The Outcomes of Competency-Based Program About Language for Communication for Early Primary School Students

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Abstract

This study aims to achieve three primary objectives: firstly, to develop a competency-based program tailored for communication purposes; secondly, to examine developmental strides in language proficiency for effective communication; and thirdly, to compare the language proficiency among early primary school students, both pre- and post-implementation of the program. The sample consisted of third-grade students from Anuban Chantarat School, Sahatsakhan District, Kalasin Province, Thailand, who were enrolled in the second semester of the academic year 2022. The total number of participants was 20 by cluster random sampling. The data collection instruments used in this study were: 1) a program usage manual, 2) a lesson plan, and 3) a language communication competence assessment test. Data analysis involved basic statistical measures, including frequency, percentage, mean, standard deviation, and hypothesis testing using the t-test (Dependent Samples). The study findings revealed that:

1. Competency-based program for early primary school students' language communication, comprising six components: 1) Principles, 2) Objectives, 3) Content, 4) Development Processes, 5) Teaching and Learning Materials, and 6) Assessment, underwent quality assessment by seven experts. The results indicated a high level of conformity and appropriateness.

2. Students who participated in the language competency-based program demonstrated enhanced language communication competence across all learning units.

3. The language communication competence of students after using the program was statistically significantly higher than before using the program at a significance level of .05. The language competence was found to be at a developing level of A2 proficiency.

Keywords: program development, language communication competence, early primary school students

1. Introduction

The study of competency-based education is increasingly being implemented at a more profound level in schools each year. This represents a significant cultural, structural, and instructional shift in schools, focusing on ensuring success for all students. Efforts are directed towards addressing the foundational shortcomings of traditional education, where the limitations of the traditional educational paradigm, which emphasizes competencies, were identified and addressed in 2011 during the National Summit for Preschool to High School Education Development (Levine & Patrick, 2019). Competency refers to individual characteristics and abilities that manifest in the application of knowledge, skills, and work behaviors in various roles and situations. This demonstration leads to outstanding success in job performance compared to others, yielding results aligned with organizational objectives. The foundation of competency lies in possessing knowledge, practical skills, and attitudes or personal attributes. This encompasses thinking patterns, emotional states, and behaviors that facilitate the ability to face and resolve various situations or problems that may arise (Dubois & Rothwell, 2004).

Competence in communication is a pivotal competency outlined within the framework of curriculum reform and the educational paradigm of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) Education 2030 Framework. This competency is of paramount significance, as delineated in the guidelines established by the

organization for collaborative efforts and economic development (OECD, 2014: Online). The research and development report on the competency framework for early primary school students, as part of the foundational education curriculum in Thailand, reveals that the core and sub-competencies selected by teachers for instructional design align significantly with the learning and teaching plan. Notably, the primary competency most prominently featured in the learning management plan is the competency in the Thai language for communication purposes (Office of the Education Council, 2019). This is in line with the Core Curriculum of Basic Education in the Buddhist Era 2551 in Thailand, which emphasizes the cultivation of five essential competencies. Among these competencies, communication skills take precedence as the most significant, followed by critical thinking, problem-solving ability, life skills, and the capability to use tools (Ministry of Education, 2009).

The issue of communication competence among Thai students is clearly evident from significant assessment outcomes, such as the prominent results of the PISA 2018 assessment, which emphasizes reading proficiency. According to the assessment, Thai students scored an average of 393 points in reading (OECD average of 487 points) (OECD, 2018). When compared to PISA 2015, it is observed that there is a decline of 16 points in reading scores (The Institute for the Promotion of Teaching Science and Technology, 2015). Upon examining and compiling data from the national-level assessments at the early primary school level, it is noted that the measurement of students' reading abilities in the 1st grade, as indicated by the Reading Test (RT) for the academic years 2018, 2019, and 2021, exhibited an overall decline in average scores across the country in chronological order (The Institute for the Promotion of Teaching Science and Technology, 2015). This corresponds with the results of the Reading Test (RT) and National Test: NT over the three preceding years in private schools at the provincial level in Kalasin Province. When comparing the scores, there is a consistent downward trend in the average scores (Office of the Basic Education Commission, 2020).

Due to the significance and the aforementioned issues, there is an effort to develop a curriculum based on competencies for Thailand's education system. This initiative is driven by the recognition that traditional teaching methods have not been effective in influencing the learning process to yield desired outcomes (Office of the Education Council, 2019). This aligns with the trend observed in several countries where a key exit strategy is Competency-Based Education (CBE). This approach encompasses Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC), Competency-Based Instruction (CBI), and Competency-Based Assessment (CBA). These methodologies center on the learner (Learning-Centered), aiming to enhance the overall educational experience. This approach opens opportunities for learners to engage in personalized learning based on their interests, aptitudes, and progress according to their abilities. The goal is for learners to acquire essential competencies necessary for work, problem-solving, and life, with a focus on developing key characteristics. The emphasis is on enabling learners to demonstrate expertise, apply knowledge in practical situations, set high expectations, cater to individual learners' needs, and instill a sense of responsibility for their own learning. Learners can design their own learning experiences, study at different times and locations, and receive flexible support tailored to their unique characteristics. In this approach, learners receive assessments when they are ready, serving as a self-assessment of their own progress. The evaluation focuses on practical applications using tools that access the learners' expertise. Competence, in this context, refers to an individual's ability to apply knowledge, skills, attitudes, and various characteristics in the workplace or when solving different problems, leading to success at various levels. Competence is manifested in observable behavioral practices that can be measured and assessed. It is a culmination of knowledge, skills, attitudes, and other abilities that contribute to an individual or a group's success in their endeavors (Office of the Education Council, 2019).

The effort to develop a competency-based curriculum in Thailand's foundational education has been consistently ongoing, even though it has not been officially announced. Researchers involved in educational development and localized educational practices are interested in enhancing competencies, particularly starting with language competencies. This interest is manifested in the development of a competency-based program for communication at the early primary school level. The program aims to cultivate language competencies for communication among early primary school students. This is a critical stage in utilizing language for effective communication, responding to the need for teachers to guide learning effectively in the 21st century. The intention is to foster sustainable learning, enabling students to apply knowledge in the continuous development of curricula and competency-based education.

2. Objectives

1) To develop a competency-based program for communication among early primary school students.

2) To investigate the developmental progress in language competencies for communication among early primary school students.

3) To compare language competencies for communication using a language competency program for early primary school students before and after its implementation.

3. Research Scope

1) Informants: The group consisted of 7 experts tasked with reviewing the draft program aimed at enhancing Thai language competencies for communication among early primary school students (Grade 1–3). Their expertise spanned curriculum development, educational research, psychology of education, content knowledge in Thai language (Thai language competencies for communication), and educational assessment and evaluation.

2) Population: The population comprised 361 3rd grade primary school students enrolled in the second semester of the academic year 2022 from private schools in Kalasin province, Thailand who have problem about Thai language competencies for communication. These students were selected from 5 schools under the jurisdiction of the Private Education Commission Office in Kalasin Province. The students were distributed across 15 classrooms.

3) Sample: The sample consisted of 20 students from the 3rd grade at Anuban Chantarat School. These students were selected during the second semester of the academic year 2022 based on their performance, as assessed by the Thai language proficiency test for communication, using the Cluster Random Sampling method.

4) The program content consists of four instructional units: Unit 1—"Dinosaurs in My Home," Unit 2—"Point of Water-Diversion, Lam Pao Dam," Unit 3—"Phu Khaow, Phu Sing," and Unit 4—"Points of Local Pride." Each unit comprises five learning sessions. This content is from local resource in Kalasin province, Thailand.

4. Instruments

1) The user manual for the language competency-based program for early primary students, which has been critically evaluated by a panel of seven experts focusing on the development of □ grammatical skills, including reading and writing, and □ social skills, including listening and speaking. The content emphasizes topics close to the learners, related to local places/districts/provinces, aiming to foster learning experiences and connect them to daily life, fostering local pride. The program comprises 20 learning plans, each lasting one hour, totaling 20 hours. The overall assessment of the appropriateness of the learning plans is at the highest level, with an average rating of 4.52.

2) The language competency assessment comprises two sets of tests:

The Language Competency Assessment Test for Grammar and Communication is a essay test comprising reading and writing components. It consists of 42 items, with a total score of 100 points. The discrimination power range of the test is between 0.20 and 0.60, indicating its effectiveness in distinguishing varying levels of language competency. The test exhibits high reliability, as evidenced by a Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of 0.90.

The Language Competency Assessment Test for Social Communication, focusing on listening and speaking skills, is presented as a essay test. This test comprises 32 items, totaling 100 points. The discrimination power range of the test falls within 0.20 to 0.40, with a Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of 0.76.

5. Research Methodology (Process and Data Collection)

1) Develop the program user manual, which underwent scrutiny for suitability by experts, and then experiment with third-grade students from Anuban Lampao School, comprising 20 students in a single classroom in Kalasin province, Thailand. These students participated in the second semester of the 2022 academic year and demonstrated lower-than-standard proficiency in Thai language communication, as identified through cluster random sampling. The participants were selected to investigate the feasibility of implementing the program in real-world scenarios, assessing its appropriateness within specific contexts. The study aims to explore potential challenges and obstacles that may arise during the practical application of the program, with participants by Cluster Random Sampling.

2) Examine the outcomes of implementing the program with a sample group of 20, with each session lasting one hour. Furthermore, the study conducted an assessment using a language competency test that focuses on grammar, including reading and writing skills. The test consisted of 42 questions, with a total score of 100 points. The scoring criteria (Rubric Scores) allocated 30 points for reading and 70 points for writing.

3) Evaluate the results using a language proficiency assessment test for communication skills in social interaction, covering both listening and speaking components. The test comprised 32 items with a total score of 100 points. The scoring criteria, as outlined in the rubric, allocated 20 points for listening skills and 80 points for speaking skills.

4) Compare proficiency levels based on the following criteria: Beginner Level (A1) with scores not exceeding

59%, Developing Level (A2) with scores ranging from 60% to 79%, and Proficient Level (A3) with scores equal to or exceeding 80%.

6. Results

1) The developed language competency-based program for primary school students comprises six components: ① Principles, ② Objectives, ③ Content, ④ Development Process, ⑤ Teaching and Learning Materials, and ⑥ Evaluation. This program assesses language proficiency for communication among primary school students, allowing them to apply their knowledge, skills, and language attitudes. It encompasses grammatical skills and social abilities, evaluating sub-skills such as listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Then, transforming these into texts, knowledge, fables, and brief stories that are personally relevant and intimately connected to one's immediate surroundings, using simple language. Embrace the joy of experimenting with words and diverse texts, deriving pleasure from exploring various forms of expression and learning through narratives associated with personal experiences. This creative process facilitates the production of works that apply acquired knowledge, fostering a sense of accomplishment and pride in one's own creations.

The program comprises a six-step instructional process for developing language proficiency for communication among early primary school students, presented in Figure 1.
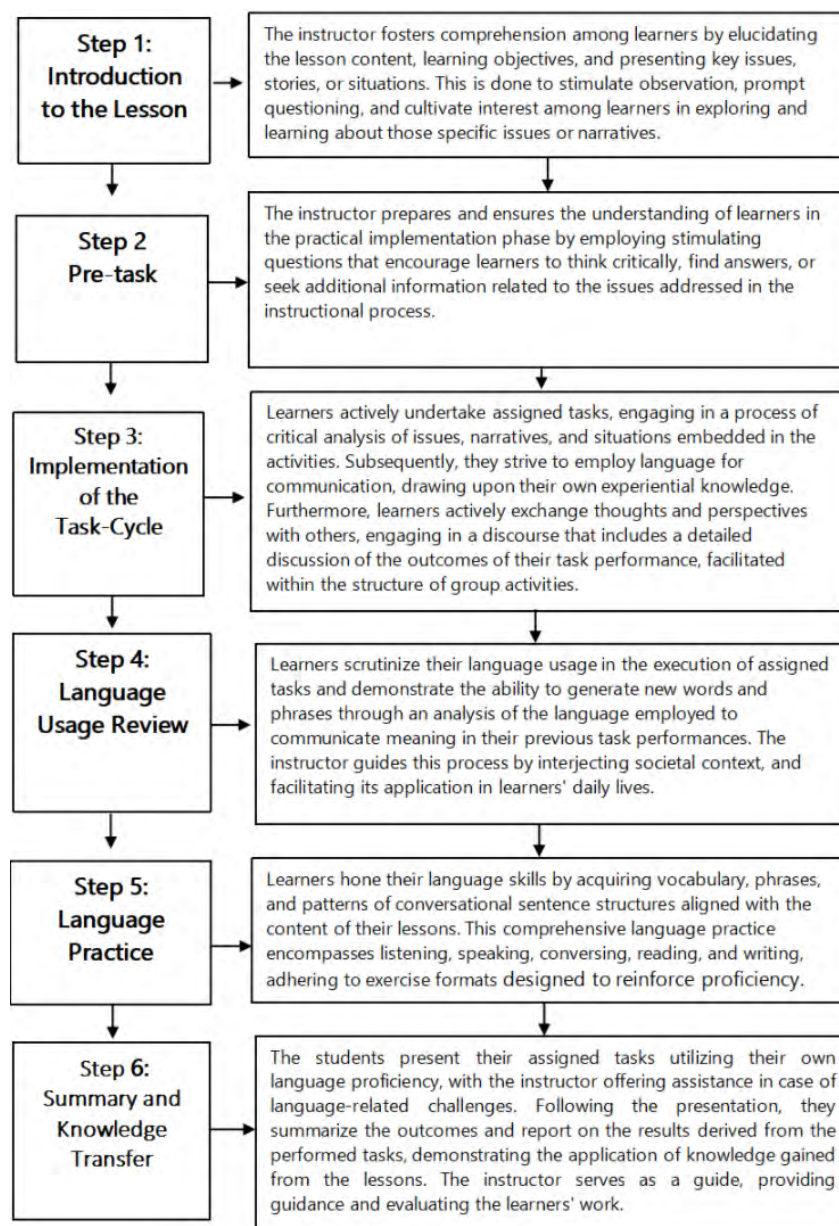

Figure 1. Steps in organizing program activities

Furthermore, there is an assessment result for the suitability of the language competency-based program for communication among early primary school students, has been developed. The overall evaluation is at a high level ($\overline{X}$= 4.40, S.D. = .679). The detailed breakdown is as follows: ① Program: The overall program is at a high level ($\overline{X}$= 4.39, S.D. = .630). ② Program Usage Guide: The overall assessment of the program usage guide is at a high level ($\overline{X}$= 4.18, S.D. = .719).

2) The study on the developmental progress in language proficiency for communication among early primary school students in each learning unit reveals that students who learn using the language proficiency program for communication exhibit enhanced language proficiency after each learning unit. This development is evident in the language competency-based program for communication, as illustrated in Figure 1.
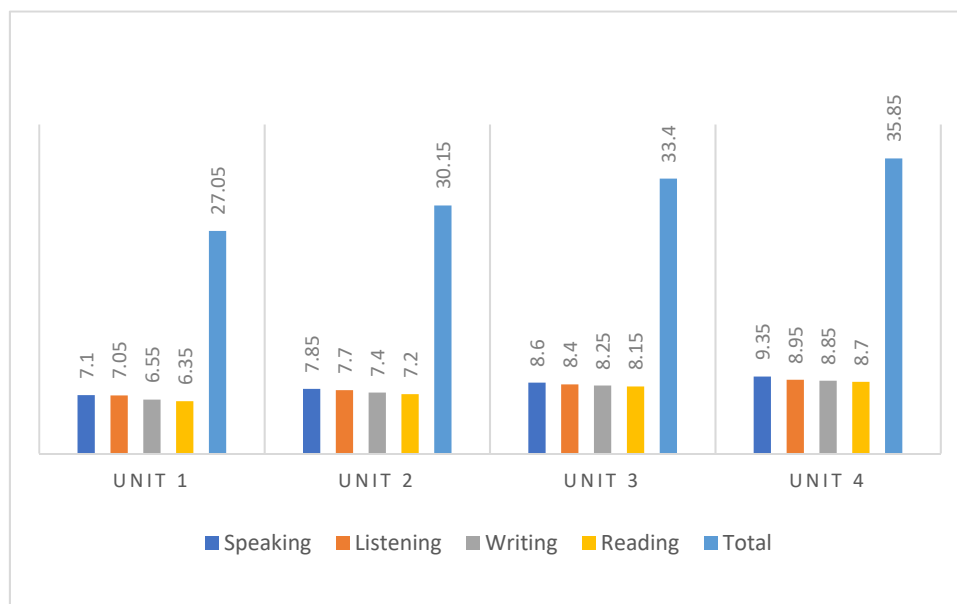

Figure 2. Developmental progress in language proficiency for communication in listening, speaking, reading, and writing

According to Figure 2, it is evident that students have an average score in Learning Unit 4, with a value of 35.85, ranking first in the proficient level (A3). In Learning Unit 3, the average score is 33.40, securing the second position in the proficient level (A3). Learning Unit 2 has an average score of 30.15, ranking third in the proficient level (A3). Lastly, Learning Unit 1 has an average score of 27.05, placing it at the developmental level (A3) and holding the lowest rank. Upon consideration, it is observed that students exhibit progress in language proficiency for communication in listening, speaking, reading, and writing across all learning units.

3) The results of the comparative analysis of scores from language proficiency assessments for communication were generated by the language competency-based program for communication among early primary school students, before and after instruction, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Comparative analysis of scores from language proficiency assessments for communication between before and after instruction

Issues	N	Pre-Test Scores		Interpretation	Post-Test Scores		Interpretation	t	P-value
		$\overline{X}$	S.D.		$\overline{X}$	S.D.			
Language Proficiency for Communication	20	60.42	5.131	A1	78.75	7.040	A2	29.651[*]	.000

From Table 1, it is evident that students who underwent learning interventions using the language competency-based program for communication in early primary school exhibited a statistically significant increase in the average language proficiency scores after instruction compared to before instruction at the 0.05 significance level ($\overline{X}$= 78.75, S.D. = 7.040). Furthermore, the language proficiency for communication is classified at the proficient

level, denoted as A2.

7. Discussion

1) The program development results reveal that the language competency-based program for communication among early primary school students is rooted in the pedagogical approaches of Task-Based Learning and Communication Language Teaching: CLT. This program consists of six components, namely: ① Principles, ② Objectives, ③ Content, ④ Developmental Processes, ⑤ Teaching and Learning Materials, and ⑥ Assessment. Moreover, the developmental process comprises six steps, including Step 1 for the introduction to the lesson, Step 2 for the pre-task phase, Step 3 for the implementation of the task cycle, Step 4 for language focus, Step 5 for language practice, and Step 6 for summary and knowledge transfer.

Furthermore, the evaluation of the program's quality revealed a high level of consistency and appropriateness. The program is highly effective and practical, likely stemming from the systematic development conducted through a research and development process. This process was divided into three phases: Phase 1 involved basic data collection, Phase 2 focused on developing the language proficiency program for communication among early primary school students, and Phase 3 entailed studying the outcomes of using the program. This development echoed Caffarella's (2002) framework for language communication competence program development, emphasizing the enhancement of individuals' knowledge, skills, and positive attitudes, enabling them to apply acquired knowledge effectively. This aligns with the study conducted by Pravit Raksaasang (2012), who developed a program to enhance reading skills based on the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) framework. The development process comprised four phases, including ① studying the problems, causes, and solutions for deficiencies in reading skills according to the PISA guidelines, ② program development, ③ program experimentation, and ④ program utilization assessment. The research conducted by Watsan Woranan (2021) involved the development of a learning management program for the Thai language subject, following an internationally designed learning approach for second-grade primary students. The study was divided into three phases: Phase 1 involved examining the current situation, problems, and needs; Phase 2 focused on creating the learning management program, and Phase 3 encompassed program experimentation, usage, and refinement. The outcomes revealed an effective and highly suitable program.

The research conducted by Ganchana Tonnaphol and Nanthaphorn Sorajit (2021) investigated the development of Thai language skills for communication through task-based learning in the subject of Thai language for communication. The study involved the design of "Integrated Activities for Thai Language Skills for Communication," consisting of three steps: ① Preparation of work tasks, ② Implementation of work tasks (comprising sub-steps: problem-solving through shared personal experiences, creativity, work plan development, and reporting), and ③ Post-work task analysis, language application practice, and result monitoring. The study was designed to be consistent with the learning development needs and competency guidelines for teachers in private schools in the nearby provinces (Chookhampaeng, Kamha, & Chookhampaeng, 2023).

2) The developmental outcomes of language proficiency for communication in early primary school students using the language competency-based program were observed. The students who engaged in learning through the language proficiency program for communication demonstrated an enhancement in language proficiency for communication. This was evident in the increased average scores in language proficiency tests related to grammar and social communication for each learning unit. The statistically significant improvement at the 0.05 significance level indicated that the language competency-based program for communication in early primary school students effectively promoted language proficiency development in both grammatical and social communication aspects. In essence, students were capable of reading simple texts presented in print and the surrounding environment. They could formulate questions, seek information, critically assess, and apply knowledge gained from reading in their daily lives. Furthermore, they could compose short texts to express their thoughts and feelings or create imaginative stories, ensuring clarity and correctness in accordance with Thai language principles. Additionally, their ability to attentively listen to and understand various forms of conversational and short text presentations had improved, demonstrating politeness and consideration towards both the reader and the audience. They were able to formulate and answer questions, express feelings, and convey their thoughts on the topics they had heard. They willingly accepted differing opinions and applied the knowledge gained from listening in their daily lives. They communicated effectively in various situations, expressing their feelings, narrating events, or conveying messages through play, role-playing, and simple performances. They posed and answered questions concisely, demonstrating politeness in speech and considering appropriateness to the context and the listener. The findings of the present study were consistent with the research conducted by Watsan Wanarat (2021), who developed a learning management program for the Thai language subject based on globally designed learning approaches for second-grade primary students. The research revealed that the learning management program, designed following

global learning approaches for second-grade primary students, contributed to higher Thai language proficiency scores and significant progress in language skills for the students. This was congruent with the findings of Wongsuwan and Ruangjaroon (2020), who investigated learning management focusing on tasks to enhance Thai language writing skills among third-year high school students. The research concluded that task-based learning management for writing can indeed enhance the Thai language writing skills of third-year high school students, leading to increased satisfaction among students with organized activities. This was also consistent with the research conducted by Klinhom, Moolmee, and Inprasitha (2017), which focused on developing the speaking ability in the Chinese language through Task-Based Learning among fifth-year high school students. The study found that students' scores on the test measuring Chinese language speaking ability increased after the instructional period. The post-learning test scores had an average of 15.22, whereas the pre-learning test scores averaged 8.37 out of a full score of 20. This demonstrated a significant improvement of 45%. The statistical analysis of the data revealed that students had successfully developed their speaking abilities to a commendable level. This corresponded with the findings of Wilaithanongsawat (2005), who investigated the development of listening and reading abilities in English among first-year high school students using the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) technique. The research showed that students' learning outcomes in listening and reading skills improved significantly after implementing CLT-based language communication activities.

3) The results of the comparative analysis of language proficiency for communication among primary school students, before and after using the competency-based program for communication, indicated a significant improvement in students' language proficiency after the program implementation. The comparison involved assessing students' language proficiency before and after the utilization of the program. The statistical analysis, at a significance level of .05, demonstrated that the competency-based program for communication, designed for early primary school students, effectively enhanced their language proficiency for communication.

This aligned with the findings of Ketdee and Thamrongsotthisakul (2022), who investigated learning activities utilizing task-based approaches to enhance listening and speaking skills in English for sixth-grade primary students, the study revealed that students exhibited higher proficiency in both listening and speaking skills after intervention, as evidenced by statistically significant results at the 0.05 significance level. This alignment is consistent with the research outcomes of Ngam-anant and Patamadilok (2022), who examined the impact of task-based learning on reading skills in English comprehension for sixth-grade primary students. The study found that the English reading comprehension abilities of sixth-grade primary students, who underwent learning interventions based on a task-based approach, were significantly higher after the intervention compared to before, with statistical significance at the 0.05 level. This aligns with the research conducted by Nantawan Wirunpakkdee, et al. (2024), which focused on developing learning activities using task-based approaches combined with the use of electronic media to enhance English writing skills for fifth-grade primary students. The study results revealed that students exhibited significantly higher English writing abilities after the intervention compared to before, with statistical significance at the 0.05 level. This is consistent with the findings of Waraporn Jitram (2019), who investigated the impact of using a set of listening and speaking skills training activities for third-grade primary students through Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) techniques. The study found that students demonstrated significantly improved learning outcomes in English listening and speaking skills after learning through CLT, with statistical significance at the 0.05 level. These findings were also in line with the research conducted by Theeranun Sriwitthaya (2020), which focused on managing learning by integrating YouTube videos with a language-teaching approach to enhance listening and speaking skills in English for third-grade high school students. The research concluded that students exhibited higher listening and speaking skills in English after receiving learning interventions through video-based activities, with statistical significance at the 0.05 level compared to the pre-experiment stage.

Competing interests

Not applicable.

Informed consent

Obtained.

Ethics approval

The Publication Ethics Committee of the Canadian Center of Science and Education.

The journal's policies adhere to the Core Practices established by the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE).

Provenance and peer review

Not commissioned; externally double-blind peer reviewed.

Data availability statement

The data that support the findings of this study are available on request from the corresponding author. The data are not publicly available due to privacy or ethical restrictions.

Data sharing statement

No additional data are available.

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