Research Article

English for Communication: A Documentary Study on Development Approaches

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Abstract: This study aims to investigate approaches for developing English communication skills in the Thai educational context using documentary research methodology. Data were collected and analyzed from academic documents, research articles, and secondary sources related to English for communication teaching and learning. The study compiled data from various academic databases between 2019-2024, totaling 85 documents. Data analysis employed content analysis and document synthesis methods. The findings revealed that effective approaches for developing English communication skills comprise five main approaches: 1) Communicative Approach, 2) Digital Technology Integration for Learning, 3) Integrated Skills Learning, 4) Authentic Learning Contexts, and 5) Communicative Assessment. This study provides recommendations for curriculum development and English teaching methods focusing on communication in the Thai context. The research contributes valuable insights for educators, teachers, and policymakers in developing effective curricula and teaching methodologies that emphasize practical communication skills, ultimately enhancing the quality of English language education in Thailand and preparing Thai learners to compete effectively on the global stage.

Keywords: English for communication, documentary study, development approaches, communication skills, English language teaching

1. Introduction

In the era of globalization and technological advancement, English has become a crucial lingua franca for international communication and cross-border business operations. For Thailand, having proficient English language skills is a vital factor in driving the economy and society toward becoming a developed nation. The National Education Policy 2017-2036 emphasizes the importance of developing learners' English language skills at all educational levels, particularly communication skills that can be practically applied in daily life and work contexts. The conceptual approach to English language teaching has shifted from emphasizing grammar and memorization to focusing on authentic language use for communication (Nunan, 2004; Richards, 2006). Developing English communication skills therefore requires diverse approaches and methods to enable learners to use the language effectively and efficiently in real-world situations.

A significant contemporary problem is that most Thai learners still struggle with English communication despite having good knowledge of grammar and vocabulary. The Education First (EF) English Proficiency Index 2023 survey found that Thailand remains in

the "Low Proficiency" category, ranking 64th out of 113 countries worldwide, with speaking and communication skills scoring significantly lower than other areas (Education First, 2023). Research by Wiriyachitra (2002) and Foley (2005) indicates that the main causes stem from traditional teaching systems, lack of opportunities for authentic language practice, and learners' fear of making mistakes. The absence of appropriate teaching approaches aligned with the Thai context prevents learners from developing English communication skills according to established goals and objectives.

The target population affected by this problem includes students and the general public who need to develop English communication skills, particularly in basic and higher education levels, who require strong communication foundations to prepare for further education and future careers. Educational institutions need clear and effective approaches for developing such skills. The lack of appropriate approaches and absence of comprehensive knowledge synthesis poses significant obstacles to improving the quality of English language teaching in the country. This documentary study is therefore essential for collecting and analyzing various approaches that have been researched and tested for effectiveness in developing English communication skills.

From the background and problems mentioned above, this study is important for creating knowledge and understanding about approaches for developing English communication skills suitable for the Thai educational context. Knowledge synthesis from documentary research will help educators, teachers, and policymakers have comprehensive and reliable information for developing effective curricula and teaching methods. The study results will benefit the enhancement of English language teaching quality in Thailand and serve as guidelines for developing Thai people's communication skills to compete effectively on the global stage with greater efficiency and success.

2. Objective

1) To study and compile approaches for developing English communication skills from academic documents and related research

2) To study and compile approaches for developing English communication skills from academic documents and related research

3) To propose appropriate approaches for developing English communication skills suitable for application in the Thai educational system

3. Research Methodology

This study employs qualitative research methodology using documentary research to collect, analyze, and synthesize data from various secondary sources related to developing English communication skills. Documentary research is an appropriate research method for studying issues requiring in-depth understanding and data synthesis from multiple sources, particularly in examining trends, developments, and best practices in various academic fields. Using documentary research methodology allows researchers to access diverse and comprehensive data, enabling comparison and analysis of concepts from multiple scholars and experts in depth and detail.

3.1 Population and Sample

The population for this study consists of academic documents, research articles, books, academic journals, theses, and research reports related to developing English communication skills, both domestic and international, published between 2019-2024 to obtain current data reflecting contemporary development trends. The five-year timeframe is appropriate for studying trends and changes in English language teaching, particularly in an era of rapid

technological and methodological transformations.

The sample used in this study consists of 85 documents selected through purposive sampling according to specified criteria: 1) documents directly related to developing English communication skills, 2) published between 2019-2024, 3) research or academic articles that underwent peer review, 4) clear source identification and references, 5) accessible full-text documents, and 6) written in Thai or English. The number of documents was determined based on data saturation principles, where additional documents no longer generate significantly new knowledge or perspectives.

3.2 Research Instrument

The research instruments consist of: 1) Document Analysis Form for systematically collecting and storing data from each document, including general document information, authors, publication year, sources, objectives, methodology, findings, and recommendations; 2) Content Analysis Matrix for categorizing and classifying data according to study topics using both deductive and inductive coding; and 3) Data Synthesis Framework for comparing, analyzing relationships, and drawing conclusions from the collected data.

Instrument development and quality verification involved content validity examination by three experts in qualitative research and English language teaching to assess appropriateness, clarity, and comprehensiveness. Expert evaluation results showed Index of Item-Objective Congruence (IOC) values between 0.67-1.00, which meets acceptable criteria (IOC $\geq$ 0.5). The instruments were then pilot-tested with 10 sample documents to verify understanding and make improvements before actual implementation.

3.3 Collection of Data

Data collection was conducted between January-March 2024, searching and compiling documents from various domestic and international academic databases including: 1) Office of the Higher Education Commission (OHEC) database, 2) Thai Digital Collection (TDC), 3) Google Scholar, 4) ERIC (Education Resources Information Center), 5) ProQuest Education, 6) Taylor & Francis Online, and 7) ScienceDirect. Relevant keywords were used such as "English communication skills," "Communicative Language Teaching," "English for communication," "Language learning approaches," etc. The search employed both simple and advanced search methods, including Boolean operators (AND, OR, NOT) to obtain the most relevant results.

Additional document searches were conducted through bibliographic references from found documents (snowball sampling) to maximize relevant document collection. Document verification and screening occurred in multiple stages: 1) title and abstract examination, 2) full-text reading and quality assessment, 3) re-verification of selection criteria, and 4) data storage in research databases. For data reliability, triangulation verification was employed using diverse data sources, comparing data from multiple sources, and having experts verify processes and analysis results.

3.4 Data Analysis

Data analysis employed content analysis methodology in three main stages: 1) Data Preparation through careful reading of all documents, recording data in forms, and organizing data into preliminary categories; 2) Data Reduction through identifying important data, creating codes, and grouping data by themes; and 3) Data Display and conclusion creation through tables, diagrams, and analysis descriptions. Content analysis in this study used both inductive approaches allowing themes and concepts to emerge from data, and deductive approaches using existing conceptual frameworks for analysis.

The analysis process began with careful reading of all documents to understand overall data, followed by initial coding to identify important themes and create preliminary codes. Next was focused coding to group similar codes and create major categories. Finally, theoretical coding established relationships between categories and created conceptual frameworks. To enhance analysis reliability, expert review and multiple researcher validation were conducted when research teams were involved.

4. Result

From studying 85 documents, effective approaches for developing English communication skills can be grouped into five main approaches, each with distinct characteristics and strong supporting research evidence. Data analysis shows these approaches do not work in isolation but can be effectively combined, with each approach having different emphases and implementation methods while sharing the common goal of developing English language use capabilities for real-world communication.

Approach 1: Communicative Approach

Document analysis revealed 28 studies (32.9%) emphasizing communicative approach methodology. This approach focuses on using language for authentic communication rather than learning language structures, incorporating diverse learning activities such as pair work, group work, role play, and simulation. Studies by Nunan (2004) and Richards (2006) demonstrate that learners receiving instruction through this approach show significantly increased confidence in language use. Additionally, research in the Thai context by Choomthong (2014) found that communicative activities help reduce Thai students' anxiety in using English and significantly increase learning motivation.

Approach 2: Digital Technology Integration

The study found 22 documents (25.9%) emphasizing digital technology integration in developing English communication skills. This approach encompasses mobile applications, online learning platforms, educational games, virtual reality (VR), and artificial intelligence (AI) to support learning. Research by Godwin-Jones (2019) demonstrates that digital technology enables learners to access diverse learning resources, practice skills continuously, and receive immediate feedback. Thai research by Lai & Zheng (2018) found that mobile English learning applications help increase practice time and improve Thai learners' pronunciation skills effectively. The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated technology adoption in education, with Moorhouse (2020) showing that online English teaching can maintain learning quality with appropriate design.

Approach 3: Integrated Skills Approach

Document analysis revealed 18 studies (21.2%) emphasizing integrated English skills development. This approach focuses on developing listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills simultaneously through activities connecting various skills, such as listening-then-summarizing, reading-then-presenting, or writing-then-discussing. Research by Oxford (2001) shows that integrated skills learning helps learners see connections between different skills and use language more naturally. Hinkel (2006) research indicates that separating skill instruction may prevent learners from effectively applying skills in real situations. Asian context studies by Kam (2004) found that project-based learning integrating various skills clearly enhances learners' confidence and communication abilities.

Approach 4: Authentic Learning Contexts

The study found 12 documents (14.1%) emphasizing authentic situation use in teaching and learning. This approach focuses on incorporating real-life situations from daily life, work, or education as learning contexts, such as using news, articles, videos, or authentic media as learning materials, organizing field trips, inviting expert speakers, or simulating real work

situations. Research by Guariento & Morley (2001) demonstrates that authentic materials help learners see natural language use and prepare for real-world language application. Research by Mishan (2005) found that learners exposed to authentic materials have higher learning motivation and better understanding of target language culture compared to those using conventional teaching materials.

Approach 5: Communicative Assessment

Document analysis revealed 5 studies (5.9%) emphasizing communicative assessment system development. This approach focuses on assessing real communication language use capabilities rather than evaluating grammar or vocabulary knowledge, using diverse assessment methods such as performance assessment, holistic assessment, self-assessment, and peer assessment. Research by Bachman & Palmer (2010) shows that communication-focused assessment helps learners emphasize developing authentic language use skills rather than memorization. Brown (2004) research found that diverse assessment methods provide more comprehensive and accurate information about learners' capabilities.

Table 1: Summary of English Communication Skills Development Approaches

Approach	Number of Documents	Percentage	Main Focus
Communicative Approach	28	32.9	Authentic language use for communication
Digital Technology Integration	22	25.9	Learning through digital media
Integrated Skills Approach	18	21.2	Developing all four skills comprehensively
Authentic Learning Contexts	12	14.1	Using real contexts for learning
Communicative Assessment	5	5.9	Assessing authentic communication skills
Total	85	100.0	

Beyond the five main approaches above, the study identified important supporting factors for developing English communication skills: 1) developing learner confidence through creating safe and conducive learning environments, 2) increasing learning motivation through interesting content and activities relevant to learners' lives, 3) providing constructive and timely feedback to help learners continuously improve and develop skills, and 4) creating opportunities for English use outside classrooms through club activities, student exchanges, or activities with native speakers.

5. Discussion

The results of this study align with global trends in English language teaching development, shifting from emphasizing language structure knowledge to focusing on authentic language use for communication. As Savignon (2017) stated, 21st-century language teaching must focus on enabling learners to use language as a communication tool, exchange ideas, and build relationships with others. The communicative approach finding, which received the most research support in this study, reflects acceptance of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) principles emphasizing learner participation and meaningful language use in context. Littlewood (2013) research shows that CLT implementation in Asian countries, including Thailand, requires adaptation to learners' learning culture by starting with clearly structured activities and gradually increasing learner autonomy.

Digital technology receiving second-highest attention in this study aligns with societal and educational changes in the digital era, particularly following COVID-19 pandemic effects that made online education a significant component of educational systems. Research by Chapelle & Sauro (2017) indicates that technology is not merely a teaching aid but can significantly transform human learning and communication methods. However, Hubbard (2013) research warns that technology use in teaching must have appropriate learning theory foundations, not merely adopting technology for modernity. This study's results reflect researchers' and practitioners' awareness of technology's potential in developing English communication skills, but further research is needed regarding long-term effectiveness and appropriate adaptation to Thai contexts.

The integrated skills learning approach found in this study aligns with Hinkel's (2006) concept proposing that separating language skills instruction may not reflect real-world language use requiring multiple skills simultaneously. Oxford (2001) research demonstrates that skills integration helps learners see connections between various skills and develop balanced capabilities. However, actual classroom practice in Thailand may still have limitations due to assessment systems and curricula that separate skills. As Wongkitrungrueng & Assavajumroon (2020) indicate challenges in adapting Thai educational systems to align with modern language teaching approaches.

Authentic learning contexts found in this study reflect the need for English language teaching to relate to learners' real lives, aligning with Authentic Learning concepts emphasizing learning in meaningful contexts connected to learners' real experiences. Gilmore (2007) research shows that authentic materials help learners prepare for real-world language use and increase learning motivation. However, Tatsuki (2006) research warns that authentic material selection must consider difficulty levels and appropriateness for learners to avoid discouragement or learning stress.

Communicative assessment found to have the least research in this study may reflect challenges in changing existing assessment systems. McNamara (2000) research indicates that assessing communication skills is more complex than evaluating grammar or vocabulary knowledge, requiring consideration of multiple factors such as language use appropriateness, fluency, and communication effectiveness. Brown & Abeywickrama (2019) suggest that communication skills assessment should use diverse methods and provide constructive feedback to learners, requiring teacher knowledge and skills development in assessment areas.

6. Conclusion

This documentary study demonstrates that effective approaches for developing English communication skills comprise five main approaches: communicative approach, digital technology integration for learning, integrated skills learning, authentic learning contexts, and communicative assessment. Each approach has different emphases and implementation methods while sharing the common goal of developing effective English language use capabilities for real-world communication. Applying these approaches in Thai educational contexts must consider various factors such as Thai learners' learning culture, teacher readiness, teaching and learning resources, and existing assessment systems. This study provides important information for developing curricula and English teaching methods emphasizing communication in Thailand.
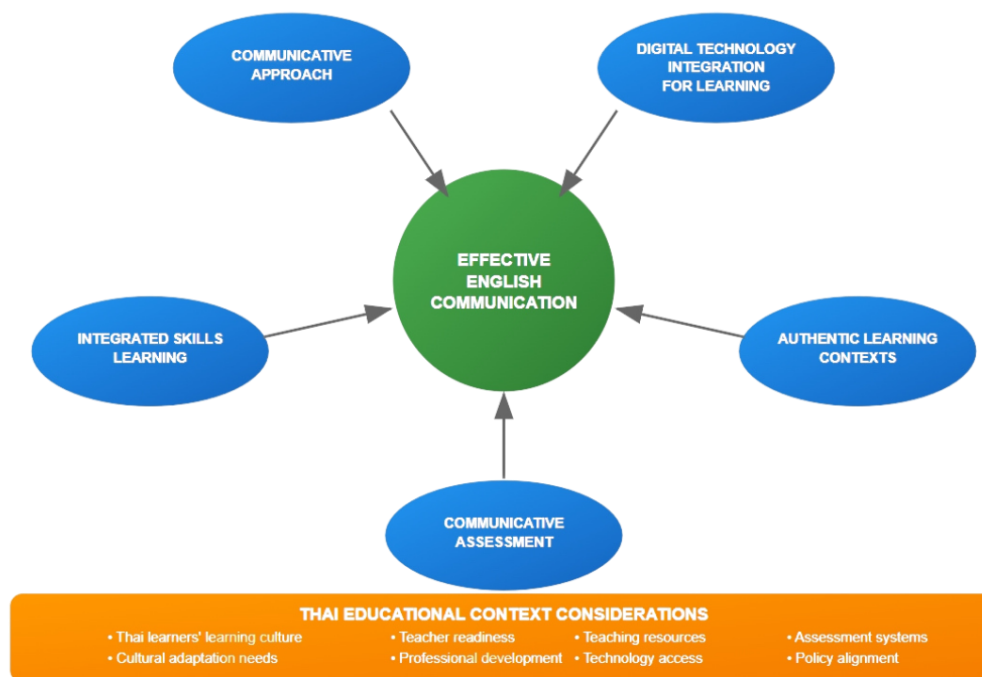
Figure 1: Model for Developing English Communication Skills in Thai Context

7. Recommendation

Based on study results, researchers offer the following recommendations. First, educational institutions should develop curricula and teaching activities integrating all five approaches while emphasizing authentic language use for communication and meaningful context learning. Second, teacher development should focus on digital technology use and communicative activity design, including communication-focused assessment. Third, assessment systems should align with communication skills development goals by reducing memorization-focused evaluation and increasing performance-based assessment. Fourth, environments conducive to English use outside classrooms should be created through English club activities, native speaker involvement, or English use in institutional activities.

For research application, educational institution administrators can use study data as guidelines for curriculum development and teaching management planning. Teachers can adapt various approaches for designing diverse and effective learning activities. Academics and educators can use study results as foundations for further research and development, particularly studying approach effectiveness in specific Thai contexts. Educational policies can utilize this information for determining national English teaching development directions.

For future research recommendations, experimental studies should test approach effectiveness in Thai educational contexts, comparative studies of single versus integrated approach effectiveness, studies of teacher and learner opinions and experiences with various approaches, and studies of factors affecting successful approach implementation in Thai educational institutions. Additionally, research should focus on developing tools and methods for assessing English communication skills appropriate for Thai contexts and studying approaches for developing teachers' knowledge and skills in effectively using modern teaching methods.

Acknowledgement

Declarations:

Conflict of interest: The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

Ethics of Human Research (if any) : Not applicable as this is a documentary study.

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