

Chapter 3

Methodology

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the methodology employed in the data collection for this research is discussed. The descriptions concern:

1. The setting and the participants,
2. Instruments employed in collecting the data,
3. Pilot study,
4. Data collection and
5. Data analysis.

The data collection took three months from June to August 2011, and the purpose of collecting the data was to investigate the following research questions:

1. What Communicative-Language-Teaching classroom factors motivate students from Myanmar to greater communications in oral interaction in the English learning classroom?
2. How can teachers encourage learners to participate in oral interactions?

The study method and instruments employed here are expected to draw conclusions about how teachers can assist second language students to participate more in oral interaction in the Communicative-Language-Teaching Classroom with the final aim of achieving their learning objectives. To answer the research questions completed by participants from Beam Education Foundation, this study was conducted using both quantitative and qualitative methods. According to Nunan (1989 cited in Burns, 1999), techniques for collecting action research data are generally qualitative in nature as it reflects the primary purpose to investigate practice critically. Brindley (1990 cited in Burns, 1999), is of the opinion that quantitative methods will be necessary to complement the findings of collaborative or individual action research.

In order to triangulate data, observation, questionnaires and interviews will be used. Thus several instruments will be employed to ensure reliability. First, the main

approach for data collection is classroom observation which is to find out (1) teacher-student interaction, (2) student-student interaction. Then questionnaires will be used to find out (3) students' motivation. At last interviews will be used to find out (4) teacher's facilitation and (5) Materials used in the classroom.

To gain access to the respondents, the Academic Coordinator of Beam Education Foundation was asked for permission. The teachers were willing to be cooperative in being observed, answering questionnaires and interviews for this research as they responded with enthusiasm and smiling faces. When the students were requested, most of them were keen to help in this study but a few were not motivated and did not offer any significant response to enquiries on this research. Consequent upon this discovery, though all the students will be observed and asked questions, only those seeming to be motivated will be interviewed.

3.1.1 Setting and Participants

Data collection was conducted in two General English classes, namely first year Bridging course at Beam Education Foundation in Chiang Mai, Thailand. The participants were a native English teacher, 2 Myanmar teachers, and 24 students of ethnic groupings from Myanmar who are currently doing their first semester. The objective of this course is to help students upgrade their English level so that they will be able to continue university education in Thailand or to get good jobs, helping them bridge the gap between high school and the kind of English they need in finding jobs and in pursuing higher education. The program is delivered in three-month terms. Students come to these two English classes two days a week, one and a half hours, per day.

3.2 Instruments

3.2.1 Classroom Observation

During classroom observation, 2 classes at Beam Education Foundation were observed. Both were first year classes but lessons usually took place at two different periods of the day: morning and evening (since students were working and studying at the same time). They came to study when they had free time. Each class was observed 4 times. Each observation lasted for one and a half hours. In total, the observation was conducted in two classes for 12 hours during May and June. By using Systematic Sampling, a population of 24 students was observed. One lesson observation of each class was conducted by using video recording which included audio recording as well. Burns, (1999) says they are a technique for capturing in detail, naturalistic interactions and verbatim utterances and very valuable sources of accurate information on patterns of interactional behavior. The aim of using audio / video recording is to check back

the detail of interactions of teacher and students. It was a non-participant observation

An observation checklist used for this observation was adapted from Appendix 4, checklist for evaluating a teacher's lesson (from Brown 1994 cited in Richards, 2001). Based on Brown's idea of observing other teachers, a teacher's personal characteristics and teacher-student interaction, this checklist was developed to seek information about the way the teachers taught, what the teacher-student interaction, student-student interaction, and to see the types of teachers' questions and responses, students' questions and responses, student's motivation, and teacher's facilitation. (A sample of the checklist is provided in Appendix A)

By doing observation, we can have direct access to the social phenomena under consideration. We can actually observe and record students' behaviour in that situation. This, in principle at least, helps to avoid the wide range of problems associated with self-report. Burns (1999) points out that video recording also vividly shows detail of the students' accurate information on interactional behavior and it is very helpful for the researchers to reflect on and analyze it. It could be happen that students are talking more than one person and the observer might miss to record the interaction. By seeing the video recording, the observer could see all the interactions and recount details of the seconds and minutes. It also provides reliable evidence of teacher and students' behavior. On the other hand, observation is time consuming and we cannot sit and observe the teacher and students' behavior for the whole term. Moreover, we cannot make video recording everyday as it will disturb students' concentration and invade their privacy to some extent. Just taking video for a lesson could emphasize their learning behavior and they could also view the video recording of classroom atmosphere and improve their learning by seeing their weaknesses in the video.

3.2.2 Questionnaires

The purpose of the questionnaires directed at the students was to get information about:

- Students' attitudes towards oral interactions (student-student interaction and student-teacher interaction) in the classroom
- Students' attitudes towards teacher's contribution and classroom activities
- Students' attitudes towards materials used in the classroom
- Activities that motivate Students to participate more in oral interaction

Stages of construction and developing the questionnaire

1. After observation, questions that arose were constructed as questionnaires

2. Reviewing the research questions and literature, to construct these questions

3. Writing the questions

4. Considering how to analyze the results

5. Proof-reading

6. Translating to Burmese language

7. Do piloting with three students from the group to find weaknesses

The questionnaires were on a five-point Likert scale. Based on the idea of attitudes to learning English (Dornyei, 2009), the questionnaires were designed concerning their attitude towards learning English, classroom activities and interactions. They were translated into Burmese language and given in two languages: English and Burmese. The five-point Likert scales used for questions were as follows:

1 = **Never**

2 = **Rarely**

3 = **Sometimes**

4 = **Usually**

5 = **Always**

The participants were asked to read each statement and check what they personally felt or thought. (Please see Appendix B for the questionnaires)

For the collection of responses to a questionnaire item (about students' attitudes towards oral interaction), the use of classroom materials and teacher's contribution were asked. Efforts were made to get input from individuals but students may not always provide accurate or complete information or they might answer in ways at variance with what is socially desirable. In an interview situation we can receive detail responses from students as it is a face-to-face activity. However, only five students from the whole group will be interviewed on behalf of the whole population of (24 students).

3.2.3 Interviews

A semi-structured interview was conducted for both teachers and students at the end of the course to investigate questions arising after observing the classes and collecting questionnaire data. Three teachers were interviewed individually. Five students were done as focus group discussion and then, to get more detailed information, two

individuals were interviewed again. It was audio-recorded while notes were taken as well. The purpose of the interviews for the teachers and students is to get information about:

- Teachers' and students' attitudes towards oral interactions
- Teachers' and students' attitudes towards the materials
- Students' attitudes towards the teacher's contribution and classroom activities
- Activities that motivate students to participate more in oral interaction
- Teachers' contribution to the learners' participation

Designing interview questions for pilot study

1. Based on the results from questionnaires, questions needing more clarification were set as interview questions
2. Proof-reading
3. Translating to Burmese language for Burmese teachers
4. Piloting with a teacher from the School.

A semi-structured interview was used in this research. For two Myanmar teachers and students from Myanmar to understand the questions well and for their convenience, the questions were translated to Burmese language and they were also interviewed in Burmese. All interviews were then transcribed, translated into English and analyzed. The native English teacher received all questions in English only.

In terms of action research, we can also use student diaries and journals for data collection to get student feedback. Burns (1999) points out that, students' diaries and journals can provide "valuable insights into classroom interactions and the students' responses to their learning experiences." However, the participants in this research were migrant students who worked half of the day and studied a few hours a day. It was difficult for them to find time for studying. When they arrived back home they had to do home work again. Thus, it seemed that they would not be motivated nor has time to assist in writing journal or diaries for this research. Thus, student diaries and journals would not be included in this study though they are often used popular tasks in the communicative teaching approach.

Table 1. Instruments for data collection

Instruments	1	2	3	4	5
Observation	Teacher-Student interaction	Student-Student interaction			
Questionnaires			Students' Motivation		
Interviews				Teacher's facilitation	Materials used

3.3 Pilot Study

In doing actual research, Seliger and Shohamy (1989:184) suggest that "it is important to examine the quality of the procedure before it is administered in the actual research," as it makes it possible to insert changes and revisions to the instruments if necessary. As reliability and validity are the two most important criteria for assuring the quality of the data collection procedures, a pilot study was conducted for each instrument in this research.

Classroom Observation

First of all, piloting of the instrument (of observation with video) was done. On the first day, the observer stayed at the right front corner of the class in order to move the video to capture both the teacher and students. When the video was taken, it was found that the video could not be moved as one wanted. Four students who sat in a U-shape classroom arrangement could not be captured since the observer was at the top left axis of the U shape. The observer could not move also as the class was small and it would disturb them if the observer walked around the classroom. Another problem was, the teacher also walked to the back to show a map which was posted on the back wall of the classroom. When it happened, it was impossible to run after her any time she was out of the video for a while. Actually, there were many student interactional activities when the teacher discussed the map but unfortunately, the observer could not video-record as it was almost impossible to do so. After all, the observer realized that one needed more than a camera: one at the right side, one at the left side and a moving camera to focus when the teacher moved or students had interaction. All the students did not talk at the same time and it was important to focus and initiate video recording whenever they interacted with the teacher or have pair work or group work. It was also necessary for the observer to go into the classroom before the class would start so that we could put the cameras on the right spots as it was not easy to move around the class and walk among the students, while teaching was in progress.

Questionnaires

In order to avoid ambiguities or misunderstanding of the questions, questionnaires were piloted with three students from the class before they were given to all students. All the three students understood the questions and could answer well. Thus, the questionnaires were given to all the students in both classes.

Interviews

To be sure of the comprehensibility of the interview questions, a Myanmar teacher from the school was first interviewed. As she could understand and answer all the semi-structured questions, there was no change to the original questions.

3.4 Data Collection

Data collection was in three parts. The first investigations of observation took place in two classes of 24 students, with 14 students and 11 students in each class. Observation notes were taken and one lesson was video-taped during lesson observation. Then the second part of the questionnaires was distributed to all students but only 19 were returned. Afterwards, individual interviews were conducted with three of the observed teachers and five of the observed students from both classes.

3.4.1 Classroom observation

It was done for 12 hours during May and June and one lesson observation of each class was conducted using video recording to check back the details of teacher-student interactions, and student-student interactions.

Table 2. Classroom Observations carried out

Class	Teacher	Students			Observation		
		Male	Female	Total no.	Frequency	weeks	Total Hours
Morning class	Female	7	7	14	4 times	1.5	6
Evening class	Female	2	9	11	4 times	1.5	6
Total Hours of Observation							12

3.4.2 Questionnaires

The questionnaires were given to all 24 students in the first and second weeks of June 2011 after doing observation. After piloting the questionnaires with three students, data collection was conducted by giving these questionnaires to the rest of the students who were observed.

Details of Questionnaires Administered

By the time the questionnaires were distributed, the students did not come to the classes regularly since it was rainy season. Only between five and eight students came to each class while questionnaires were conducted. Thus, questionnaires were given, three times in order to get response from all the participants. In the first week, 12 answers were collected from both classes but it was not enough for analysis as this research planned to prepare interview questions from the results of the questionnaires. At first the plan was to conduct questionnaires with 24 students in just a day as both morning class and evening class were held on the same day. However, the real situation was different from the expectation: only 19 questionnaires were returned.

3.4.3 Interviews

A semi-structured interview was conducted for two Myanmar teachers and five students individually in Burmese language and a native English teacher (in English) at the end of the course to investigate questions arising after observing the classes and collecting questionnaire data. While conducting interview, it took 20 minutes for each person. The teachers were very enthusiastic to contribute their ideas and experiences of teaching in the English classrooms of Beam Education Foundation. Interviewing three teachers lasted one hour. They were interviewed separately by booking appointments. Concerning students' interview, five students were focused at the same time. It took 45 minutes for the group of students. A few did not understand the questions clearly though they were asked in Burmese language. The questions were explained repeatedly until they understood and gave the proper answer relating to the questions. They were also keen to share their English learning experiences and their belief, attitude towards learning English with the interviewer. The interview was recorded and notes were taken.

3.5 Limitations of the Study

In this study, the data collection was conducted during one semester for three months. Since three instruments were used, observation period was rather short as this is a research for investigating students' oral interaction for a certain period of time. It could have been more extensive if the observation had been conducted for three semesters, all year round, and the progress of students from Myanmar studying in the

Communicative-Language-Teaching classroom, tracked as a case study. Moreover, this study focused on migrant students from Myanmar studying at Beam Education Foundation. The information and results might not be the same if the research as done in another migrant school in Chiang Mai, since the setting, students' education background, teachers, teaching techniques are likely to be slightly different. Thus, the findings in this research might be applicable or useful for students from Myanmar learning English only in some cases as the conditions of teaching English classrooms could not be the same, everywhere.

3.6 Data Analysis

The qualitative data for observation will be analyzed and the audio taped data of the interview will be transcribed, translated and analyzed. The quantitative analysis involves scoring data of students' attitudes as expressed in the questionnaires by using frequency analysis.

3.6.1 Observation

While analyzing the observation data, the video tape record was viewed three times in sequence for the research purpose. The most interactive episodes were transcribed (See Appendix D) and analyzed for indications of students' motivation to participate orally.

3.6.2 Interview

Interview data was transcribed in full and then translated into English. (See Appendix F). Part of the transcription relating to the research questions were used in data analysis under different headings.

3.6.3 Questionnaires

The questionnaires were given to all (24) students during June first week and second weeks of June after doing observation. After piloting questionnaires with three students, data collection was conducted by giving questionnaires to the rest of the students who were observed.

The questionnaires were scored and put in the table with different headings: activities which students liked, activities that students disliked and students' attitude towards learning English which were related to the research questions (See Appendix E).