

Full Length Research Paper

Classroom Interactional Competence of Thai University Students

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Having thought that Thai students could hardly speak English, and the manner of expressing their (learners) ideas seem hindered by their negative notion of committing wrong grammar usage, my study aims to show the relevance and effectiveness of Classroom Interactional Competence (CIC), and consider how it can be characterized in different context. According to Walsh's Theory (2011) Classroom Interactional Competence (CIC) is defined as 'Teachers' and learners' ability to use interaction as a tool for mediating and assisting learning'. It puts interaction firmly at the center of teaching and learning and argues that by improving their CIC, both teachers and learners will immediately improve learning. Therefore, this paper aims to unveil how CIC can be of use and help Rajabhat University students to have a positive impact on learning and how the University students can communicate and interact in the classroom context according to the interaction features of Conversation Analysis (CA).

Keywords: Classroom Interactional Competence (CAC), Thai university student, English language

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INTRODUCTION

In this study, the researcher investigates the oral communication of Thai University students in the Business English Program. Since Thai students need to improve their English both inside and outside the classroom context. In the context of ASEAN Community and globalization, English plays an important role in Asia and the world. Moreover, the use of English has spread into the variety groups of people among the native and non-native speakers. English is necessary in many areas such as education, transportation, tourism industry, hospitality, and business.

This study focuses on a group of students from Rajabhat University. At the end, the researcher intends to use the research results to develop the students' oral communication skills in the EFL contexts specifically in

Thailand, using the Classroom Interactional Competence (CIC) technique.

In the research context of this study, Chandrakasem Rajabhat University is a tertiary educational institution in the north of Bangkok and offers a Post Diploma Certificate and degree level education from the Bachelor's degree to Master's degree with a Ph.D. offered in several majors. Chandrakasem was founded in 1940 as Thailand's first training college for secondary school teachers.

Chandrakasem Rajabhat University has a strong background philosophy which refers to "Good Knowledge, Strong Virtue and Leader in Community Development". Moreover, the vision of the university is to be a centre of learning, upgrading intelligence to the

international level. In addition, one of the missions of the university is to produce graduates with potential wisdom to meet the international standard (TQF: HEd: 2009). The university may have certain goals but in some ways it is impractical. It is not easy to do as a wishing concept. Therefore, to communicate successfully and meet the aim of international standard the students have to master English literacy and communication skills.

As a teacher in the Business English Program, the researcher found a lot of problems in developing English learning and teaching the students. The major cause of the problem may lie in the emphasis in teaching reading and grammatical structure as well as vocabulary rather than emphasizing speaking skill (Wongsothorn et al., 2003).

The quantity of students in the classroom is another problem for students to acquire and practice English in the classroom. As the teachers have to put considerable effort in order to have all students practice language activities within the time limit. It is not easy to manage the language class if the number of students is not in the right proportion which means 1 teacher with 60 students.

In addition, the university in Thailand has to follow the policy of the government in expanding educational opportunities. It is said that everyone has the right to learn wherever he wishes. Therefore, the university opens the courses for both full time and part time students with a non-restricted standard. As a consequence, the English teacher has homogeneous students with different majors and background knowledge of English which means that they are classified as fast learners, average and slow learners being grouped together in one class.

Another cause of the problem is that learners have less opportunity to use English in their daily life. Most of the students only study English only in the language classroom. However, when they are outside the classroom context, they do not have the opportunity to meet foreigners or talk English with friends. Some teachers do not create an English environment for the students to speak and communicate in English.

In addition, the low socio-economic background of students is also the cause of students lacking opportunity to learn and use English. The problem of students social status has effects on the academic achievement. This has been a dissolvable problem for a long time. According to Heyneman and Loxley (1983) concluded that the effects of schooling and teachers quality on academic achievement showed influence on the student family background.

While the report of the World Bank showed that Thailand became an upper-middle income economy country since 2011, however, the impact of poverty in Thailand has been a primarily cause to the socio-economic development of the country. Especially, over 70% of the Rajabhat students have to work part-time in

order to earn some money to afford their tuition fee and the cost of daily living.

Without the financial support from the family, the students themselves cannot spend time on their study as much as they should. As a result, the intention to participate and improve their study seems to be far away from their thought.

For these reasons, the researcher used a CIC method which will enhance and facilitate speaking with understanding ability among Rajabhat University students. Likewise, the use of CIC can empower students' competence in English communication skills. For this research, the researcher would like to find out the answers to the following questions with regards to the Classroom Interactional Competence (CIC) application.

1. What form of language used in CIC is applicable to the Rajabhat University students?

2. How does the students' speaking competence develop with regards to CIC (i.e. in and outside classroom)?

Extract (1) Form of Language used: Class discussion/Talk

Topic: Giving opinion on the picture of tourist attraction

Speaker: Student 1 and Student 2

Date of recording: Semester 1/2012

- (1) T: Good morning everyone.
- (2) SS: Good morning teacher. I'm fine and you?
- (3) T: How's your father's Day? How's your father's Day?
- (4) Male 1: Happy
- (5) T: Happy. Where're you going?
- (6) SS: Staying at home. O.K. Yes.
- (7) Female 1: You went back home.
- (8) T: Where's your hometown?
- (9) Female 1: Samutprakarn.
- (10) T: Where did you go in Samutprakarn?
- (11) Female 2: Bangphi.
- (12) T: Are there a lot of tourist places in Bangphi?
- (13) Female 2: ดากอากาศบางพลู
- (14) T: Uh..huh ดากอากาศบางพลู
- (15) T: The temple, the market, the resort. ดากอากาศบางพลู is the resort or the name of the place.
- (16) Female 2: เป็น
- (17) T: Can you speak in English? Can you try to explain in English?
- (18) Female 3: บางฟู
- (19) T: O.K. did you go anywhere else?
- (20) Female 3: I worked.
- (21) T: What are you doing?

- (22) **Female 3:** McDonald.
 (23) **T:** Oh. Mcdonald.
 (24) **Female 2:** Part time.
 (25) **T:** Your time job.
 (26) **Female 2:** Espanade Ratchada.
 (27) **T:** O.K. Espanade Rachada.

Analysis

Lines 1-4 Interactions were preceded by greetings and participants were stimulated to reply.

Lines 5-6 Student recognized the correct answer appropriate to given the question.

Lines 6-10 A reinforce question which contribute to the formation of needed to produce response and information.

Lines 11-16 Girl 2 and 3 are taking turn to keep the conversation flow smoothly through question and answer. Line 17 Teacher's repetition for clarity with reinforce question, to ensure the reliability and competency of the person.

Lines 19-27 Girl1 and Girl 2 are taking turns in answering question to make the conversation flow smoothly and form more ideas that will be essential to the required information.

Likewise, line 22's suppose complete reply was accepted as not to interrupt the flow of information and conversation.

Extract (2) Transcription according to the out-of class conversation

(1) **T:** Um...I had the problem with the memory card. It's not enough. So, I'm going to start now. O.K. Ung Ing you told me that you have a problem with your eye eyes problem, right?

(2) **S1:** Because eye first time I (pointed to her eye) migraine.

(3) **T:** Uh hah... yes.

(4) **S1:** Right right right head.. Ur... about five five days I feel pain in my eyes and I go to doctors about three times... for migraine only. Next time to hospital on mid-night. Doctor eyes check check about my eye. He told me ur.. ur... virus Aciclovir.

(5) **T:** Virus Aciclovir?

(6) **S1:** Virus Asyclovir same herb ur... รักษาว่าง้อ (she asked how to say รักษา or "treatment" in English).

(7) **T:** To have the treatment.

(8) **S1:** To have the treatment by Asyclovir. For two two weeks for two weeks in hospital. I I used time.

Analysis

Line 1 shows that teacher had enforced a question, making the student to formulate an idea for an answer.

Line 2 S1 To further by expressing idea and describing how he feels, S1 made a gesture (Paralinguistic body

movement-pointing to his eyes) and relating his answer to the teacher.

Line3. T. just ignored the seam gesture by pointing to eye for what suppose to be the head, carried the talk to the head for migraine.

Line 4-5 Teachers' interruption in (Line 5) to verify and stimulate more ideas to S1 and elaborate more interaction.

Line 6-8 Teacher overlapped the ideas and statement given by S1 to verify more answer and allow more ideas of expression that describes S1.'s Feeling and condition.

Extract (3) Giving opinion on the picture. Talking in pairs

(1) **Female 1 :** Do you like the place in the picture?

(2) **Male 1:** Yes, yes, I do.

(3) **Female 1:** Why?

(4) **Male 2 :** It's so beautiful and when I see this picture I feel relaxed.

Extract (4) Giving your opinion on the picture. Talking in pairs

(1) **Male:** Do you like the place in the picture?

(2) **Female:** Yes, I do.

(3) **Male :** Why?

(4) **Female:** Because I like the old town style.

(5) **Male :** What kind of tourism type is it according to the picture?

(6) **Female :** I think it's a VFH tional tourism.

Analysis

CIC is very evident for all lines hence the scope of the interaction runs smoothly as it derives only from one particular thought which is the picture.

Line 1 and 2 (Male and Female) shows shaping in formulating ideas-taking learner's response.

Lines 3-6 (3-4) and (3-6): Interaction that produce accurate, effective communication under the topic management for its coherence.

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Analysis

Line 1 T. because of the health condition, teacher had enforced a question, making the student to formulate an idea for an answer.

Line 2 S1. To further express idea and describe how he feels, S1 made a gesture (Paralinguistic body movement-pointing to his eyes) and relate his answer to T.

Line3. T. just ignored the seam gesture pointing to eye for what suppose to be the head, carried the talk to the head for migraine.

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Line 6-8.T overlapped the ideas and statement given by S1 to verify more answer and allow more ideas of expression that describes S1.'s Feeling and condition.

CONCLUSION

In this paper, I have presented an initial characterization of classroom interaction together with the analysis of outside classroom interactional competence.

With regards to Walsh's theory (2011) studying spoken interaction appears that speakers vary in different levels of competence and abilities when it comes to expressing their ideas and achieved understanding. This is true that both in and outside the classroom contexts some students appear to show better in communication, while some of them seem to have difficulty in conveying the simple conversation.

Much of what happens in language classrooms was mainly concerned to the individual performance rather than collective competence. It then appears that teachers tend to evaluate their learners' ability who can produce correct utterances, rather than to negotiate meanings or clarify a point or idea. It can summarize that the students show their individual performance rather than joint competence.

Furthermore, to produce accuracy, appropriateness and fluency in utterances outside the classroom, of course, the Rajabhat University students reveal the

communicative competence in which they tried to interact with others.

Based on the notion and ideas on CIC, the study is then clarified that the main focus are the Rajabhat students, who become the center and goal of this research study. By means of conversation and discussion, Rajabhat University students seem to have good teachers being as the reactants participants and facilitator in order to improve their interactional competence and individual performance.

Finally, it is not as easy for students to conquer the barrier occurring during the time of CIC strategic usage. In this research, the possibility and necessity in developing the oral communication skills of Thai Rajabhat University is really urgent and all the institutions and universities in Thailand should take this into consideration.

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