

แนวทางในการสอนภาษาอังกฤษที่เหมาะสมเพื่อเสริมสร้าง ทักษะสำหรับศตวรรษที่ 21 ในบริบทของไทย

Suitable Approaches in Teaching English Language to Promote
21st Century Skills in Thai Context

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บทความนี้กล่าวถึงปัจจัยพื้นฐานที่จะเสริมสร้างทักษะการสอนภาษาอังกฤษในศตวรรษที่ 21 โดยครอบคลุมประเด็นเรื่องแนวทาง บทบาทของครูผู้สอน การคัดเลือกบทเรียนและกิจกรรมการสอนภาษาอังกฤษในบริบทของสังคมไทย และแนวความคิดสำหรับการประยุกต์ใช้ในห้องเรียน โดยในส่วนแรกจะกล่าวถึงนิยามหรือคำจำกัดความของทักษะสำหรับศตวรรษที่ 21 และความจำเป็นของทักษะดังกล่าวต่อการเรียนและการประกอบอาชีพของผู้เรียนตลอดจนสังคมโดยรวม ในส่วนที่สองจะกล่าวถึงปัจจัยพื้นฐานที่จะส่งเสริมทักษะดังกล่าวโดยจะเน้นเรื่องแนวทางการสอนภาษาอังกฤษที่อิงหลักการสอนเพื่อการสื่อสารและการสร้างองค์ความรู้ด้วยตนเอง บทบาทของครูผู้สอน และการคัดเลือกบทเรียนและกิจกรรมการเรียนการสอน และเพื่อให้ครูผู้สอนสามารถนำไปประยุกต์ใช้หลังจากที่ได้ทราบถึงแนวคิดและวรรณกรรมต่างๆ ที่เกี่ยวข้อง ส่วนสุดท้ายจะสรุปภาพรวมให้ครูผู้สอนเห็นว่าปัจจัยต่าง ๆ เหล่านี้จะนำไปสู่ผลลัพธ์ในการเสริมสร้างทักษะสำหรับศตวรรษที่ 21 และการประยุกต์ใช้เพื่อออกแบบชั้นเรียนภาษาอังกฤษในบริบทของไทยที่มีการผสมผสานความรู้และทักษะเข้าด้วยกันอย่างกลมกลืนได้อย่างไร

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Abstract

This article will discuss fundamental considerations to promote 21st century skills in English language teaching by reviewing approaches, teachers' roles, materials and students activity selection; English language teaching in Thai context; and some ideas for classroom application. In the first section, definition of 21st century skills and needs of the students' academic outcomes, profession, and society of the 21st century skills will be discussed. The second section examines fundamental considerations to promote the skills. English language teaching approaches mainly based on communicative and constructivism disciplines, roles of teachers, materials and activity selection are main focuses of this part. To enable application after reviewing all concepts and background literature, the last section provides a summary for teachers to gain a clear picture of how all factors contribute to the outcomes promoting the 21st century skills and the application to the realistic goals for designing English language classrooms in Thai context where knowledge and skills are harmoniously developed.

Key words: teaching approaches/ TESOL/ 21st century skills/ Thai context

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I: Introduction

What are 21st century skills?

We have all realized that the world is becoming more interconnected, Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) is increasingly important because World population build connections through Language, especially English language. Because of this, TESOL has been challenged to provide teaching methodology which suits the context, serves the needs of the individuals and communities, and benefits learners academically and professionally. In a year, the AEC would allow a free flow of eight skilled labor-Engineer services, Nursing services, Architectural services, Surveying qualifications, Accountancy services, Dental practitioners, Medical practitioners, and Tourism services (TOT, 2014). As a consequence, Thailand would benefit a great deal in business if Thai education could prepare young learners well in terms of language skills, professional skills and life skills.

In today's TESOL literature, "21st century skills" are often cited but almost never defined. 21st century skills are core concerns in education and have become core values of students' outcomes in many Asian countries including Thailand. The Pacific Policy Research Center (2010) reviewed "21st century skills" from three different organizations. First, the Educational Testing Service (ETS) defines 21st century learning skills as the ability to a) collect and/or retrieve information, b) organize and manage information, c) evaluate the quality, relevance, and usefulness of information, and d) generate accurate information through the use of existing resources. Second, the North Central Regional Education Laboratory (NCREL) identifies them as achieving learning through digital age literacy, inventive thinking, effective communication, and high productivity. Third, the Partnership for 21st century skills identifies six key elements for fostering 21st

century learning: 1) emphasize core subjects, 2) emphasize learning skills, 3) use 21st century tools to develop learning skills, 4) teach and learn in 21st century context, 5) teach and learning 21st century content, and 6) use 21st century assessments that measure 21st century skills. Moreover, the Ministry of Education of Singapore (2014) presents 21st century competencies in a framework which includes 1) civic literacy, global awareness, and cross-cultural skills, 2) critical and inventive thinking, and 3) communication, collaboration, and information skills. The framework also incorporates learning and innovation skills which are considered essential in an increasing complex world. They include 1) creativity and innovation, 2) critical thinking and problem solving, 3) communication and collaboration, and 4) information, media, and technology skills. Mathis (2013) called these life skills "soft skills" or 4Cs. To conclude, the main skills of 21st century skills which are commonly referred to are critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, and communication.

Why is it important for students to possess 21st century skills?

Drawing evidence from school outcomes and job requirements, students need to develop the skills for later use at the workplace or become skills in their personal life, and later life-long skills. First is the school outcome. One outstanding example among ASEAN countries is Singapore where English is both an official and daily-life language. The 21st competency framework of Singapore (Ministry of Education: 21st Century Competencies, 2015) emphasizes that to keep Singapore strong and to capitalize on the rich opportunities of the new digital era, young learners in Singapore must achieve skills necessary to be competent world citizens. These skills also include the 4Cs which are presented in the terms "civic literacy; critical and inventive thinking; together with communication, collaboration and information skills. Second is a job

requirement. The National Governors Association (2003) in Mathis (2013) stated that the soft skills or 4Cs have been endorsed by the National Governor's Association and the American Youth Policy Forum. The 21st century generation should be people who are able and willing to rapidly learn new skills, be responsible individuals with a team player attitude, have the ability to communicate through various genres and for a variety of purposes e.g. inform, instruct, motivate, and persuade (Center, 2010), and be a basic technology user as well as creative individuals. The skills in great demand are analyzing and interacting in non-routine situations which can lead to collaborative inventions. Additionally, 21st century skills are not new; however, they are "newly important" as today's workers must be able to find and analyze information from multiple sources and use this information to make decisions and create new ideas (Silva, 2009 cited in Larson, 2011). Third is that of the world and environment. Stanford center for Learning Opportunities (2010) stated that students must learn how to learn so that they can apply their knowledge, manage new situations with changing information, technologies, jobs and social condition. As we are now living in a more complex and socially networked environment, information and knowledge is everywhere and has been updated every second from every corner of the world. All things considered, there have been urges from both the academic, professional, and civil world to develop these 4Cs skills. One might be more concrete and broader than the other; however, all of them aim at developing effective students for the 21st century to serve the global needs because today's tasks are more complex. The world is open for intercultural and corporative transactions, and the technology is extremely advanced.

This paper will discuss fundamental considerations to promote 21st century skills in

English language teaching by reviewing approaches, teachers' roles, materials and activities; English language teaching in Thai context; and finally give a recommended English language teaching framework and ideas for classroom application.

II: Fundamental considerations to promote 4Cs of 21st century skills in English Language Teaching

The TESOL classroom is suited for 21st Century skill development because of the global nature of the English language. Skills relevant to global citizenship are necessary. Educators, policy makers, and language teachers have cooperatively redesigned English courses to include these skills in the classrooms to produce students with knowledge along with developing these four skills. Fundamental considerations to promote 21st century skills in English classroom design are approaches, teachers' roles, and classroom activities.

A. Approaches

The nature of each approach serves different learning objectives. Drawing on the development and objectives of each English language teaching approach, we will carefully examine three main approaches which are most discussed in the 20th and 21st century- Communicative Language Teaching approach, Collaborative Language Learning approach, and Task-based Language Teaching approach to see how each approach is relevant and promote the skills.

1. Communicative Language Teaching Approach

Richards (2006) reviewed the development of language teaching in the last 50 years into three phases: first, traditional teaching applying aural-oral; structural- situational approaches (up to late 1960's). These approaches focus on the presentation of the material by the teacher, the practice by the students,

and the production meaning that the students using the learned structure in different contexts to develop the fluency with the new pattern. This approach included memorization of dialogs, drills, and guided activities. Second, classic communicative language teaching approach (1970s to 1990s) was introduced to develop students' fluency rather than language structures. Third, current communicative language teaching approach (late 1990s to 2006 dated of the book) paid attention to the result of the gradual learning process i.e. communicative, relevant, purposeful, interesting, and engaging. In phase three, it was obvious that grammar should be taught inductively rather than deductively. Classroom activities should ideally be created for the need for communication, interaction, and negotiation of meaning. The content became more authentic. At some points, problem solving and information gathering together with sharing took place.

2. Collaborative Language Learning Approach

The idea of collaborative language learning approach is based on social constructivism which suggests that knowledge could not be transferred from a teacher to passive learners. Instead knowledge will be formed when a learner actively searches for the information, transforms it, and constructs it (Chirasawadi, 2008). According to McInerney and Roberts, 2002 cited in Chirasawadi, 2008, the term "collaboration" refers to working in a group to achieve a common goal while the contribution of each individual to the whole is respected. It can be said that the collaborative language learning approach focuses on involvement of the group members with an appropriate size; each group member should be assigned a clear role. The content suitable for this approach should be loosely structured, non-fundamental, and is likely to be more controversial. Examples are sharing opinions on the effects of global warming (Sejnost, 2010) or

predicting the results of tourism in Thailand after the AEC. This approach aims for communication and contribution of an individual knowledge to form answers to the questions. The process could start from students identifying sources of information- either from offline or online authentic materials, gathering factual information, sharing information within the group, analyzing the information, and developing new knowledge-the answer to the proposition. At some points, critical thinking, collaboration, and communication take place. Successful communication should contribute to self-confidence that, in turn, would feed to motivation to continue learning (Bhatia, Anthony, & Noguchi, 2011).

3. Task Based Language Teaching Approach

The idea of task based language teaching (TBLT) approach is also based on social constructivism theory. TBLT emphasizes learning to communicate through interaction in the target language, incorporates authentic texts into the learning situation, provides opportunities for learners to focus not only on language but also on the learning process itself, enhances learners' own personal experiences as important contributing elements to classroom learning, and links classroom language learning with language use outside the classroom (Nunan, 2004, p.1). A task is defined as an activity or action which is carried out as the result of processing or understanding language. There are three main task types: information gap, reasoning gap, and opinion gap. Task difficulty and complexity can be easier to more difficult depending on learner factors, task factors, and text or input factors. Examples of tasks are ordering a sequence of pictures, comparing texts and pictures, jigsaw reading, and explaining opinion on choice selection. Different types of tasks require different cognitive processing. A jigsaw reading task type provides contextual support, is rather structured with some

knowledge available, and does not require much reasoning. On the other hand, opinion exchange on choice selection is a low-level structured task and reasoning is required. In addition, with TBLT, students should be grouped within the classroom. There are three steps in implementing a task: pre-task, task-cycle, and language focus. In step 1, pre-task, the teacher prepares students by stimulating their background knowledge and giving clear instructions of the task. In step 2, task-cycle, students complete task, prepare the presentation for task outcomes, and present it to class. In step 3, language focus, teacher lets students analyze the language features, gives explanation if necessary, and has students practice language features (Willis, 1996 cited in Chirasawadi, 2008). A task can simply be implemented inside the classroom to encourage communication among students or outside the classroom to provide students with opportunities for authentic materials and interactions. To complete each type of task, communication, collaboration, critical thinking, and negotiation take place.

B. Roles of Teachers

TESOL has been moving forward to student-centered language classroom. As a result, teachers should teach and lead less. The less control by teachers, the more cognitive and linguistic development in students. Therefore, teachers should:

1. organize an environment where knowledge could be constructed through group activities whether large or small. When using small groups, four is the optimum size to manage student learning. It allows for a good range of experience and individual contributions (Performance and Targeted Programmes Branch, 2002). This is to ensure active participations of the students. Also, Chirasawadi (2008) revealed that when learning in groups, students felt emotionally safe; and accordingly, they were productive and collaborative;

2. facilitate the class, not teach-asking more questions and listening more to questions. There are progressing steps in asking questions. Teachers can begin with some checking-understanding questions- yes- no questions, fact questions, questions with prompts to scaffold the students to retell the information, and then the teachers should gradually move to higher-order thinking questions- why and how questions; open-ended to have the students express their thoughts and supply reasons to justify their thoughts. Herramann (2015) confirmed that by scaffolding questions, even students with limited language skills can demonstrate critical thinking skills; and

3. recognize that students have valuable skills and background knowledge that they can contribute in order to affect maximum learning.

Therefore, the 21st century not only requires language teachers to teach English but also to envisage and to incorporate approaches, designs, and activities to yield the favorable outcome- students who possess the 4Cs and other necessary life skills mentioned.

C. Materials and activities selection

A common practice of materials and activities is to select textbooks based on the topics and/or grammar points the teachers assume will match the school levels of the students. Many teachers decide to finish all content contained in a syllabus without considering learners' needs, background knowledge, and ways to establish skills. Bhatia (2012) suggested that the teachers consider the content, learner age, learner knowledge, and methodology. Some materials are teacher-centered where teachers organize the classroom; teachers initiate and lead activities, and follow up the targeted content or language while students respond to the lead and complete the exercises. On the other hand, some kinds of materials are learner-centered base where teachers become a classroom consultant or

facilitator and response to the lead and questions of students while students take initiation of the communication, discussion, and responsibility of the follow up session. A shift from teacher-centered-based materials to learner-centered based materials is a challenge. However, it can be made possible by:

1. designing a less solid lesson plan or structured materials; teachers should leave room for students to do more searching;
2. aiming for a task which is designed for both knowledge and skills; the task should bring out students' ability to gather information, sort out the information, and use the information analytically; and
3. involving a digital device such as smart phones or tablets that are ready to connect to information available with different genres and substance; teachers should incorporate classroom materials with a design where students have a chance to formulate their knowledge and language through authentic materials available.

Hino (2012) confirmed that materials for today's language classrooms are not textbooks but authentic materials, which are TV news and electronic newspapers. They contribute a variety of linguistic norms and cultural values. Also, on the plus side the TV news and electronic newspaper are real-time. By receiving information from different source, students will learn how to think, compare, weigh, and criticize the information. One aspect of this selection is the issue of moderation. The proposition of structured and unstructured materials, the balance of knowledge given and knowledge constructed, and the controlled, guided, and free use of the digital devices allowed in the language classroom are involved. By carefully blending these elements into the English language lesson plans, the skills can subtly be promoted. While students are engaging in information gathering, data sorting,

comparing, contrasting, summarizing, critical thinking and analytic skills are developed.

III. English Language Teaching in Thai Context

There are two broad categories of English language teaching syllabuses: the synthetic syllabus and the analytic syllabus. The synthetic syllabus targets on discrete linguistic items, such as points of grammar, lexical items, and functions. Learners will utilize the learned items in communication situations later. However, the analytic syllabus is a noninterventionist, experiential approach which aims to immerse learners in real-life communication. This type promotes learners' growth and self-realization (White, 1988 cited in Beglar and Hunt, 2002). Several studies have revealed that English classrooms in Thailand are based on grammar translation approach. Grammar translation was thought of as something that transferred knowledge from teacher to students concretely. It can be stated that English language teaching in Thai context emphasizes form over meaning. Discrete linguistic items, such as points of grammar, lexical items, and functions are usually taught in class. English language teaching in Thai context, however, focuses very little on communication or a communicative-oriented approach to learn the language- negotiating for meaning. According to Wiriyachitra, 2001 English language teaching focused on university entrance examinations which demanded a tutorial teaching and learning style; lacked challenging lessons because of a large-sized classroom with mixed-ability students; and with a one-lesson-fits-all policy the teaching failed to motivate and bring out active learners. Therefore, it was almost impossible for the students to discuss the content and the language with the teacher and among themselves. However, in this decade, the focus has been moving forward to student-centered, analytical learning instead of

rote learning, technology skill, and how to work together. Communicative approach with an emphasis on listening and speaking is one of the main approaches. Collaborative, task-based, and problem-based learning are also applied in English language teaching in Thai context. This reveals that English language teaching in the 21st century of the Thai context also concerns 4Cs in developing language skills in line with soft skills. Changes cannot be made overnight. Many teachers are confident when they have solid structured lesson plans and/or worksheets in hands. Many teachers believe that students learn when they are taught the language directly, neither from group discussion nor communication. The challenge is to make the teachers aware that through group works and tasks with an appropriate design of the digital device in the classroom, students can construct their own content and language knowledge, and at the same time they acquire the skills and this establishes life-long skills with which students can search for more knowledge outside the classroom. Communication in the classroom does not restrict to teacher-student

based approaches anymore. Communication genres in the 21st century have engaged student to student type together with online environment e.g. email, blogs, twitter and Line in supplementary with traditional or offline environment e.g. report writing and Learning logs. The learning outcome should also be shifted from quizzes or examinations to a completion of tasks, info-gram and/or oral presentations. Therefore, it is time for Thai teachers to envisage an English classroom in which students construct their own language knowledge.

IV. From Fundamental Considerations to Applications

This section emphasizes on how to shape the end product- the efficient students who can use the English language to communicate and gain language knowledge, and likewise the skills. One example applied to any reading class is a summarizing task which includes question-writing activity to promote 4 Cs.

A flowchart of how a task-based reading lesson unfolds follows.

Step	Tasks	Skills enhanced
Pre-Task	T introduces a text and activates schema for the topic. T elicits questions about the text. T and Ss discuss the main ideas and the details of the text. T and Ss extract vocabulary. Ss look up for any vocabulary they do not know, and discusses the meaning and the story. T asks Ss to summarize the text in their own language.	Reading Analyzing Searching for meaning
During Task	Ss are assigned in teams. In group. Ss read a NEW text on exploration and discovery in textbook. Ss discuss the text by asking questions to each other. Ss look up for any vocabulary they do not know. Ss gather main ideas and supporting details. Ss transfer them in their own language. Ss present the summary to class. While listening, class takes notes and completes a table given out by T. Ss compare notes and discuss if they agree on the main ideas and if the details from each group is too much or too little.	Reading/Writing Collaborating Communicating Critical thinking Creativity Speaking/Listening

Step	Tasks	Skills enhanced
Post-Task	T and Ss analyzes the table. T elicits errors of language. T asks Ss to vote for the best presentation.	Communicating Critical thinking

As can be seen from the flowchart above, teacher leads a lot at the pre-post task stages; however, during the task the teacher plays role of a facilitator while the students participate in the task actively. By going through these task steps, it would prove that the students really understand the targeted text and involve. Skills needed could be enhanced. Also, both form and meaning of language would be discussed by the students.

V: Summary

This paper has discussed 21st century skills and fundamental consideration in English language teaching in Thai context to suggest how the basic English classroom approaches, roles of teachers, and materials as well as material selection can be integrated to promote the skills of the 21st century. One aim is to equip students with skills of the 21st century and life-long skills. The other aim is

to help English teachers in Thailand adjust their teaching approaches with the realization that students have come with multi-level of knowledge and skills and that classroom in this century cannot shun digital devices whereby they complement learning. Turning passive students into active ones is goal.

VI. Concluding remarks

English classroom is not an isolated grammar-based class; however, it is a vessel to promote the skills. Therefore, when designing a lesson; teachers should take into account of many factors. Most importantly, the selective course design should promote skills; teachers should be aware of the educational organic growth in students. Good teaching approaches for the 21st century should support knowledge construction through communication, collaboration, and tasks.

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