

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

Summary of the Study

The objectives of this study were (1) to compare the critical thinking skills of students who studied Business English I course at Chiangrai Commercial School through the cooperative learning method and the traditional group work method. (2) to survey the opinions of students who are taught by the cooperative learning method toward cooperative learning method after using this learning model. The subjects of this study were 94 second-year students, Higher Vocational level, who studied Business English I at Chiangrai Commercial School in Chiangrai. The instruments used in this study were: a pre-test which was designed to test the students' ability in learning and critical thinking skills, before taking the lesson and the post-test after taking the lesson. The tests were short answer test items. The questionnaire was Likert 5 point rating scale. The questionnaire was used to find out students' opinion on cooperation in the cooperative learning method.

When the critical thinking skills of both groups were compared, it found that the mean of critical thinking scores of students who were taught through the cooperative learning method was higher than that of the traditional group work method. The students' opinions toward cooperation in the cooperative learning method was moderately positive and self-evaluation of their learning and thinking ability, after using this model, was positive.

Discussion of Results

The test and the questionnaire results reveal that:

1. The test's results show that after learning both groups for eight weeks, all critical thinking mean scores in the post-test of the students taught by the cooperative learning method (Mean 52.68) were higher than those of the students taught by the traditional group work (Mean 45.15). (See Appendix E) When the three critical thinking skills: analysis, synthesis and evaluation in both groups were compared, all critical thinking skills of the traditional group work students were at the mixed level. The analysis and evaluation skills of the cooperative learning students were in the mixed level and the synthesis skills were in the commendable level. (See table 13 and 14 in Chapter 4) But when each skill was compared, the critical thinking skills at analysis level of the students in both groups had no significant

difference, while the other two critical thinking skills, namely, synthesis and evaluation level of the students in both group are significantly higher at .05 level. This can imply that the eight periods of allocated time of instruction was not adequate in learning the new method. Students need more time to become familiar with the cooperative method and to be actively involved in more practice in thinking critically. In the traditional group work, students also had the chance to discuss in groups, therefore, certain critical thinking skills, such as analysis, can occur.

2. The students' opinions towards cooperative learning after being taught by the cooperative learning method were moderately positive, as revealed by the results of the analysis of all the items of the questionnaire in Appendix H. Regarding to the six main topics, the analysis reveals that the students had a high level of cooperation in social skills (mean 4.37). Furthermore, the study indicates that the students were moderately cooperative in the positive interdependence skills (Mean 4.16), using face to face interaction skills (Mean 4.09), group processing skills. (mean 4.00), and using individual accountability skills (Mean 3.91). In the last topic, the students were asked about their self-evaluation on their learning and thinking ability. Most of them realized the advantages of cooperative learning. They

evaluated their progress at a moderate level. The total mean of this section was 4.12.

The highest mean of the students' opinion was that the group members consulted one another to make the best decision.(Mean 4.60). Second, there were 2 opinions with the same mean (4.58) that is they found that they listened to other people's opinions and accepted others' ideas, even if they did not agree. They found that they were better studying in a group like this than studying in the traditional classroom. The third one was that group members shared materials or resources with others (Mean 4.39). The first and second highest means were in the social skills, this can imply that students have high cooperation in the social skills. The lowest mean of the questionnaire was that the students thought that they did not always give feedback after doing the task for improving the next task (Mean 3.64). It can be interpreted that students in groups did not usually give feedback to others. In the traditional teaching, the teacher will always give feedback to the students, while in the cooperative learning method, students will have a chance to evaluate their work after finishing. Therefore, the teacher should stimulate students to practice giving feedback to each other in class.

The results of the test and questionnaire reveal that the students' learning and critical thinking ability was improved after using the

cooperative learning method and the opinion towards cooperative learning was also positive. According to the results from the post-test, they revealed that after teaching about eight weeks, the critical thinking scores of the students who were taught by the cooperative learning (Mean 52.68) were higher than scores of the students who were taught by the traditional group work in the post- test (Mean 45.15). Therefore, it proves the hypothesis that using the cooperative learning method, to enhance the critical thinking skills in teaching Business English I, is more effective than using the traditional group work method. The difference was significant at $p < .05$ level.

Implication

Some teachers who teach English may think that teaching students who have not mastered English well to think critically is difficult because the students cannot explain their thinking in English clearly. The researcher found that after working in groups, the students, who were taught by the cooperative learning method, could express their reasons better than those who were taught by the traditional group work.

The finding shows that the cooperative learning method could enhance the students' language proficiency, creativity, critical thinking skills and team skills. Johnson & Johnson (1987) state that

using cooperative learning can promote greater competency in critical thinking and working collaboratively with others, and also promote more positive attitudes toward the subject. According to the Thai National Education Act (1999), the education policy plans to stimulate Thai students to have not only proficiency in academic work, but also the crucial skills such as team skills and critical thinking skills. These skills will be used in their education and their real life in the future. At present, the business workplaces are also looking for employees who can be effective team members and leaders and the ones who do not have only the business skills but also the problem solving and critical thinking skills. Therefore, the educators and the instructors should prepare students to use these skills. Thai students definitely need more practice in thinking skills.

The finding also shows that the students' learning and the critical thinking ability was improved after using the cooperative learning method. Mustapha (2002) emphasizes that cooperative learning provides a suitable environment for students to develop their critical thinking skills because they have a chance in discussion and interaction among other group members. It is very necessary for the teachers to have sufficient knowledge in the concept of cooperative learning and critical thinking. Moreover, they should use the cooperative learning method at the beginning of the semester in order

to help students to become familiar with it and can benefit from it in improving the higher level of thinking.

Recommendation

Not only research studies in the English subject but also in other subjects, have discussed that cooperative learning will promote students' higher achievement, greater motivation, greater social skills, and more positive attitudes towards the teacher, and subjects as well as improving their critical thinking skills. Moreover, Hampton and Grudnitski (1996) suggest that cooperative learning may be particularly valuable in helping low achievers. Therefore, the researcher would like to strongly recommend the use of the cooperative learning method, which is one of the learner-centered approaches, to all teachers who wish to increase students' cooperation and critical thinking skills, especially, the college or university teachers who should be concerned more with enhancing these two skills which are very essential for students in furthering their higher education and in seeking their job opportunity.

However, there are also other areas of research which can be further investigated as suggested below:

1. Other methods in teaching might be introduced to see their result on the effectiveness of students' critical thinking skills.

2. The cooperative learning method can be introduced to other groups of students in other levels to improve students' higher thinking skills.
3. Research on using the cooperative learning method should be conducted using students of different ages in various levels of education.
4. Revision of the proto-syllabus should be done to include the critical thinking skills.

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