 [@thBritish](#)

 [Britishcouncil_th](#)

<https://doi.org/10.57884/SGCA-H363>

© British Council 2026. Shared under a Creative Commons Attribution Non-commercial 4.0 International Licence (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>)

© British Council 2026

The British Council is the UK's international organisation for cultural relations and educational opportunities