

Development of English Communication Skills Using Direct Method for Thai Yai Students at Sathuparadit Meditation Center, Yannawa, Bangkok

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Abstract

This article aimed to study (1) the needs and problems of English communication skills by using the Direct Method for Thai Yai students at Sathuparadit Meditation Center, Yannawa, Bangkok, (2) to develop English communication skills for Thai Yai students using the Direct Method, and (3) to study student satisfaction with the Direct Method. The sample comprised ten Thai Yai students from English Class A at Sathuparadit Meditation Center, selected using purposive sampling. The research instruments included an English communication ability test, a lesson manual based on the Direct Method, and a satisfaction questionnaire. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, paired t-tests, and content analysis. The research results were as follows: The needs and problems of English communication skills were at a high level, with an overall mean of 4.24, indicating a strong requirement for improved speaking and listening skills. After applying the Direct Method, students' communication skills improved significantly, as shown by the increase in mean scores from 9.08 in the pre-test to 17.68 in the post-test at a significance level of 0.05. Students expressed high satisfaction with the learning experience, with an overall mean of 4.23, suggesting that the Direct Method was effective and enjoyable.

This study confirms that immersive, interactive teaching strategies such as the Direct Method can significantly enhance communication skills among ethnic minority learners in religious education settings. The findings contribute to improving curriculum design for English language instruction in similar contexts.

Keywords: Direct Method; English Communication Skills; Thai Yai Students.

Introduction

English communication skills are essential for success in today's globalized world. English serves as an international lingua franca for education, commerce, diplomacy, and cultural exchange. Studies show that nearly 70–80% of workplace communication occurs in English, emphasizing its importance for professional success (Ferguson 1). In Thailand, despite efforts to integrate English language education, many learners—especially those from ethnic minority groups—struggle with speaking and listening skills due to limited exposure and traditional grammar-based instruction. (Ferguson, 2006)

Thai Yai students, an ethnic group from the Shan State, Myanmar, often come to Buddhist centers in Bangkok for cultural and religious education. However, their opportunities to practice English communication remain minimal, restricting their ability to engage with the broader

global Buddhist community and adapt to modern educational requirements. Previous studies indicate that most Thai Yai learners rely heavily on translation-based methods, which fail to develop spontaneous communication abilities (Soisuwan, 2017).

The Direct Method, developed as an alternative to the Grammar-Translation Method, emphasizes direct interaction in the target language without translation. It focuses on oral communication, vocabulary in context, and inductive grammar learning (Richards & Rodgers, 2014). This makes it an ideal approach for learners seeking practical communication skills. Despite its proven success in various contexts, little research has been conducted on its application among Thai Yai students in Buddhist education settings.

This study addresses this gap by exploring how the Direct Method can enhance English communication skills among Thai Yai students at Sathuparadit Meditation Center, Bangkok.

Research Objectives

1. To study the needs and problems of English communication skills among Thai Yai students using the Direct Method.
2. To develop English communication skills among Thai Yai students through the Direct Method.
3. To study student satisfaction with learning English using the Direct Method.

Literature Review

English Communication Skills

Communication skills refer to the ability to convey and receive messages effectively through verbal and non-verbal channels (Barker, 2013). In English, these skills include listening, speaking, reading, and writing. For language learners, speaking and listening are particularly challenging due to their reliance on real-time comprehension and production (Santhi, 2016). Research highlights that oral communication skills enhance not only language proficiency but also self-confidence, intercultural understanding, and employability (Johnson, 2001). Direct Method in Language Teaching

The Direct Method emerged in the late 19th century as a response to the limitations of the Grammar-Translation Method. It prioritizes immersive learning, where all classroom interaction occurs in the target language, and grammar is learned inductively rather than through explicit rules (Brown, 2007). Vocabulary is taught through real-life context using visual aids and physical demonstration.

Key principles of the Direct Method include:

- Exclusive use of the target language.
- Emphasis on speaking and listening before reading and writing.
- Inductive grammar teaching.
- Vocabulary presented in meaningful contexts.

Research shows that the Direct Method fosters communicative competence and encourages active learner participation (Larsen-Freeman and Anderson).

Conceptual Framework

Independent Variable: Direct Method-based instruction

Dependent Variables:

- English communication skill development
- Student satisfaction

Direct Method → English Communication Skills → Satisfaction

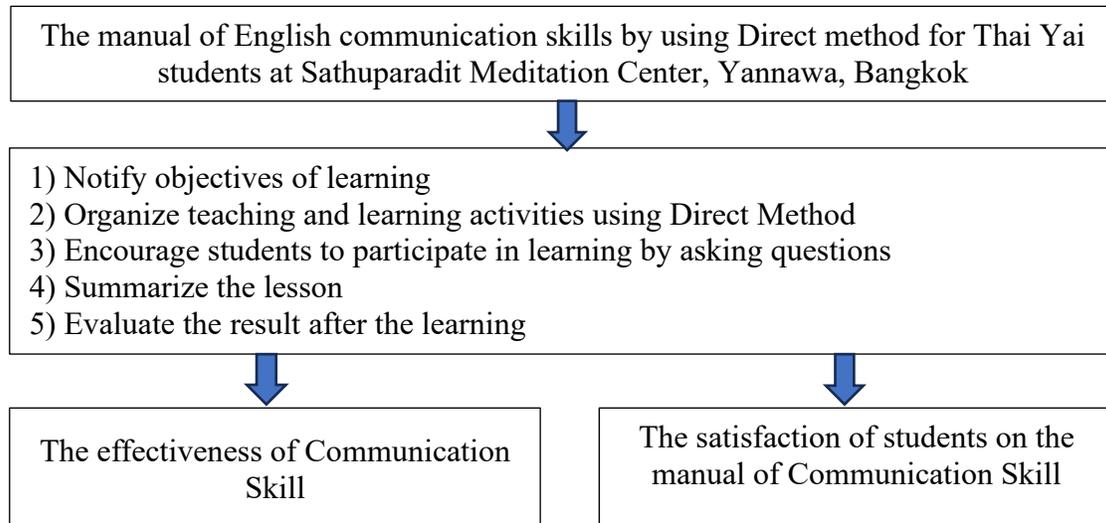


Fig 1: Conceptual Framework

Research Methodology

Research Design

This study used a pre-experimental design (one-group pre-test and post-test).

Population and Sample

Population: 80 Thai Yai students at Sathuparadit Meditation Center.

Sample: 10 students from Class A, selected purposively.

Instruments

1. English Communication Skills Test (Pre-test and Post-test).
2. Lesson Manual (Five units: Travel, School Trip, Weekend Activities, Entertainment, Stories).
3. Satisfaction Questionnaire (Five-point Likert scale).

Data Collection

- Pre-test administered before intervention.
- Direct Method lessons implemented over five sessions.
- Post-test and satisfaction survey conducted after the intervention.

Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics, paired-sample t-test, and content analysis were used to analyze data.

Research Results

Objective 1: Needs and Problems

Students reported high needs in speaking and listening skills.

Table 1: Needs and Problems of English Communication Skills

Skill	Mean	Interpretation
Speaking	4.30	High
Listening	4.25	High
Vocabulary	4.15	High
Overall	4.24	High

The results indicated that the overall language skills were at a high level ($\bar{x} = 4.24$). When considering each aspect, all skills were rated at a high level. Speaking yielded the highest mean score ($\bar{x} = 4.30$), followed by Listening ($\bar{x} = 4.25$), whereas Vocabulary had the lowest mean score ($\bar{x} = 4.15$).

Objective 2: Development of Skills

Table 2: Comparison of Pre-test and Post-test Scores

Test	Mean	S.D.	t	p
Pre-test	9.08	1.53		
Post-test	17.68	1.22	14.72	0.000

The results indicated that the post-test scores ($\bar{x} = 17.68$, S.D. =1.22) were significantly higher than the pre-test scores ($\bar{x} = 9.08$, S.D.=1.53) at the .05 level ($\bar{x} = 14.72$, $p < .001$), which is consistent with the established hypothesis.

Objective 3: Satisfaction

Statements	\bar{x}	S.D.	Satisfied Level
1. The lessons are suitable for studying	4.50	0.71	very satisfied
2. The lessons motivate students to share their opinion together.	4.40	0.52	satisfied
3. The lessons promoted the critical thinking of students.	4.30	0.67	satisfied
4. The lessons promote students to understand more about the content.	4.10	0.74	satisfied
5. The lessons help students for discussing and sharing their ideas.	4.20	0.63	satisfied
6. Students are able to adapt and use their procedures and skills in daily life properly.	4.10	0.74	satisfied
7. The lessons help students for cooperate working	3.80	0.79	satisfied
8. The lessons are easy to understand.	4.10	0.57	satisfied
9. Studying Duration is proper.	4.20	0.63	satisfied
10. The process of studying help students to think logically.	4.60	0.70	very satisfied
Total	4.23	0.67	satisfied

The results indicated that the overall satisfaction toward the lessons was high ($\bar{x}=4.23$, S.D.=0.67). Students expressed the highest satisfaction with the lessons' capacity to foster logical thinking ($\bar{x}=4.60$, S.D. = 0.70) and their suitability for study ($\bar{x} = 4.50$, S.D. = 0.71). Although other dimensions were rated favorably, cooperative working received the lowest mean score ($\bar{x} = 3.80$, S.D. = 0.79), indicating a primary area for future pedagogical enhancement

Discussion

The findings indicate that the Direct Method significantly improves English communication skills among Thai Yai students. This aligns with Brown's assertion that immersive approaches accelerate language acquisition (Brown, 2007). The inductive grammar approach and emphasis on real-life contexts contributed to learners' active engagement, consistent with Larsen-Freeman and Anderson's findings on communicative language teaching.

The high satisfaction scores suggest that the Direct Method not only enhances proficiency but also motivates learners by reducing anxiety and promoting interaction. However, challenges such as limited exposure to English outside the classroom highlight the need for supplementary practice opportunities, such as conversation clubs and digital platforms.

This study contributes to language education in Buddhist contexts by providing a practical model for integrating communicative approaches in culturally sensitive environments.

Conclusion

The Direct Method effectively improved English communication skills and learner satisfaction among Thai Yai students at Sathuparadit Meditation Center. Its emphasis on oral communication, contextual vocabulary, and active participation makes it a suitable approach for similar educational settings.

Suggestions

1. Expand Direct Method programs to other Buddhist centers.
2. Train teachers in communicative teaching strategies.
3. Develop online tools for continued language practice.

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