

Enhancing English Skills for International Market Access: A Case Study of Pga K'nyau Textile Entrepreneurs in Lamphun Province

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Abstract

This research aimed to improve the English language proficiency of handwoven textile entrepreneurs from the Pga K'nyau group in Lamphun Province, enabling them to access international markets. The study used the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach as an intervention. A mixed-methods design was employed, incorporating both quantitative and qualitative data. The target group comprised 30 entrepreneurs, and data were collected through interviews, questionnaires, and pre- and post-tests. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and paired-sample t-test, while qualitative data were validated through member checking. Three tailored lesson plans were designed to enhance participants' vocabulary, sentence construction, and online business communication skills. Statistical analysis revealed a significant improvement in English proficiency, with the post-test scores showing an average increase of 5.90 points compared to the pre-test. Over 90% of participants met the minimum proficiency benchmark of 50%. Qualitative data indicated a strong need for ongoing development in listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills, particularly for international trade purposes. Overall, the CLT approach was found to be effective in increasing participants' confidence and ability to use English in real-world business contexts. The findings suggest that integrating language teaching with practical business activities can help entrepreneurs expand into global markets. This study provides a model for other ethnic and rural groups to enhance their business prospects through targeted English language education. Future research should explore the applicability of this approach in other sectors and regions.

Keywords: Language Proficiency Enhancement; English Communication for Entrepreneur;
English for International Business; Communicative Language Teaching

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Background and Significance of the Research Problem

English is widely recognized as a global language and a common medium that allows people from diverse linguistic backgrounds to communicate for a variety of purposes. (Bayyurt et al., 2019; Si, 2019). In today's globalized economy, proficiency in English has become essential for international communication (Crystal, 2003), especially businesses seeking to expand beyond local markets, particularly in sectors that rely on international communication, trade, and collaboration. English serves as the primary medium for business negotiations, marketing, and online transactions, making it crucial for entrepreneurs who wish to reach a broader audience. The growing importance of e-commerce and digital marketing further emphasizes the need for English language skills, as online platforms often cater to global customers.

For handwoven textile entrepreneurs in Thailand, particularly those from ethnic minority groups such as the Pga K'nyau, mastering English presents a significant opportunity for expanding their market reach. Traditionally, these entrepreneurs have operated within local economies, selling products to domestic buyers or relying on intermediaries. However, with the rise of digital marketplaces, there is potential for these businesses to directly engage with international customers, provided they possess the necessary language skills (Richards & Rodgers, 2001).

The Pga K'nyau group, also known as the Karen people, has a rich tradition of handwoven textile production, characterized by unique designs and traditional techniques. Despite the high quality and cultural significance of these products, limited English proficiency has often been a barrier to international trade (Royal Project Foundation, 2012). Previous studies have shown that improving English communication skills can significantly enhance entrepreneurs' ability to engage in global markets, negotiate prices, and manage customer relationships (Larsen-Freeman, 2003).

This research aims to address this gap by developing and implementing an English language training program tailored specifically to the needs of Pga K'nyau handwoven textile entrepreneurs. The program is based on the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) Approach, which emphasizes practical language use in real-world contexts. By focusing on business communication skills, including vocabulary related to product descriptions, negotiations, and online sales, this study seeks to enhance the capacity of these entrepreneurs to engage with international customers directly and effectively (Esmail, 2015). For example, Pga K'nyau entrepreneurs regularly participate in national trade fairs each year. These events attract both domestic and international clients, which provide the entrepreneurs with opportunities to use English in showcasing their handwoven textile products. Moreover, they also engage in price negotiations using English as the medium of communication.

The importance of English as a lingua franca in ASEAN countries, including Thailand (Kirkpatrick, 2010), further underscores the relevance of this research. The ASEAN Charter mandates English as the working language of the region, making it even more critical for local entrepreneurs to be proficient in the language to fully participate in regional and global markets (ASEAN, 2008). Through targeted language training, this research hopes to empower Pga K'nyau entrepreneurs to leverage their cultural heritage and craftsmanship for greater economic benefit.

The field trip survey to the village and unstructured interviews with the handwoven textile entrepreneurs highlight the necessity of implementing an appropriate English language teaching intervention. This ensured that the instructional design was contextually relevant and aligned with the learners' needs.

Research Objectives

The objectives of this research are as follows:

- 1) To analyze the current English language proficiency of handwoven textile entrepreneurs from the Pga K'nyau group in Lamphun Province, identifying the specific areas of communication that require development for successful participation in international markets.
- 2) To implement a tailored English language teaching program based on the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach, designed to improve the business communication skills of Pga K'nyau entrepreneurs, with a focus on vocabulary, negotiations, and online interactions.
- 3) To investigate the effects of the tailored teaching program and examine the attitudes of the Pga K'nyau entrepreneurs towards the program

Scope of Research

This study focuses on the English language development of Pga K'nyau handwoven textile entrepreneurs in Lamphun Province, Thailand. It specifically addresses their communication challenges in international trade, including business vocabulary, negotiation, and online communication. The research involves designing and implementing a short-term English instructional program based on the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach. The scope is limited to adult entrepreneurs currently engaged in textile production and sales. It does not cover general English proficiency or long-term language acquisition.

Theoretical Framework

1. Relevant Teaching Approaches

The fundamental challenge in selecting an appropriate pedagogical framework for Karen handwoven textile entrepreneurial centers on accommodating learner heterogeneity while delivering immediately applicable communicative competence. The study's decision to adopt Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) over English for Specific Purposes (ESP) and Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) reflects a careful analysis of contextual constraints and learner needs.

CLT emerges as the most appropriate choice because it prioritizes communicative competence through meaningful interaction without requiring homogeneous learner backgrounds. Rooted in Hymes' (1972) conception of communicative competence and later refined by Canale and Swain's (1980) four-component model encompassing grammatical, sociolinguistic, discourse, and strategic competencies, CLT emphasizes real-world communication over structural accuracy (Richards & Rodgers, 2014). This approach proves particularly suitable for diverse learner groups where participants possess unequal educational foundations and varied English exposure levels.

ESP, while highly effective in specialized contexts, demands relatively homogeneous baseline knowledge among learners (Dudley-Evans & St John, 1998). The approach focuses on domain-specific discourse and assumes shared professional backgrounds that enable specialized vocabulary and register development. For the entrepreneurs with dramatically different literacy levels and formal education experiences, ESP's requirements for uniform foundational competence would exclude significant portions of the target population, contradicting inclusive pedagogical principles.

Besides, Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) presents an engaging pedagogical approach that could be adapted for teaching entrepreneurship-related content. However, it may not be suitable for the present study, as the participating entrepreneurs have limited time due to their work commitments. CLIL requires extended instructional time, given that both content and language are taught simultaneously. Additionally, effective implementation of CLIL demands specialized teacher training and access to appropriate resources. Another challenge lies in the varying levels of language proficiency among the entrepreneurs, which further complicates its application in this context.

Last but not least, TBLT's emphasis on authentic task completion through structured three-phase instruction (pre-task, task cycle, post-task) requires substantial learner autonomy and linguistic resources (Ellis, 2003; Nunan, 2004). While TBLT effectively promotes meaningful language use through goal-oriented activities that mirror real-world situations, its implementation

demands extensive institutional support, time allocation, and prior linguistic exposure that exceeded the entrepreneurs' available resources. The approach's cognitive and organizational demands would likely overwhelm learners with limited formal educational experience.

Therefore, CLT's flexibility accommodates the different nature of the participants while providing immediate functional value for business communication. The approach's emphasis on learner-centered activities and meaningful interaction allows participants with varying proficiency levels to engage collaboratively in authentic communicative scenarios such as product introductions, customer negotiations, and cultural heritage narration. This scaffolding approach supports whole-class progress despite individual differences, creating an inclusive learning environment that addresses the social dimension of language acquisition (Canale, 1983).

The pedagogical decision reflects sound theoretical grounding in communicative competence theory, which emphasizes appropriateness and effectiveness over purely structural accuracy (Bachman, 1990; Bachman & Palmer, 1996). By prioritizing fluency development through authentic interaction, CLT enables entrepreneurs to develop strategic competence for managing communication breakdowns (Canale & Swain, 1980) while building confidence in cross-cultural business encounters. This approach aligns with the immediate practical needs of textile entrepreneurs who must engage international customers without extensive preparatory language study.

It is argued that CLT is uniquely positioned to bridge linguistic inequalities while fostering economic empowerment through communicative skill development (Celce-Murcia, 2007). Unlike ESP's specialization requirements or TBLT's structural demands, CLT provides the pedagogical flexibility necessary for addressing diverse learner profiles while maintaining focus on functional communication competence essential for entrepreneurial success in international markets.

1. The Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) Approach

The Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach has become a widely accepted method for teaching languages, particularly English, in both academic and business contexts. Unlike traditional language teaching methods that focus on grammar and translation, CLT emphasizes real-life communication and practical language use (Richards & Rodgers, 2001).

Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) is considered one of the most effective and modern approaches to teaching English as a foreign or second language, gaining significant attention from linguists and researchers. This paper discusses how CLT has made language learning more interactive, referencing various studies that have examined its impact. Additionally, it outlines both the advantages and disadvantages of implementing CLT. The paper concludes by summarizing findings based on the literature review (Thamarana, 2015).

In a classroom setting, interaction plays an important role in the success of English language teaching and learning, facilitating the exchange of ideas, feelings, and opinions between teachers and students. For teachers, maintaining strong interaction with students is essential, requiring the use of effective strategies and approaches. Many teachers today favor a student-centered approach over a teacher-centered one, believing it fosters better interaction. The Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) method is highlighted as a key approach in encouraging this student engagement (Eisenring & Margana, 2019).

The goal of CLT is to develop learners' communicative competence, enabling them to effectively interact in a variety of situations, both formal and informal. This approach is particularly suited for business communication, as it helps learners navigate conversations, negotiations, and transactions that are central to global trade (Larsen-Freeman, 2003).

For the Pga K'nyau handwoven textile entrepreneurs, this approach is especially relevant, as they need to interact with international customers in real-time, either through digital platforms or in direct communication. CLT focuses on the ability to convey meaning, making it a practical method for teaching language in a business environment where vocabulary and phrases related to sales, pricing, and customer service are crucial (Esmail, 2015). The emphasis on listening, speaking, reading, and writing within business scenarios provides a comprehensive framework that addresses the entrepreneurs' specific needs to help them improve using English, hopefully in global business contexts.

2. English as a Global Language in Business

English is recognized as the dominant language of international business, diplomacy, and global communication (Crystal, 2003). In the ASEAN region, where multiple languages are spoken, English serves as a lingua franca, facilitating communication between people from different linguistic backgrounds (Kirkpatrick, 2010). This makes it essential for entrepreneurs, particularly those from minority groups like the Pga K'nyau, to develop English proficiency to participate in international markets. The rise of e-commerce platforms such as Amazon, Etsy, and Alibaba further underscores the importance of English in global trade (Kemp, 2019).

Research has shown that English proficiency can significantly impact an entrepreneur's ability to expand into foreign markets. Moreover, businesses with stronger language skills are more likely to succeed in exporting products, negotiating contracts, and building relationships with international partners (Seidlhofer, 2011). This research aligns with the broader understanding of English as a critical skill for economic empowerment, particularly for small-scale entrepreneurs

in developing regions (Graddol, 2006). With today's digital platforms, the local entrepreneurs have an opportunity to market their products, using their language proficiency as a more powerful tool to attract customers.

3. Digital Platforms and International Market Integration

With the growth of online marketplaces and digital platforms, language skills have become even more important for entrepreneurs. Language competence is an important resource in international business because it facilitates communication, knowledge acquisition, relationship building, and participation in global markets (Tenzer et al., 2017). For the Pga K'nyau entrepreneurs, establishing an online presence is critical for accessing global customers, especially given the increasing demand for unique, handmade products.

As digital platforms increasingly facilitate international interactions, English often serves as a lingua franca among users from diverse linguistic backgrounds, which makes effective communication an important aspect of online engagement (Seidlhofer, 2011; Kemp, 2019). The integration of these digital tools with English language skills enables entrepreneurs to bypass traditional trade barriers and reach international consumers directly (Chen & Wellman, 2009).

4. Prior Applications in the Thai Context

Several studies have explored the development of English language skills among rural and ethnic minority entrepreneurs. For instance, Pipak (2012) examined how communicative language teaching activities could enhance listening and speaking skills in English for secondary students in Thailand. Her findings showed that learners who participated in communicative activities demonstrated significant improvement in their ability to use English in real-life situations, suggesting that similar methods could be applied to adult learners in a business context.

Likewise, Chanapai (2018) conducted a study on Development of listening and speaking skills in English of grade 9 students using the communicative language teaching approach, finding that a tailored approach that incorporates business vocabulary and scenario-based learning led to marked improvements in participants' English proficiency. This is especially relevant for the Pga K'nyau group, as their business model relies on effective communication with international buyers.

In addition, Meunchong (2023) conducted qualitative research to explore the barriers and needs related to English language use among homestay entrepreneurs in Baan Saliang Haeng 3, Khao Kho District, Phetchabun province, Thailand. The study involved 15 homestay owners selected through purposive sampling, all of whom met the Thai homestay standard evaluation. Using participant observation and in-depth interviews, the research found two key issues:

(1) barriers to effective English communication with international visitors, and (2) the need for English skills development. The main barrier is the limited educational background of the homestay owners, most of whom have only completed primary or secondary school and do not use English regularly. Results show that they lack basic English vocabulary and sentence construction skills. In terms of their needs, they expressed a desire for bilingual (Thai-English) learning materials, including booklets with essential phrases related to greetings, room details, and tour itineraries, which they can use for self-study.

Last but not least, Nomnian (2014) explored the English language needs of raft service entrepreneurs in Kanchanaburi, Thailand, who cater to international tourists. Based on focus group discussions with 30 entrepreneurs, the study identified three key needs: improving speaking skills, learning English and other languages, and promoting English proficiency development. The entrepreneurs emphasized fluency over accuracy due to frequent verbal interactions with non-native English-speaking tourists, particularly from China and Myanmar. The study highlighted the importance of adult language learning to enhance English skills and improve the quality of Thailand's tourism industry within the ASEAN Economic Community context.

According to Chanapai (2018), focusing on practical, scenario-based language instruction can lead to significant improvements in English language proficiency, thereby enhancing the economic prospects of rural entrepreneurs (Pipak, 2012; Chanapai, 2018). The present research builds on this body of literature by applying the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach to the specific context of handwoven textile entrepreneurs in Lamphun Province, with the goal of helping them integrate into international markets.

5. Gap in the Literature

In spite of the growing recognition of English as a crucial tool for international business and the proven benefits of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) in developing communicative competence among diverse learner groups, limited research has applied this approach specifically to adult, rural entrepreneurs. Previous studies in Thailand have demonstrated that scenario-based, communicative instruction can improve English proficiency in sectors such as tourism and small-scale commerce. However, few have focused on ethnic minority artisans like the Pga K'nyau handwoven textile entrepreneurs, who face distinct linguistic, educational, and economic barriers. Existing frameworks such as English for Specific Purposes (ESP) and Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) are often unsuitable due to their cognitive and structural demands. While CLT has been identified as an inclusive and flexible alternative, there remains a gap in understanding how this method can be effectively adapted to meet the immediate business communication needs of these entrepreneurs within digital and global marketplaces.

Research Methodology

This study employed a mixed-methods approach, integrating both quantitative and qualitative research methods to develop the English language proficiency of handwoven textile entrepreneurs from the Pga K'nyau group in Lamphun Province. Mixed-methods research allows for a comprehensive understanding of both statistical outcomes and participants' experiences, making it ideal for assessing language learning and business communication skills (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2017).

1. Population and Sample

The target population for this study includes 30 handwoven textile entrepreneurs from the Pga K'nyau group in Ban Hong District, Lamphun Province. Purposive sampling was used to select participants based on their involvement in handwoven textile production and their interest in developing English skills for international trade (Patton, 2002). This sampling method ensures that participants are highly relevant to the study's objectives and represent the group most likely to benefit from English language development.

2. Research Design

This research is designed as an intervention study, with pre-test and post-test assessments to measure the impact of a tailored English language training program. The intervention focuses on improving participants' English proficiency using the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) Approach, which emphasizes real-world language use in business contexts (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). The study employed both quantitative and qualitative approaches to evaluate the effectiveness of the intervention.

3. Data Collection Tools

Data were collected using a variety of tools to capture both quantitative and qualitative information. To evaluate the effectiveness of the training program, several assessment methods were employed. Firstly, the researcher conducted a preliminary needs analysis regarding the participants' English language development. This was achieved through informal conversations and observations during fieldwork. General demographic information such as age, gender, and educational background was also collected. The findings from these interactions indicated that most participants possessed a basic level of English proficiency, sufficient for everyday communication.

The pre-test was administered to assess the participants' baseline proficiency levels and to provide a valid point of comparison for subsequent evaluations. Moreover, the post-test served as a summative measure to determine the extent of learning outcomes and instructional effectiveness. To ensure the reliability and validity of the research instruments, three experts in the fields of applied linguistics, English language teaching, and educational measurement were invited

to review, evaluate, and validate both pre- and post- tests. Their feedback was systematically incorporated to strengthen the credibility and strength of the study. A pilot test was also conducted with a small group of learners who were not part of the main study, allowing necessary revisions to be made prior to official implementation.

Additionally, qualitative data were collected through semi-structured interviews, which helped identify participants' specific language needs and challenges (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2018) related to international business communication. The participants were assured that the given data will be used only for the research purposes and that they were presented anonymously. Then, they are coded using content analysis and were checked by the member checking technique. Finally, a satisfaction survey, using a 5-point Likert scale, was administered at the program's conclusion to gauge participants' satisfaction and the perceived usefulness of the training for their business operations (Bryman, 2016).

4. Lesson Plan Development

The Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) framework served as the pedagogical foundation for designing instructional activities that emphasized real-world use. CLT prioritizes meaningful communication and learner interaction over memorization or grammatical drills, (Richards & Rodgers, 2001), making it well-suited to the diverse needs of the Pga K'nyau textile entrepreneurs.

The researchers employed a series of lessons sequenced from simple to more complex, which had been reviewed and refined by three experts in English Language Teaching. These lessons were evaluated as appropriate for the learners, considering their limited available time. All three lessons were contextually relevant to the learners' environment as entrepreneurs, which facilitated both learning and assessment. The lessons primarily focused on listening and speaking skills, which are fundamental for effective communication and ready to use in their contexts.

In the first lesson, *Business Vocabulary*, related key terms were introduced through interactive group activities. Instead of passively memorizing terms, learners worked in groups to match vocabulary with product images and collaboratively describe items in English. This approach aligned with CLT's principle of using language for authentic purposes, which allows participants to build lexical knowledge.

The second lesson, *Language Patterns for Online Shopping*, applied CLT principles by focusing on functional language. Participants had an opportunity to use English in to sell products in their posts. This activity emphasized creativity and real-life like situations. By prioritizing interaction over accuracy, the lesson reflected CLT's learner-centered orientation and encouraged confidence-building in realistic business situations (Canale & Swain, 1980).

The third lesson, Setting Up an Online Shop, integrated CLT with digital literacy by teaching participants how to describe products, respond to inquiries, and manage sales in English on e-commerce platforms (Kemp, 2019; Tenzer et al., 2017). Participants engaged in activities, such as creating product listings and simulating customer service dialogues. These tasks mirrored real-life communicative demands and fostered learners' ability to convey meaning clearly and appropriately. This practical application of CLT helped bridge the gap between language learning and economic empowerment through digital market integration.

Although only three lessons were delivered, the researchers conducted follow-up monitoring over a three-month period to assess the practical application of the knowledge gained. The researcher followed up with the participants to determine whether they had utilized what they had learned. The results indicated that the learners were able to apply their knowledge effectively, particularly during a trade fair that took place after the training had concluded.

5. Data Analysis

Quantitative data from the pre-test and post-test were analyzed using statistical software, specifically Excel (Field, 2018). The key metrics used for analysis included Mean and Standard Deviation to assess overall performance and the Percentage of Improvement in post-test scores to measure the effectiveness of the training intervention (Field, 2018).

Qualitative data from interviews and focus groups were analyzed through content analysis, identifying recurring themes related to participants' language needs and challenges (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). The satisfaction survey data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, providing insights into participants' perceptions of the training (Bryman, 2016).

6. Ethical Considerations

Ethical approval for this research was obtained from the relevant academic committee. All participants were informed of the purpose of the study, and their consent was obtained before data collection (Cohen et al., 2018). Confidentiality and anonymity were maintained throughout the research process, following ethical guidelines for educational research.

7. Timeline

The study was conducted over a period of 3 months. The data collection and intervention were completed within the first months, while the remaining time was allocated for data analysis and reporting.

Results

1. Results from Data Analysis

This study focused on improving the English language skills of handwoven textile entrepreneurs from the Pga K'nyau group, enabling them to access international markets. The analysis included learner demographics, an evaluation of lesson plans based on the Communicative Approach, pre- and post-test score comparisons, and a needs assessment for further English skills development. Data were collected from 30 participants, with the following results:

1.1 Learner Demographics:

The study included 30 handwoven textile entrepreneurs from Ban Hong District, Lamphun Province. Prior to the training, their English proficiency was generally at a basic level, limited to simple everyday communication. The learner demographic data were used to inform the lesson design, ensuring alignment with the diverse backgrounds of the participants. Despite their varied profiles, all learners shared a common goal: to use English for product presentation and negotiation purposes.

1.2 Evaluation of Lesson Plans:

The experts evaluated the lesson plans using the Communicative Approach, assessing the appropriateness of the teaching objectives, content relevance, and activity effectiveness. The results indicated that the lesson plans were highly suitable for enhancing English communication in a business context. Experts agreed that the lessons were well-structured and met the specific needs of the participants.

1.3. Pre- and Post-Test Scores:

A comparison of pre- and post-test scores revealed a substantial improvement in the participants' English proficiency. The post-test scores were significantly higher than the pre-test scores, reflecting the success of the training. Over 90% of the participants achieved the minimum benchmark of 50%, as outlined by the Ministry of Education's standards.

1.4 Needs Assessment for English Skills Development:

The results of the needs assessment questionnaire showed a strong demand for further development of English business communication skills, particularly in reading and writing for online marketing and sales. The participants expressed a high interest in continuing their English education to further improve their ability to communicate in international markets.

These findings demonstrate that the Communicative Approach is highly effective in enhancing the English language skills of Pga K'nyau handwoven textile entrepreneurs, enabling them to engage more confidently with international customers and expand their business globally.

Table 1 Amount and Percentage of Training Participants by Gender

Gender	Amount	Percentage
Male	6	20
Female	24	80
Total	30	100

The table shows that the majority of the training participants were female, with 24 participants, accounting for 80%. The remaining 6 participants were male, making up 20%.

Table 2 Amount and Percentage of Training Participants by Age Group

Age	Amount	Percentage
20-29	6	20.00
30-39	9	30.00
40-49	7	23.33
50 Years old and above	8	26.67
Total	30	100.00

From the table, it is also evident that most participants were aged between 30-39 years, with 9 participants, representing 30%. This was followed by participants aged 50 and above, with 8 participants, accounting for 26.67%. Those aged between 40-49 years accounted for 7 participants (23.33%), while the youngest group, aged 20-29 years, included 6 participants, representing 20%.

Table 3 Amount and Percentage of Training Participants by Educational Level

Educational Level	Amount	Percentage
Primary School (Grade 6)	8	26.67
Lower Secondary School (Grade 9)	9	30.00
Upper Secondary School (Grade 12)	12	40.00
Bachelor's Degree	1	3.33
Total	30	100.00

From the table, it can be seen that the majority of the participants had completed upper secondary school, with 12 participants, accounting for 40%. The second largest group had completed lower secondary school, with 9 participants (30%), followed by 8 participants who had finished primary school (26.67%). Only 1 participant had a bachelor's degree, representing 3.33%.

2. Results of the Evaluation of the Learning Management Plans Using the Communicative Approach

The learning management plans developed for this study were evaluated by experts in language education and business communication, focusing on content relevance, instructional design, and alignment with the learners' needs. The overall assessment was highly positive, with the plans receiving ratings between 4.6 and 5.0 on a 5-point scale.

The experts found the content of the lesson plans, particularly the focus on business vocabulary, negotiation phrases, and e-commerce communication, to be highly relevant to the Pga K'nyau entrepreneurs' needs. The plans effectively addressed the primary challenges faced by the participants, such as describing textile products, negotiating with international customers, and managing online sales in English.

In terms of instructional design, the experts commended the CLT approach, which provided practical, business-related scenarios for participants to practice real-world language use. The step-by-step progression from foundational vocabulary to more complex negotiation activities was deemed appropriate for the learners' proficiency levels.

Additionally, the plans were aligned with the specific business and linguistic contexts of the participants, offering relevant materials that facilitated engagement and applicability.

However, the experts suggested incorporating more listening comprehension activities to further enhance the balance of language skills being taught.

Overall, the learning management plans were rated as highly effective in promoting English language proficiency for business communication. The use of the Communicative Approach was particularly praised for encouraging active learner participation and fostering real-world application, which is critical for entrepreneurs engaging in international markets.

It was found that handwoven textile entrepreneurs still face challenges and have a need for improvement in various aspects of English proficiency. Speaking was identified as the highest priority at 58%, followed by listening at 23%, reading at 10%, and writing at 9%, respectively.

The study results for developing the English proficiency of handwoven textile entrepreneurs from the Pga K'nyau group, enabling them to bring their handwoven products to international markets, show pre- and post-test scores using communicative English teaching activities, as shown in the following table.

Table 4 Mean and Standard Deviation of Pre- and Post-Test Scores Using Communicative English Teaching Activities for Developing English Proficiency of Handwoven Textile Entrepreneurs of the Pga K’nyau Group

Test	Mean Score	Standard Deviation (SD)	t-test
Pre-Test (out of 20)	7.57	2.71	9.56
Post-Test (out of 20)	13.47	2.02	

This table shows the significant improvement in English proficiency scores of the participants, as indicated by the increase in the mean score from the pre-test (7.57) to the post-test (13.47) from the total score of 20. The pre- and post-tests consisted of three components: (1) vocabulary, (2) phrases used in buying and selling, and (3) expressions related to product descriptions and negotiations.

The standard deviation (SD) decreased from 2.71 in the pre-test to 2.02 in the post-test, indicating that the scores became more consistent after the learning activities.

The results of the t-test ($t = 9.56$), and the p-value ($p < .0001$) indicated a statistically significant improvement in participants’ performance from the pre-test to the post-test. The mean difference of 5.90 points was accompanied by a 95% confidence interval ranging from 4.66 to 7.14, suggesting that the intervention consistently produced a substantial gain in scores. Importantly, because the entire confidence interval lies above zero, the results provide strong evidence that the instructional treatment was effective in enhancing the participants’ outcomes.

Table 5 Satisfaction of the participants towards the training

No.	Item Description	Mean ($\bar{x}$)	SD	Level of Satisfaction
1	This project helps increase knowledge.	4.73	0.45	Highest
2	This project is beneficial for the career.	4.47	0.57	High
3	This project creates opportunities to increase income through online channels.	4.53	0.57	Highest
4	This project is suitable for the participants' needs.	4.53	0.57	Highest
5	This project helps recognize the value of using English to generate income.	4.57	0.57	Highest
6	This project encourages participant engagement.	4.63	0.56	Highest
7	The knowledge from this project can be applied.	4.43	0.57	High

Table 5 Satisfaction of the participants towards the training (Continued)

No.	Item Description	Mean ($\bar{x}$)	SD	Level of Satisfaction
8	The instructors are knowledgeable.	4.60	0.62	Highest
9	The instructors effectively deliver the content.	4.60	0.56	Highest
10	Overall satisfaction with the program.	4.7	0.43	Highest

The table shows that the responses regarding satisfaction with the English proficiency development project for handwoven textile entrepreneurs targeting international markets among the Pga K'nyau group in Lamphun Province received average scores ranging from 4.51 to 5.0, indicating the highest level of satisfaction for all items. The exception is item 2, where the project's benefit to the participants' careers received an average score of 4.47, reflecting a high level of satisfaction.

Discussion

The research yielded several key insights regarding the effectiveness of the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach in improving the English proficiency of handwoven textile entrepreneurs from the Pga K'nyau group. The following points emerged as central to the discussion;

1. Lesson Plans and Activities

The three lesson plans were crucial in meeting the specific business communication needs of the participants. The first plan focused on English vocabulary related to the handwoven textile industry, enabling participants to better describe their products and communicate more clearly with international customers. Tailored vocabulary instruction, as supported by Coyle et al. (2010), is essential for rapid and relevant language acquisition in specialized fields. The second plan introduced conversation practice centered on product introductions, negotiations, and sales transactions, with pair activities simulating real-world scenarios. This aligns with Ellis' (2003) findings that role-playing enhances meaningful communication and engagement. The third plan integrated lessons on opening online shops, combining vocabulary and conversational skills to help participants navigate digital business contexts. This holistic approach, supported by Chen and Wellman (2009), empowered participants to access broader markets, enhancing their economic opportunities.

2. Participants' Feedback

Interviews conducted after the training revealed that participants greatly benefited from the communicative activities. After analyzing the feedback, the credibility of the data was verified

by the member checking techniques. The structure of the lessons, which progressively moved from simple to complex tasks, allowed learners to gradually build their confidence and proficiency. One participant expressed that *“Before this training, I was afraid to speak English with tourists. Now I can introduce my products confidently and explain how they are made (Interviewee 1).”* The real-life scenarios used in the activities also resonated with participants, as they could immediately see the relevance of their learning to their everyday business interactions. This finding is consistent with research by Richards and Rodgers (2001), who advocate for a learner-centered approach where the focus is on practical language use.

Additionally, participants highlighted the importance of real-world applicability, a factor identified in other studies as a key motivator for adult learners. According to Norton (2013), adult learners are more likely to engage with and retain language skills when they see a clear connection between learning and personal or professional goals. The results from this study support this, as the participants’ enthusiasm increased as they recognized how the language skills could directly benefit their businesses. Another participant claimed that *“I learned useful phrases for negotiation and describing my handwoven products. This will help me earn more and communicate better with buyers (Interviewee 2).”* Moreover, Interviewee 3 said *“I can now explain the cultural meaning of our designs in English, which makes customers more interested in our products.”*

Finally, participants indicated their ongoing learning needs, suggesting directions for future training: *“I would like more sessions on writing emails and taking orders in English, because speaking is easier than writing for me (Interviewee 4).”* The other added *“We need more opportunities to practice with real customers, not only in the classroom, so that we can improve faster (Interviewee 5).”*

3. Learning Environment

An unexpected but valuable observation was the participants’ strong engagement and curiosity in learning English. Many participants frequently asked about specific vocabulary related to their industry, reflecting their desire to improve communication with international customers. This eagerness to learn, combined with the structured activities, created a productive and dynamic learning environment. The positive learning atmosphere may be attributed to the CLT approach, which encourages active participation and interaction (Larsen-Freeman, 2003).

Previous research also underscores the importance of learner engagement in language acquisition. Studies by Littlewood (2004) suggest that when learners are actively involved in the learning process

through communicative activities, they are more likely to retain new vocabulary and language structures. The high level of participant involvement in this study aligns with these findings and demonstrates that the CLT approach can effectively foster engagement in a business-oriented language program.

4. Comparisons with Other Studies

The findings of this research are largely consistent with other studies on the effectiveness of communicative language teaching. For example, a study by Esmail (2015) demonstrated that the CLT approach is particularly effective in improving speaking and listening skills in real-world contexts, especially in business environments. Similarly, Coskun (2011) found that teachers who implemented CLT in their classrooms saw greater learner autonomy and participation, which aligns with the positive engagement observed in this study.

However, some studies have pointed out potential limitations of the CLT approach, particularly in more formal language settings. For instance, Li (1998) argued that CLT may be less effective in contexts where learners require more structured grammar instruction. This study, however, found that the integration of vocabulary, conversation practice, and digital literacy through communicative activities was highly effective in meeting the specific needs of the entrepreneurs, suggesting that CLT can be adapted successfully in business-oriented programs.

Conclusion

This study aimed to improve the English language skills of 30 handwoven textile entrepreneurs from the Pga K'nyau group in Ban Hong District, Lamphun Province, with a focus on accessing international markets. Using the Communicative Language Teaching Approach, three lesson plans were developed, targeting vocabulary, product descriptions, negotiations, and online business communication. The data analysis covered demographics, lesson plan evaluation, pre- and post-test comparisons, and a needs assessment for further English skills.

Results showed significant improvements in English proficiency, with over 90% of participants exceeding the minimum benchmark in post-tests. The lesson plans were rated highly by experts for their relevance and effectiveness in business communication, and participants demonstrated increased confidence and engagement. A needs assessment revealed a strong demand for continued English education, particularly in reading and writing for online sales and marketing.

Overall, the study concluded that the Communicative Approach was highly effective in enhancing the participants' English skills, allowing them to engage more confidently with international customers and expand their businesses globally. These findings highlight the potential of tailored language education in empowering rural entrepreneurs economically.

Limitations

Contextual and methodological factors may affect the generalizability of its findings. First, the sample size was limited to 30 Pga K'nyau handwoven textile entrepreneurs in a single district, which restricts the extent to which the results can be applied to broader populations or other cultural and occupational groups. Second, while the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach proved effective for enhancing business-related English skills, the study focused narrowly on vocabulary, conversational practice, and digital literacy relevant to textile entrepreneurship. This specificity, while beneficial for participants, may not address broader language competencies such as grammar accuracy or academic English, which could be important in different contexts. Third, the duration of the training was relatively short, and therefore long-term retention and continued application of the acquired language skills were not measured. Finally, reliance on self-reported feedback may introduce bias, as participants might have overstated positive outcomes due to motivation or researcher influence.

Suggestions

To build on the success of the initial training, it is recommended that the entrepreneurs receive continued English language instruction to further improve their business communication skills. This ongoing training should expand beyond speaking and listening to also emphasize reading and writing, particularly in the context of online marketing and customer service. By developing a more comprehensive set of language skills, the entrepreneurs will be better equipped to navigate the complexities of international business communication.

Given the increasing reliance on digital platforms for selling products, future training should integrate digital literacy skills alongside English language learning. This would allow the entrepreneurs to more effectively manage e-commerce practices and handle online communications in English, helping them to thrive in a global marketplace. Such training could focus on areas like setting up and maintaining online shops, responding to customer inquiries, and navigating international sales processes.

The success of these teaching methods and lesson plans presents an opportunity to expand the program to other rural or ethnic communities engaged in similar entrepreneurial activities. By adapting the approach to meet the specific needs of different groups, more entrepreneurs can benefit from improved English proficiency and digital skills, helping them to integrate into international markets and boost economic development in their communities.

To ensure the entrepreneurs continue to succeed, it is essential to provide ongoing support and conduct periodic assessments of their progress. This would help identify any emerging needs

and offer tailored assistance as they continue to develop their business communication skills. Such support could take the form of follow-up training sessions, mentorship, or access to resources that address the evolving demands of their entrepreneurial activities.

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