

Research Article

COMMUNICATIVE ENGLISH LEARNING MANAGEMENT COMPETENCY LEVEL OF THE LOWER SECONDARY SCHOOL ASSISTANT TEACHERS IN THAILAND

Received: March 2, 2022

Revised: March 27, 2022

Accepted: April 1, 2022

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Abstract

The objectives of this research were to 1) develop the competency framework, 2) develop a competency assessment instrument, and 3) explore the competency levels of communicative English learning management of the lower secondary school assistant teachers. The research process was divided into 3 phases: 1) develop the framework from documentary studies and interviews with 7 English expert teachers selected by Snowball sampling, 2) develop an assessment instrument by creating an evaluation form in Behavioral Anchored Rating Scale (BARS), and 3) explore the competency levels of 441 assistance teachers through multi-stage random sampling. Data were analyzed by using content analysis, descriptive statistics such as variable's mean, standard deviation and frequency, IOC, and reliability coefficient.

The findings were: 1) the framework comprised of five sub-competencies; namely, (1) learner analysis competency (2) lesson plan creation competency (3) technology incorporation competency (4) learner centered classroom management competency and (5) learner assessment competency by high quality level with the IOC index between 0.60 - 1.00, 2) the competency evaluation form consisted of 5 levels which criteria of each level were suitable by high quality level with the IOC index between 0.60 - 1.00 and the reliability between raters was high at 0.885 with Intraclass Correlation Coefficient (ICC), and 3) most of assistant teachers attained level 2 out of 5 levels in learner analysis competency (86.2%), lesson plan creation competency (88.4%), learner assessment competency (75.7%); level 3 in learner centered classroom management competency (67.6%) and level 4 in technology incorporation competency (74.1%).

Keywords: Communicative English, Learning Management Competency, Lower Secondary School Teachers, Assistant Teachers

Introduction

A competent person can appropriately apply his or her own knowledge and skills to achieve task goals because competency is a skilled trait, including knowledge, skills, and attitudes, that performs a high-standard knowledge in a responsible area (McCelland, 1975). Competency and competency frameworks are important tools for human resource management, in particular, quality of communicative English teachers - key to internationally develop nation in all dimensions. Also, the competency framework defines set of teachers' behaviors required in learning management area and how they are expected to perform their jobs. (Chappell & Hager, 2020; English Language Institute, 2021; Secretariat Office of the Teachers Council of Thailand, 2021)

While the country needs to be developed in order to keep up with the pace of global changes and facilitate trading and investment condition, international relations and becoming a member of ASEAN in which English is official language. It is also found that those labors working abroad lack ability to communicate in English efficiently. (Education First, 2020) This reflects the lack of efficiency and effectiveness in the past English learning management. One of the most important factors that is discouragement and an obstacle to English development among Thai learners is the limited resources of quality and quantity of competent teachers in English learning management. Moreover, the professional development encounters systematic problems because of non-relational competence (Afrianto, 2018; Anchunda & Kaewurai, 2021; Nugraha & Maulida, 2021) and there is no specific communicative English competency framework for new teachers, especially "assistant teachers" who are recruited and appointed to be an official as government teacher and just begin their careers in the classroom, (Office of the Teacher Civil Service and Educational Personnel Commission, 2021) so it's the most important time that they need intensive preparation and development to become professional English teachers. They want to improve their techniques to pass on body of knowledge that fit the learner requirement along the framework of communicative English learning management competency which can build a valid and transparent blueprint for job description, performance evaluation, and their career path (Bourgeois, et al., 2021; Haruta, et al., 2018) during the probation period of two years prior to be appointed as "Teacher" in order to improve knowledge, skills and attitude that enable a teacher to be successful to maximize student learning. (Abdurakhmonov, 2021; Mejang & Suksawas, 2021; Nugraha & Maulida, 2021; Poonpon, 2021). Additionally, a survey shows 90% of English assistant teachers perform duties in the lower-secondary level, who play an important role in creating corresponding learning management to learners in primary level's fundamental knowledge in order for the learner to be able to communicate in English and utilize their knowledge in gaining knowledge in higher level. English Language Institute, 2021; National Educational Information System, 2021; Office of the Teacher Civil Service and Educational Personnel Commission, 2021).

This shows necessity for development of the framework of communicative English learning management competency of the lower secondary school assistant teachers to set performance expectations and evaluate assistant teacher contributions objectively and also expedite the teachers to enhance their performance and increase their level of communicative English learning management satisfaction. Also, exploring their competency levels can help assess 'competency gaps' in individuals and provide effective inputs for creating modules for increased development and proper training resources so that the elevation communicative English learning management

competency for the assistant teachers in lower-secondary level allows them to pass on the body knowledge to learners effectively and help uplift learner ability to use English in daily life communication.

Research Objectives

1. To develop the framework of communicative English learning management competency of the lower secondary school assistant teachers
2. To develop an assessment instrument of communicative English learning management competency of the lower secondary school assistant teachers
3. To explore the competency levels of communicative English learning management competency of the lower secondary school assistant teachers

Research Methodology

The research design is Research and Development as follows:

Population and Sample

1. To develop the framework, determine key informants in accordance with exponential non-discriminative snowball sampling method (Ellis, 2021) and performs in-depth interview which provides deep information and is relevant to the point (Marta & Roma, 2021). Firstly, identify potential key informant as an expert teacher with minimum of 5-year experienced English teacher who is national gold medalist of OBEC awards for lower secondary school teachers on academia, management and innovative and technology from academic year 2016 – 2019. Then find the first expert teacher through simple random sampling method and ask the first teacher to recruit others until the saturation point is reached (Ellis, 2021). In this research, seven expert teachers were interviewed.

2. To explore the competency levels, the population of the study consisted of 1,731 lower secondary school assistant English teachers in various regions of Thailand from the data of office of the teacher civil service and educational personnel commission report in academic year 2021. The sample of this research is calculated by using Yamane (1973) formula with 95% confidence level of 1,731 teachers. After calculating the sample size by substituting the numbers into the Yamane formula, the number of samples is 324 teachers. In order to obtain reliable of data, researcher has increased sample size to 441 teachers through multi-stage random sampling method.

Data Collection Tools

The data collection tools are

1. In-depth interview applying semi-structured interview and STAR technique (Roulston & Choi, 2018; Voutsina, 2018) comprised with questions generated from literature review related to an area of communicative English learning management concerning situations (Situation-S), tasks (Task-T), actions (Action-A) and results (Result-R) through Behavioral Event Interview (BEI) (McClelland, 1998) as it is one of the most efficient methods in a qualitative research design of collecting primary data directly from the expert teachers to enable their deep understanding of the concept and behaviors.

2. A competency assessment instrument was developed from the collected data of content analysis and in-depth interview to create an evaluation form in Behavioral Anchored Rating Scale (BARS) (Klieger et al., 2018).

Each indicator of the BARS was generated to meet the criteria of relevancy and related to more favorable attitudinal reactions, including perceptions of fairness and justice on communicative English learning management job.

Data Collection

1. Utilize semi-structured interview and STAR technique to conduct in-depth interview with 7 English expert teachers selected by Snowball sampling in order to analyze the literature review and interview data in creating competency definition, competency indicating behaviors, and levels of competency.

2. Use the collected data of the definition, indicating behaviors, and levels of competency to develop an assessment instrument by creating an evaluation form in Behavioral Anchored Rating Scale (BARS).

3. Utilize the competency evaluation form to explore the competency levels of communicative English learning management competency of 441 lower secondary school assistant English teachers in various regions of Thailand in academic year 2021.

Research Process

The research process is divided into 3 phases as follows:

Phase 1: The objective in this step is to study frameworks of the assistant teachers' (AT) communicative English learning management (CELM) on lower secondary school (LS) level from concepts and theories about communicative English teaching competency from UNESCO ICT Competency Framework for Teachers, Southeast Asia Teachers Competency Framework (SEA-TCF), Professional Standards for Thai Teachers and Standards for Assistant Teachers of Teachers Council, Ministry of Education and to create definition and competency indicating behaviors of lower secondary school assistant teachers' communicative English learning management (LS-AT-CELM) through in-depth interview, content analysis, analytic induction and, BARS.

Phase 2: The objective in this step is to develop an evaluation form BARS based on the indicators of the competency levels of LS-AT-CELM. The data analysis is conducted by examining the validity of interpretation and correct certain error as advised from 5 specialists and also the inter-rater reliability by coefficient among the researcher, experience English teachers and English assistant teachers is considered.

Phase 3: The objective in this step is to explore the competency levels of LS-AT-CELM in Thailand using the evaluation form developed in Phase 2. The data analysis is conducted by using descriptive statistics such as variable's mean, standard deviation and frequency.

Research Finding

1. **Competency framework for lower secondary school assistant teachers' communicative English learning management** consists of 5 elements of competency; namely, 1) Communicative English Learner Analysis Competency 2) Communicative English Lesson Plan Creation Competency 3) Technology Incorporation in Communicative English Competency 4) Learner-centered Communicative English Classroom Management Competency 5) Communicative English Learner Assessment Competency. Examination result of appropriateness of definition and competency indicating behavior finds an average of between 4.80 - 5.00 which proves the definition and competency indicating behaviors to be most appropriate. Operational definition and indicating behaviors are indicated as follows:

1) **Communicative English Learner Analysis Competency** means lower secondary school English assistant teachers' expression that shows ability to analyze and specify the needs in learning styles, point to develop and assist and guidance individual learners for English communication equally with the highest mean ($\bar{X} = 5.00$, S.D. = 0.000).

2) **Communicative English Lesson Plan Creation Competency** means lower secondary school English assistant teachers' expression that shows the ability to select communicative English lesson plan that contains English learning contents and activities that coordinate learners' needs on the level of a period in both online and offline formats with the highest mean ($\bar{X} = 5.00$, S.D. = 0.000).

3) **Technology Incorporation in Communicative English Competency** means lower secondary school English assistant teachers' expression that shows ability to utilize and develop modern instructional media that coordinate with communicative English learners' needs in both online and offline formats with the highest mean ($\bar{X} = 5.00$, S.D. = 0.000).

4) **Learner-centered Communicative English Classroom Management Competency** means lower secondary school English assistant teachers' expression that shows the ability to employ modern techniques and strategies of communicative English learning management in order to pass on knowledge and set learning activities that focus on students as a center, trigger learners' interest and inspire them to communicate in English both in online and offline formats with the highest mean ($\bar{X} = 4.80$, S.D. = 0.447).

5) **Communicative English Learner Assessment Competency** means lower secondary school English assistant teachers' expression that shows the ability to select measurement and assessment that align with actual condition, analyze the results from measurement and assessment, utilize the results to develop learners' ability to communicate in English effectively and develop communicative English measurement and assessment tools with the highest mean ($\bar{X} = 4.80$, S.D. = 0.447).

2. The competency evaluation form of lower intermediate assistant teachers' communicative English learning management developed from the framework finds IOC by 5 specialists of between 0.60-1.00 showing coherence of each element of indicating behaviors and competency levels and the inter-rater reliability was high at 0.885 with Intraclass Correlation Coefficient (ICC) with certain details as follows:

Table 1 The competency levels

1) Communicative English Learner Analysis Competency

Level 1: Demonstrate competency or the behaviors unclearly.

Level 2: Specify learner's pros: demonstrate the ability to specify pros and points to develop in communicative English for individual learners including 4 skills; listening, speaking, reading and writing.

Level 3: Demonstrate level 2 competency and specify learning styles: demonstrate the ability to specify communicative English learning styles of individual learners.

Level 4: Demonstrate level 3 competency and select teaching approach: demonstrate the ability to select learning management approach in accordance with individual needs of learners.

Level 5: Demonstrate level 4 competency and guide learners: demonstrate the ability to assist and guidance individual learners in developing commutative English skills.

2) Communicative English Lesson Plan Creation Competency

Level 1: Demonstrate competency or the behaviors unclearly.

level 2: Specify learning standard: demonstrate the ability to specify the measurement, indicators and communicative English learning objectives that cover learning behaviors in cognitive domain, affective domain and psychomotor.

level 3: Demonstrate level 2 competency and set contents: demonstrate ability to set contents in accordance with learners' needs along with following standards, indicators and communicative English learning objective on the level of a period.

level 4: Demonstrate level 3 competency and set learning activities: demonstrate the ability to set learning activities that are in accordance with contents, standards, indicators and objectives of communicative English and learners' needs on the level of a period both in online and offline formats.

level 5: Demonstrate level 3 competency and set English lesson plan: demonstrate the ability to manage communicative English learning plan that covers activities, technological media, measurement and assessment that are in accordance with learners' needs on the level of a period both in online and offline formats.

3) Technology Incorporation in Communicative English Competency

Level 1: Demonstrate competency or the behaviors unclearly.

Level 2: Specify technological media: demonstrate the ability to specify technological media in accordance with content and communicative English activities.

Level3: Demonstrate level 2 competency and select technological media: demonstrate the ability to select modern technological media in accordance with communicative English learners' needs in both online and offline formats.

Level 4: Demonstrate level 3 competency and apply technological media: demonstrate the ability to apply technological media in offline and online formats in accordance with communicative English learners' needs.

Level 5: Demonstrate level 4 competency and develop technological media: demonstrate the ability to develop technological media in communicative English in both online and offline format in accordance with learners' needs.

4) Learner-centered Communicative English Classroom Management Competency

Level 1: Demonstrate competency or the behaviors unclearly.

Level 2: Specify learning management strategy: demonstrate the ability to specify techniques and strategies in passing on knowledge and set communicative English learning activities that focus on learner as a center.

Level 3: Demonstrate level 2 competency and select classroom management strategies: demonstrate the ability to employ techniques and strategies in passion on knowledge and set activities for communicative English learning that focus on learners as a center and that fits online and offline formats.

Level 4: Demonstrate level 3 competency and pass on knowledge: demonstrate the ability to pass on knowledge and set communicative English learning activities that focus on learners as a center and that fits online and offline formats.

Level 5: Demonstrate level 4 competency and trigger and contribute to learning: demonstrate the ability to set learning activities that are suitable for online and offline formats and that are able to trigger learners' interest and contribute to their ability to utilize the English as a tool to gain more knowledge.

5) Communicative English Learner Assessment Competency

Level 1: Demonstrate competency or the behaviors unclearly.

Level 2: Select measurement and assessment: demonstrate the ability to select measurement and assessment in communicative English that align with actual conditions.

Level 3: Demonstrate level 2 competency and measure and assess: demonstrate the ability to measure and assess communicative English that align with actual conditions.

Level 4: Demonstrate level 3 competency and analyze measurement and assessment results: demonstrate the ability to analyze and assess English communication that align with actual conditions.

Level 5: Demonstrate level 3 competency and develop measurement and assessment tools: demonstrate the ability to develop measurement and assessment tools that align with actual conditions.

3. The competency levels of the lower secondary school assistant teachers in various regions of Thailand finds most of assistant teachers attained level 2 out of 5 levels in communicative English learner analysis competency (86.2%), communicative English lesson plan creation competency (88.4%), communicative English learner assessment competency (75.7%); level 3 in learner-centered communicative English classroom management competency (67.6%) and level 4 in technology incorporation in communicative English competency (74.1%) with certain details as follows:

Table 2 The competency levels of the lower secondary school assistant teachers

Competency	Number of Teachers	competency levels				
		1	2	3	4	5
1) Communicative English Learner Analysis Competency	441	-	380 (86.17%)	42 (9.52%)	19 (4.30%)	-
2) Communicative English Lesson Plan Creation Competency	441	-	392 (88.89%)	18 (4.08%)	31 (7.03%)	-
3) Technology Incorporation in Communicative English Competency	441	-	10 (2.27%)	47 (10.66%)	53 (12.02%)	331 (75.06%)
4) Learner-centered Communicative English Classroom Management Competency	441	-	24 (5.44%)	76 (17.23%)	298 (67.57%)	43 (9.75%)
5) Communicative English Learner Assessment Competency	441	-	333 (75.51%)	60 (13.61%)	48 (10.88%)	-

Discussion

The discussion comprises 3 aspects with details as follows:

1. Framework of LS-AT-CELM was developed by combining strong quantitative and qualitative methodologies in data collection to produce the accuracy and reliability of the resulting elements of five sub-competencies aligning international, regional and national concepts such as Competency Framework for Teachers of UNESCO (2018), Southeast Asia Teachers Competency Framework of SEAMEO (2019), and Professional Standards for Teachers and Assistant Teacher Performance of Secretariat Office of the Teachers Council of Thailand (2021) to with communicative English learning management area of lower secondary school level. This framework is described the various skills, abilities, and personality traits that contribute to English assistant teachers performing well in their position within the structure and enables organizations involved such as schools and Ministry of Education in Thailand of all sizes and shapes to align their visions and missions. As the framework clearly established

the outline from organizations involved to the English assistant teachers around expectations of behaviors and performance, it is easier to connect the objectives of an individual with the direction of the organization (Chappell & Hager, 2020; Nugraha & Maulida, 2021). Additionally, having this competency framework is better to the future English assistant teachers' recruitment and also retention standards.

2. An assessment instrument of LS-AT-CELM teachers was developed from the strengthening modern competency framework to create an evaluation form in Behavioral Anchored Rating Scale (BARS) (Klieger et al., 2018), and also the inter-rater reliability by coefficient was considered among the researcher, experienced English teachers and English assistant teachers conforming to theoretical triangulation (Turner & Turner, 2009) which involves more than two independent investigators to confirm generated aspects and minimize measurement bias. BARS, generally, uses a 5-point scale of 0 to 4 starting with a rating of "0" to identify one who fails to demonstrate competency (Asana, et al, 2021; Langhan & Tiyyagura, 2022; Sirbu et al., 2020; Wetzel & Greiff, 2018), but the competency assessment tool in this research - utilizing to assistant teachers who have some prior knowledge - comprises scale of 1 to 5 starting with a rating of "1" to identify an assistant teacher who demonstrates competency or the behaviors unclearly. This high-quality assessment tool directly relates to communicative English learning management particular outcome, includes clear assessment criteria, provides challenge for the full range of teachers evaluating, and is fair and explicit about what assistant teachers are required to do, therefore, it can provide a window for high-quality results when applied.

3. Competency levels of LS-AT-CELM evaluated from high-quality modern assessment tool help the organization that is responsible for teacher professional development in Thailand determine whether the teachers are competent or not in each competency and establish training needs that will address those gaps, so that the teachers can effectively reach their standards. Surprisingly, evaluating result of the competency levels of the LS-AT in various regions of Thailand found certain interesting competency gaps that most of assistant teachers attained level 2 out of 5 levels in communicative English learner analysis competency, communicative English lesson plan creation competency, communicative English learner assessment competency; level 3 in learner-centered communicative English classroom management competency and level 4 in technology incorporation in communicative English competency. The gaps are also utilized as a guideline in making policy to develop competency development procedure to better lower secondary school assistant teachers' communicative English teaching competency in order to uplift their competency as Ministry of Education in Thailand has a policy in teacher development reformation to respond the systematic human resource development in accordance with Constitution of the Kingdom of Thailand, category 16, (Thai Parliament, 2018) the national reformation of education and economy specifying that teaching in every level should be improved in order for learners to be able to learn according to their preference and improve the structure of related organization to achieve the goal. This has to be coherent nationally and regionally in order to eliminate obstacles and build competitive advantage of the country; therefore, nation and people will sustainably benefit from various economic group participation with good immunity which means effective communication capacity in accordance with 20-year national strategy (2018-2037) (Bureau of International Cooperation, Ministry of Education, 2018) in the development and construction of human resource potential aiming at the development for human in every dimension and every age to be smart and requisite skills in the 21st century,

to have English language communication skills. Apart from that the national education plan B.E. 2560-2579 (2017-2036) (Office of the Education Council, 2017) has set desirable characteristics and quality of Thais in order for every educational institute to cling on to as a framework in building Thais 4.0 who, although, have different contexts of locals and educational institutes, but will maintain Thainess and compete internationally. It is specified for the learner to have communication competency particularly English is an important competency, to have ability to give and receive messages, have etiquette in communication to express thoughts, knowledge, understanding, feelings, and personal attitude to exchange news and experience that is useful for self-development, society, and negotiation to eliminate conflicts. Choosing to receive or not to receive news with reasons and righteousness together with means selection in effective communication concerning effect to oneself and society. (Office of the Teacher Civil Service and Educational Personnel Commission, 2021) The lower secondary school teachers' communicative English teaching competency must be developed to meet conditions and needs of their levels because they play an important role in creating corresponding teaching to primary level's fundamental knowledge of learners in order for the learners to be able to communicate in English and utilize their knowledge in gaining knowledge in higher levels.

Suggestions

1. The organization involved should utilize this competency framework to develop training course along the teachers' competency levels or gaps to develop communicative English learning management competency for lower secondary school assistant teachers.
2. Due to the 2nd research objective, the evaluation form of communicative English learning management competency of the lower secondary school assistant teachers is suitable by high quality level, it, therefore, should be utilized to indicate behaviors and competency level of lower secondary school assistant teachers' communicative English learning management to be a guideline to develop the teachers' competency.

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