THE USE OF INTERACTION STRATEGIES TO ENHANCE WILLINGNESS TO COMMUNICATE AMONG THAI EFL STUDENTS

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THE USE OF INTERACTION STRATEGIES TO ENHANCE WILLINGNESS TO COMMUNICATE AMONG THAI EFL STUDENTS

by

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AEC	ASEAN Economic Community
ANCOVA	Analysis of Covariance
ANOVA	Analysis of Variance
ASEAN	Association of South East Asian Nations
CLT	Communicative Language Teaching
EFL	English as a Foreign Language
ELT	English Language Teaching
EMIS	Education Management Information System
ESL	English as a Second Language
IRF	Initiate Respond Feedback
IS	Interaction Strategies
JEPeM	Jawantankuasa Etika Penyelidikan Manusia
L1	First Language
L2	Second Language
M	Mean
MD	Mean Difference
NIETS	National Institute of Educational Testing Service
OHRP	Office of Human Research Protections
O-NET	Ordinary National Education Test
PCK	Pedagogical Content Knowledge
SD	Standard Deviation
SEM	Structural Equation Modelling
SESAO	Secondary Educational Service Area Office

SLA   Second Language Acquisition

SPSS   Statistical Package for the Social Sciences

WTC   Willingness to Communicate

ZPD   Zone of Proximal Development

LIST OF APPENDICES

PENGGUNAAN STRATEGI INTERAKSI BAGI MENINGKATKAN KESANGGUPAN BERKOMUNIKASI DALAM KALANGAN PELAJAR EFL THAILAND

ABSTRAK

Penyelidikan kuasi-eksperimen ini dikendalikan untuk mengkaji (i) keberkesanan strategi berinteraksi yang dikenali ramai sebagai IS bagi mempertingkatkan kesediaan berkomunikasi di kalangan pelajar gred sebelas EFL Thailand, (ii) kesan berinteraksi di antara kaedah mengajar dan tahap kefasihan bahasa Inggeris, serta (iii) pengalaman pelajar mengaplikasi IS dalam kelas. Peserta kajian kumpulan eksperimental dan kawalan yang terdiri daripada pelajar-pelajar dalam dua kelas menyeluruh di sekolah A (jumlah peserta=67) dan sekolah B (jumlah peserta=65) masing-masing telah diajar menggunakan pelan pelajaran IS serta tanpa-IS selama empat minggu. Semua peserta pelajar telah memberikan respons di dalam pra-kajian serta pasca-kajian berskala WTC sebelum dan selepas intervensi kajian. Enam orang peserta pelajar dalam kumpulan eksperimental yang mempunyai tiga tahap kefasihan Bahasa Inggeris telah dipilih untuk ditemubual separa berstruktur mendalam secara berasingan menggunakan kaedah pensampelan tujuan. Analisis kovarian menunjukkan skor purata pasca-ujian WTC para peserta pelajar di dalam kumpulan eksperimental jauh lebih ketara secara statistik berbanding kumpulan kawalan. Analisis kovarian dua hala menunjukkan tiada kesan interaksi yang ketara di antara kaedah mengajar dan tahap kefasihan bahasa Inggeris. Data kualitatif dianalisa secara tematik, di mana pendapat pelajar berkaitan pengalaman IS mereka di dalam kelas telah dikod serta dikelompok untuk membentuk tiga tema utama iaitu (i) membangkitkan reaksi emosional, (ii) mempertingkatkan penyertaan dalam kelas,

serta (iii) mewujudkan peluang pembelajaran. IS disyorkan kepada para pengajar EFL Thailand dengan tujuan mempertingkatkan kesediaan berkomunikasi pelajar kerana ia berupaya memudahkan pembelajaran sesebuah bahasa. Para pengajar wajar menggunakan IS secara kreatif berlandaskan kemahiran dan pengalaman masing-masing, peka terhadap kefasihan bahasa Inggeris pelajar, serta mendorong penggunaan IS secara gabungan dengan persekitaran pembelajaran dalam talian. Dapatan kajian ini menunjukkan implikasi dalam pengajaran kelas bahasa Inggeris berkonteks EFL dan yang setara dengannya. Cadangan untuk kajian kelak ditumpukan pada kesan IS di atas kekerapan dan kualiti penggunaan bahasa sasaran di samping menyelidik perspektif para pengajar dalam menggunakan IS di dalam kelas bahasa.

THE USE OF INTERACTION STRATEGIES TO ENHANCE

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ABSTRACT

This quasi-experimental study was conducted to investigate (i) the effectiveness of interaction strategies known collectively as IS in enhancing willingness to communicate (WTC) of the Thai EFL eleventh-grade students, (ii) the interaction effect between teaching methods and levels of English proficiency, and (iii) the students' experiences in the use of the IS in the classroom. Two intact classes of the student participants in School A (N=67) and School B (N=65) in the experimental and control groups were taught using the IS and non-IS lesson plans respectively for four weeks. All student participants responded to pretest and posttest of WTC scale before and after the intervention. Purposive sampling was used to select six student participants with three levels of English proficiency in the experimental group for an individual semi-structured in-depth interview. The ANCOVA showed that the student participants' WTC posttest mean score in the experimental group was statistically significantly greater than that in the control group. The two-way ANOVA indicated that there was no significant interaction effect between teaching methods and levels of English proficiency. Using thematic analysis to analyse qualitative data, the students' experiences in the IS in the classroom were coded and grouped into three main themes, that is, (i) eliciting emotional reactions, (ii) enhancing classroom participation, and (iii) creating opportunities in learning. The IS is recommended to the Thai EFL teachers to enhance the students' WTC because it could facilitate language learning. The teachers should use the IS creatively based on their skills and teaching experience, be aware of the students' English proficiency, and support the use of the IS by

integrating with an online learning environment. The findings have implications for English classroom instruction in the EFL and similar contexts. Future research is suggested to look into the effects of the IS on frequency and quality of the target language use as well as to investigate the teachers' perspectives of the use of the IS in the language classroom.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1   Introduction

With an increasing demand on effective English communication in the current competitive society, it is not surprising that Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) as one of the highly acclaimed teaching approaches is widely implemented in both ESL- and EFL-context of language classrooms. This demand further highlights the general presumption that the teaching and learning of English aims to encourage language students to communicate. Furthermore, this aim parallels the adage "To talk in order to learn", which is a central idea in teaching English through CLT (Skehan, 1989, p. 48). Both Peng (2007) and Richards (2006) concur that CLT supports students to develop communication skills in using the target language, in which the function of language use in CLT is primarily based on authentic daily social communication situations (Richards, 2006). For these reasons, it is imperative to provide language students with a supportive learning environment whereby they can immerse themselves in the CLT-based learning activities. However, applying CLT in encouraging language students to communicate in the target language requires meaningful interaction in the language classrooms (Allwright, 1984; Choudhury, 2005; Yu, 2008).

Teachers typically use interaction as a crucial pedagogy to conduct lessons in institutional settings. Allwright (1984) considers interaction to be "the fundamental fact of classroom pedagogy – the fact that everything that happens in the classroom happens through a process of live person-to-person interaction" (p. 156). The role of interaction has been widely featured in various landmark studies which explained the

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processes of second and foreign language acquisitions (Wagner, 1996; Zhao, 2013). Consolo (2006), Yu (2008), and Tuan and Nhu (2010) claim that interaction is key to students' language learning development. Likewise Kang (2005) argues that students who are frequently involved in interactive learning have better language development and language acquisition.

Therefore, classroom interaction facilitates students' success in acquiring the target language. Yu (2008) points out that students can develop linguistic knowledge and abilities through classroom interaction and engagement. Yu (2008) also further alludes that the interaction is constructive in creating and enriching opportunities to communicate and use the language between the teacher and students, and/or among the students. Importantly, the interaction can provide students with opportunities and exposure to comprehensible input in linguistic knowledge building (Muho & Kurani, 2011; Zhao, 2013).

Previous studies on Second Language Acquisition (SLA) identified that interaction is instrumental in students' language acquisition both from social and cognitive perspectives. In the social aspect, three hypotheses from the theory of SLA – Input Hypothesis, Interaction Hypothesis and Output Hypothesis, shed light on how interaction relates to students' language acquisition. In the Input Hypothesis, Krashen (1981) notes that interaction is a result of providing a primary source of "Comprehensible Input" which plays a pivotal role in students' language learning. He justifies that learning cannot happen without a supplement of comprehensible input. Furthermore, for him, meaningful interaction is more concerned with comprehension rather than form. Hence, an availability of comprehensible input is imperative for students to acquire the target language through interaction (Mitchell & Myles, 2004).

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In the Interaction Hypothesis, Long (1980) proposes the role of "Negotiation of Meaning" in promoting successful language learning because of linguistic and conversational modifications. He argues that students can have a fuller understanding of comprehensible input if they negotiate the meaning with their teacher and/or peers through interaction. Therefore, students can receive more comprehensible input from interactional adjustment.

In the Output Hypothesis, Swain (1985) emphasises the role of "Language Output" which can improve students' spoken language through interaction. She posits that students' attempt to produce the target language can create opportunities such as to test hypotheses, notice gap from interlanguage, modify output, and reflect language use. By doing so, students are therefore able to produce more accurate target language use and obtain deeper language knowledge.

As described above, the three hypotheses of the SLA theory support interaction in the language classroom that can contribute to students' second language acquisition. Echoing this, Mackey (2002) claims that:

> Second language interaction can facilitate development by providing opportunities for learners to receive comprehensible input and negative feedback, as well as modify their own output, test hypotheses and notice gap in their interlanguage (p. 380).

Another prominent theory explaining the role of interaction in SLA is Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory which focuses on the role of social interaction in language acquisition. Vygotsky's contribution to the theoretical expansion is learners' internalisation of the language in the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD)

through socially mediated interaction between students and teachers' scaffolding and/or their more capable peers.

Apart from the SLA and Vygotsky's sociocultural theory which extensively describe how the interaction supports students' language acquisition, many studies have elucidated the impact of interaction on students' learning development through language learning processes. A cognitive view is also used to explain students' learning processes. The cognitive constructivism theory pioneered by Piaget (1976) explains that students can develop cognitively through interaction. The learning processes often involve students being exposed to comprehensible input, learning to negotiate meaning, and produce language output by interacting with their teacher and/or peers in the language classroom. Each interaction moment contributes to their schema construction through cognitive processes.

The significance of interaction in the language classroom has been studied in various facets. Several issues of classroom interaction are researched using both quantitative and qualitative inquiry methods (Damhuis & Blauw, 2008). Current researchers pay attention to the role of classroom interaction in promoting communicative competence which is considered as students' ultimate goal of language learning. However, it is very challenging for students to achieve communicative competence if they do not have or lack Willingness to Communicate (WTC), a body of research in SLA.

The present study supports the role of interaction in the language classroom as a core foundation in supporting and improving students' willingness to communicate in English. It aligns with Molberg's (2010) claim that the prominence of WTC is initially the result of the role of classroom interaction in language development.

Moreover, MacIntyre, Dönyei, Clément, and Noels (1998) highlight that language students need to be encouraged to seek communication opportunities through practising the target language in authentic situations. In this sense, the crucial goal of language instruction should be to enhance WTC in the language learning process.

The scope of the present study, thus, focuses on the quality and quantity of interaction in the language classroom from the perspective of WTC. The researcher of the study would like to emphasise the role of interaction and the teacher's use of "Interaction Strategies (IS)" in the classroom. The overall aim is to investigate the effectiveness of interaction strategies (IS) in enhancing the students' levels of WTC in English.

1.2   Background of the Study

A common phenomenon in typical language classrooms with different learning contexts often displays language students' reluctance to communicate despite being given the opportunities. Based on MacIntyre et al.'s (1998) justification, "Willingness to Communicate (WTC)" is the key concept that explains why students are willing or unwilling to use the target language for communication. As claimed in the studies of Cao (2011) and Yashima (2002), WTC is considered as an individual difference construct that has gained a considerable interest of researchers in second language acquisition and foreign language acquisition. The premise of WTC was first conceptualised in L1 verbal communication. Later, McCroskey (1985) embarked on WTC in the studies of communication. Fundamentally, WTC emerged from a number of notions in several early studies, for example, reticence (Phillips, 1965), unwillingness to communicate (Burgoon, 1976), predisposition towards verbal

behaviour (Mortensen, Arnston, & Lustig, 1977) as well as communication apprehension and shyness (McCroskey & Richmond, 1982).

The notion of L2 WTC in MacIntyre et al.'s (1998) reconceptualisation suggests that WTC can be viewed from two main perspectives. The first perspective views WTC as a static personality trait in which one exhibits a consistent level of predisposition across different situations (MacIntyre et al., 1998; McCroskey & Richmond, 1987; 1990b). Further expanding on this type of WTC, McCroskey and Baer (1985) postulate that an individual shows tendency to engage in communication only when he/she has an inclination.

Many previous studies have revealed different individual factors affecting L2 WTC. As reviewed from related WTC studies, these factors included (i) perceived communicative competence in the studies of Baker and MacIntyre (2000, 2003), Hashimoto (2002), Cetinkaya (2005), Ghonsooly, Khajavy, and Asadpour (2012), Ghonsooly, Hosseini Fatemi, and Khajavy (2013), Kim (2004), MacIntyre (1994), Knell and Chi (2012), MacIntyre, Baker, Clément, and Conrod (2001), McCroskey and Richmond (1990b), Peng and Woodrow (2010), Yashima (2002), and Yashima, Zenuk-Nishide, and Shimizu (2004), (ii) communication anxiety in the studies of Baker and MacIntyre (2000, 2003), Birjandi and Tabataba'ian (2012), Ghonsooly et al. (2012), Ghonsooly et al. (2013), Hashimoto (2002), Kim (2004), MacIntyre (1994), MacIntyre et al. (2001), MacIntyre et al. (1998), McCroskey and Richmond (1990a), Peng and Woodrow (2010), Yashima (2002), and Yashima et al. (2004), (iii) motivation in the studies of Cetinkaya (2005), Hashimoto (2002), Kim (2004), Knell and Chi (2012), Liu and Park (2012), MacIntyre et al. (2001), MacIntyre and Charos (1996), Peng and Woodrow (2010), Yashima (2002), and Yashima et al. (2004), (iv)

personality in the study of MacIntyre and Charos (1996), (v) attitudes towards the international community in the studies of Yashima (2002), and Yashima et al. (2004), (vi) gender and age in the studies of MacIntyre, Baker, Clément, and Donovan (2002) and Weaver (2004), (vii) prior immersion experience in the study of MacIntyre, Baker, Clément, and Donovan (2003) as well as (viii) self-confidence in the studies of Baker and MacIntyre (2003), MacIntyre (1994), Peng and Woodrow (2010), MacIntyre et al. (2001), and Yashima et al. (2004).

The second perspective views WTC as a situational-based variable. An individual displays a fluctuation in WTC according to different situations and types of interlocutors. The situational WTC has both transient and enduring influence on an individual's WTC (MacIntyre et al., 1998). The definition of WTC in L2 proposed by MacIntyre et al. (1998) as "a readiness to enter into discourse at a particular time with a specific person or persons, using a L2" (p. 547) has been widely cited in numerous studies on WTC. Presently, research on WTC with a focus on situational-based perspective has captured more researchers' attention. These studies generally aim to investigate potential variables affecting WTC and to explain how WTC as a situational variable influences students' language learning.

Studies conducted by Cao (2006) and Kang (2005) indicated that the effect of social contextual factors could change the level of WTC. The empirical evidence revealed that time and context were the two social contextual factors causing fluctuations of WTC in L2. Other social contextual factors include social support (MacIntyre et al., 2001), learning context (Baker & MacIntyre, 2000, 2003), opportunities in L2 communication and topic under discussion (House, 2004), specific class situations and tasks (Weaver, 2004), grade levels (MacIntyre et al., 2002),

frequency and quality of L2 contact (Clément, Baker, & MacIntyre, 2003) as well as classroom environment (Peng & Woodrow, 2010).

Similarly, Cao and Philp's (2006) study showed that WTC was affected by three types of classroom interaction (i.e., whole class, small class, and dyads) with varying conditions (i.e., tasks types, group size, familiarity and interest of topics of discussion, and familiarity with interlocutors). As studies on WTC as a situational-based variable are widely available, researchers such as Kang (2005) attempted to establish a new definition of WTC as a situational construct as shown below:

> An individual's volitional inclination towards actively engaging in the act of communication in a specific situation, which can vary according to interlocutor(s), topic, and conversational context, among other potential situational variables (p. 291).

Likewise, Cao (2014) used a socio-cognitive lens to view L2 WTC and coined the term of situated WTC in a second language classroom as follows:

> A student's observable intention to engage in class communication with other interlocutors. This intention entails fluctuation and dynamism due to variations in its individual, environmental and linguistic antecedents, which interdependently exert facilitative effect on it (p. 810).

Drawing upon different studies in the literature, it can be concluded that WTC plays a dual role in second or foreign language acquisition, that is trait-like personality and situational-based. WTC can also be affected either directly or indirectly by a multiplicity of different types of variables. However, various studies on WTC in different learning contexts seem to point to WTC as a situational-based factor rather than personality trait. In the present study, WTC is viewed as a situational variable which can be changed depending on the teacher's teaching strategies. The focus is on

classroom interaction where the teacher uses the IS in the class to improve students' levels of WTC in English.

1.3   Teaching English for Communication in Thailand Schools

English has become a global language, used as an international medium of communication. In recent years, Thailand, like other nations in the world, has paid more attention to English in formal education. Students in Thai schools are taught English as the first foreign language under the administration of the Ministry of Education of Thailand (2008). English is one of the compulsory subjects in the Basic Education Core Curriculum. Thai EFL students from primary to secondary levels need to study English in schools. The Ministry of Education of Thailand (2008) stipulates that the primary goals of ELT for Thai EFL students emphasise four key aspects, namely, to use English for authentic communication, to relate English with its cultural knowledge, to incorporate English with other different learning subjects and to use English in building a relationship with the society and around the globe.

Within the strand of teaching English for communication, students should be able to exchange and interpret information and express their own ideas, feelings, and justifications. Apart from that, the Ministry of Education of Thailand (2008) expects students to possess basic spoken and written language communication skills and abilities. However, students face challenges to achieve the national education goals. Several Thai researchers in ELT have reported the substandard English proficiency among Thai EFL students (Hengsadeekul, Hengsadeekul, Koul, & Kaewkuekool, 2010; Khemkhien, 2010).

ELT in Thailand has attempted to implement educational policies to enhance the quality of teaching and learning of English. As asserted in Wongsothorn, Hiranburana, and Chinnawongs' (2002) research, an equal balance of the four key English learning skills was incorporated in the revised national English syllabus to improve students' English proficiency in 1960. Despite the revision of the English syllabus to promote the four skills, Thai EFL teachers have persistently stressed grammar, reading, and writing in instruction (Punthumasen, 2007; Wongsothorn et al., 2002). An argument on the appropriateness of the Ordinary National Education Test (O-NET), a national examination used to measure students' abilities in English communication was raised. For instance, the O-NET should not be implemented in national tests since it is impractical to use a multiple choice paper-based format to assess students' abilities in English communication (Pattapong 2010; Sinwongsuwat, 2012). Paradoxically, students with satisfactory scores are typically incompetent to communicate in English. As a replacement, a natural talk with interactive communication is suggested for more valid and reliable assessment which reflects students' authentic communicative competence.

This evidence points to the existing issue of English language testing and assessment in Thailand (Foley, 2005). Weaknesses in the English communication testing system affects Thai English language teachers' teaching practice (Pattapong, 2010). Teaching the language for communication has not been clearly focused in the classroom. Generally, an English teachers' instructional practice is to fulfil the purpose of examination rather than authentic communication. Thus, it is difficult for students to be willing to use and practise the language to ultimately achieve communicative competence.

A number of studies (e.g., Cheng, 2000; Liu, 2005; Tsui, 1996) have indicated that Asian language learners are passive, quiet, shy, and reticent to engage in communication in the class. Supported by the observation in a preliminary study, prior to the present study it was also found that twelfth-grade students rarely used English to communicate in the class. It was assumed that the class had a less interactive orientation because of the teacher's instructional practice. The traditional IRF pattern was mainly used by the teacher to produce an interaction. Kasper (2001) postulated that the classroom that incorporated the IRF structure inhabited students' participation in interaction. As such, the students are prevented from being exposed to the language in the class (Punthumasen, 2007). It was also observed in the preliminary study that the teacher's use of different teaching techniques have the potential to create a classroom with meaningful interaction in English. Four promising teaching strategies used by the teacher stood out. These were (i) questioning techniques (Dalton-Puffer, 2006), (ii) teacher's scaffolding (Allahyar & Nazari, 2012), (iii) time-waiting (Hu, 2004) as well as (iv) turn-taking (Poole, 2005). Hence, an integration of the four strategies in the class which is supported by Lee and Ng (2010) that can enhance level of willingness to communicate should be emphasised in a pursuit of facilitating the language acquisition for the Thai EFL students. More attention should be paid to the teachers' classroom strategies since using English for communication is not commonly seen in the social context of Thailand and the students mainly learn and use English in the classroom.

1.4   Problem Statement

As Thailand is an active member of the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) and English is a common communication language among the AEC members, teaching English for communication is paramount in the Thai EFL classroom (ASEAN Secretariat, 2015). Admiral Narong Pipatanasai, Thailand's Education Minister in his "Thai Education towards ASEAN" project speech, commented that Thai language learners must improve their foreign language proficiency, especially English, for effective communication (Office of the Prime Minister Thailand, 2017). To achieve this goal, the Ministry of Education has urged Thai English teachers to prepare and assist the EFL students in developing effective English communication skills (Punthumasen, 2007). However, the outcomes have so far been unsatisfactory and remained problematic.

The NIETS' (i.e., the National Institute of Educational Testing Service) analysis of 12th grade Thai EFL students' O-NET English scores indicated the mean score of English for communication from 2008 to 2019 was below the standard requirement (i.e., 50%). The statistical data obtained with consent from the NIETS (See Appendix A) are illustrated below.
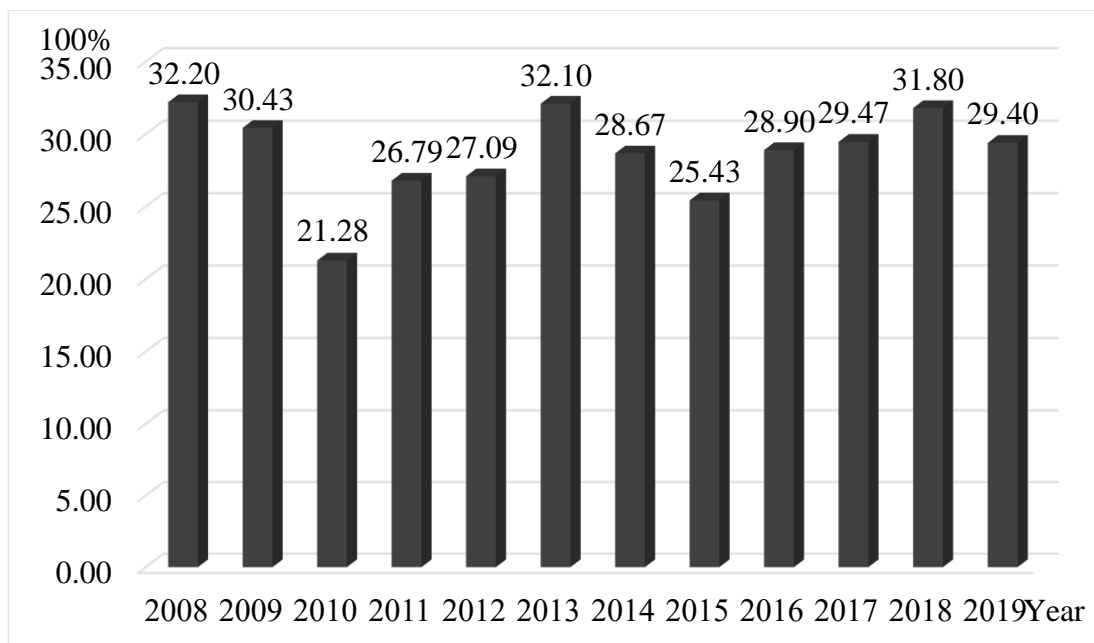
Figure 1.1 O-NET English Communicative Mean Scores

    The graph shows that the 12th grade students in the country are not proficient in English communication. The students' annual mean score has failed to indicate an acceptable communicative competence indicated by at least a 50% score for English communication strand in the O-NET examination. In the aspect of linguistic competence, MacIntyre et al. (1998) argued that students with low English proficiency would show a greater level of WTC as compared to their counterparts with high English proficiency. Can this argument be used to explain the situation of WTC in the Thai EFL context? Based on the results of several studies (e.g., Alemi, Daftarifard, and Pashmforoosh (2011), Baghaei, Dourakshan, and Salavati (2012), Bashosh, Nejad, Rastegar, and Marzban (2013), Imran and Ghani (2014), Liu and Park (2012), and Tan and Phairot (2018)), English proficiency has a significant influence on students' WTC. Nevertheless, there is no proof in the literature indicating an interaction effect between levels of English proficiency and teaching strategies on the level of WTC. In this regard, one of the aims of the present study is to look for an interaction effect between

levels of English proficiency (i.e., low, moderate, and high) and teaching strategies (i.e., with the IS and without the IS) on the students' WTC posttest mean score.

An analysis of the 12th grade students' English proficiency, which was obtained from the Academic Affairs Division of two participating schools in the present study showed that overall students' English proficiency was at a moderate level (M=65.16, SD=13.10) with a benchmark of high (75-100), moderate (60-74), and low (0-59). Details of students' English proficiency means in high, moderate, and low groups are shown in Table 1.1.

Table 1.1
Means of English Proficiency in Different Groups

Levels of English Proficiency	Mean	Standard Deviation	N
High	82.30	5.82	106
Moderate	66.71	4.46	106
Low	53.01	4.33	163
Overall	**65.16**	**13.10**	**375**

Table 1.1 exhibits students' mean English proficiency levels in high, moderate, and low groups are 82.30 (SD=5.82), 66.71 (SD=4.46), and 53.01 (SD=4.33) respectively. Students in the low English proficiency group outnumbered other groups. In other words, almost half of the target students are categorised in the low English proficiency group. The findings supported the report of the O-NET communicative mean scores.

Additionally, in order to emphasise the crucial problem in students' unwillingness to communicate, a preliminary study was conducted with 375 twelfth graders in the two target participating schools (i.e., 175 and 200 participants in Schools A and B respectively) to measure WTC level using an adapted WTC scale to show the results on WTC levels. It was found that the students' mean level of WTC was at a

moderate level (M=2.48, SD=0.64) with mean score ranges at low (1.00-2.33), moderate (2.34-3.67), and high (3.68-5.00). Table 1.2 displays students' WTC means divided into low, moderate, and high levels.

Table 1.2
WTC in Three Different Levels

Levels	Mean	Standard Deviation	N
High	4.00	0.23	12
Moderate	2.86	0.35	203
Low	1.89	0.30	160
Overall	**2.48**	**0.64**	**375**

Table 1.2 points out students' mean level of WTC in high, moderate, and low groups, which was 4.00 (SD=0.23), 2.86 (SD=0.35), and 1.89 (SD=0.30) respectively. The number of students in the high level of WTC group was significantly lower than the other two groups. Thus, the results suggested that the majority of the students in the target schools had not been encouraged to reach a sufficient level of willingness to communicate in English.

Using the Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient, the correlation between students' English proficiency and overall WTC was calculated. As displayed in Table 1.3, a statistically significant low positive correlation was obtained, where $r=0.231$ and $p=0.00$. This means that students with a high English proficiency level were generally more willing to communicate in the language. Further interpretation reveals that 5.34% of the variance in English proficiency can be explained by the variance of overall WTC.

Table 1.3
Correlation between English Proficiency and Overall WTC (N=375)

Variables		Pearson Correlation	Sig. (2-tailed)
English Proficiency	Overall WTC	0.231[**]	0.00

Note. [**] Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed), $r=0.231$, $r^2=(0.231)^2=0.0534$

The correlational findings postulate a presumption that predicts the students' English proficiency when their level of WTC is improved. When a relationship between English proficiency and WTC has been found, Tan and Phairot (2018) suggested that instructional interventions need to be implemented in the classroom to facilitate an improvement of students' English proficiency which in turn enhances their level of WTC. However, observation of the language classroom in Thai schools revealed that teachers have continuously implemented a number of non-interactive teaching methods. For example, exercises such as grammar translation in Khamkhien's (2010), Punthemasen's (2007), and Teng and Sinwongsuwat's (2015) studies, grammar translation with aural-oral practice in Pattapong's (2010) and Wongsothorn et al.'s (2002) studies, rote memorisation in Khamkhien's (2010), Pattapong's (2010), Punthumasen's (2007), and Wongsothorn et al.'s (2002) studies, audio-lingual exercises in Khamkhien's (2010) and Teng and Sinwongsuwat's (2015) studies as well as pattern drills in Khamkhien's (2010) study are several teaching strategies which are deemed less effective in promoting communicative competence.

Although CLT is the current teaching method used to promote classroom interaction in ELT in Thailand, there are limitations in CLT applications. For example, problems and challenges of a mismatch between theory and practice that are incompatible have been debated in English instruction. The CLT approach has failed to provide students with a suitable learning context and is considered to have practical instructional constraints for the Thai EFL teachers due to students' low level of speaking skills (Teng & Sinwongsuwat, 2015). Using CLT in ELT in Thailand, Khamkhien (2010) implied that CLT does not create adequate and suitable learning opportunities for meaningful interaction in the language classroom. Importantly, no studies have been conducted to show that CLT increases students' WTC.

Tuan and Nhu (2010) acknowledge the importance of teachers' communication styles which potentially affect classroom interaction. Teachers use the IS as an instructional tool to interact with students in the language classroom (Lee & Ng, 2010). They suggested that the use of the IS has potential to promote meaningful classroom interaction and enhance the level of WTC. However their research lacked convincing empirical evidence to support their proposition.

Different strategies that have been used by teachers in encouraging classroom interaction are complex and depend on the teachers' control. Walsh (2006a) pointed out that there is a wide range of different interactional features within the IS such as content feedback, seeking clarification, and confirmation checks among others. Each interactional strategy may facilitate or inhabit students in different learning contexts. A clear emphasis on the use of the IS in the present study focuses on four substrategies, namely, (i) questioning techniques, (ii) teacher's scaffolding, (iii) time-waiting, and (iv) turn-taking.

To conclude, the supporting evidence such as the O-NET statistical report, the preliminary results of WTC levels, and the teacher's current non-interactive teaching strategies are indications of the WTC problem among the Thai EFL students. In order to manage students' unwillingness to communicate, this study argues that the use of the IS in the language classroom would be suitable instructional strategies for the Thai English language teachers. The IS is believed to be applicable to the Thai EFL context to create meaningful classroom interaction and enhance the students' WTC.

1.5   Research Objectives

The main research objectives (RO) in this study are:

RO1: To investigate the effectiveness of interaction strategies (IS) on students' WTC posttest mean score.

RO2: To examine the interaction effect of types of teaching methods (i.e., with the IS and without the IS) and English proficiency levels (i.e., high, moderate, and low) on the students' WTC posttest mean score.

RO3: To investigate students' experiences in the use of interaction strategies (IS) in the classroom.

1.6   Research Questions

The research questions (RQ) in this study are as follows:

RQ1: Is there a statistically significant difference in students' WTC posttest mean score between the experimental and control groups?

RQ2: Is there a statistically significant interaction effect of types of teaching methods (i.e., with the IS and without the IS) and English proficiency levels (i.e., high, moderate, and low) on the students' WTC posttest mean score?

RQ3: What are the students' experiences in the use of interaction strategies (IS) in the classroom?

1.7   Hypotheses

The null hypotheses of this study are formulated as follows:

H$_0$1: There is no statistically significant difference in students' WTC posttest mean score between the experimental and control groups.

H$_0$2: There is no statistically significant interaction effect of types of teaching methods (i.e., with the IS and without the IS) and English proficiency levels (i.e., high, moderate, and low) on the students' WTC posttest mean score.

1.8   Rationale

The dynamics of language classroom interaction depend upon teachers. The teachers are regarded as the key determinant of creating learning opportunities and classroom participation. They are institutionally responsible for conducting lessons to teach their students and facilitate their learning. Walsh (2002) pointed out that teachers have the authority to control the institutional language classroom in different ways. Specific aspects within their control are (i) discussion topics, (ii) content and procedures, (iii) participants, (iv) cues, (v) role and relationships between teacher and students, (vi) interaction, (vii) time talking, (viii) modification of students' talk, and (ix) questioning (to those who know the answers).

In classroom interaction research, Walsh (2002) further emphasised that teachers should have established higher awareness of lesson goals, teaching objectives, pedagogic purposes and their language use to facilitate students' learning opportunities. Brown (2001) suggested that teachers limit their class talk time to ensure students have adequate conversation opportunities. In this regard, meaningful

interaction (i.e., teacher-student and student-student) needs to be supported to create further opportunities in learning and practising the target language in class.

According to Kang (2005) WTC is dynamically changeable through different types of pedagogical techniques. The review of literature shows the studies on WTC have not examined instructional intervention to arrest the issue of students' unwillingness to communicate and use the target language in class. Moreover research on WTC which was conducted in the Thai learning context (e.g., Pattapong (2010) and Suksawas (2011)) used a qualitative inquiry approach.

Therefore, the researcher of the present study acknowledges this research gap and further attempts to explore pedagogical intervention by trying out the IS to investigate its effectiveness in enhancing students' WTC levels. To complement the two Thai studies above, the present study has a strong quantitative component. At the same time, the study can fill the research gap of ELT in Thailand since there are no studies conducted so far on WTC to address the issue of unwillingness to communicate among students in the Thai EFL context.

Hopefully, the present study will contribute new knowledge to the existing body of research in WTC. Findings from the study serve as a springboard towards introducing a new instructional intervention for teachers to incorporate in the class to raise the WTC levels. It is also expected that other scholars could benefit from this study to further investigate and develop different teaching techniques in improving WTC with other dimensions.

1.9   Significance of the Study

English for communication is indispensable to students in their search of opportunities in higher education and future careers. Willingness to use or practise using the target language is a contributing factor to success in mastering communication skills. Teachers require an effective teaching method to increase students' intention to communicate. From the literature it is believed that a conducive learning environment is necessary in creating meaningful interaction in the language classroom. Students' learning and exposure to the target language in the IS class would potentially increase as classroom interaction improves. Hopefully, this strategy could encourage students to be willing to communicate in English both inside and outside the class.

For the Thai EFL teachers, it is time for a positive change and thinking outside the box. They should review and reflect on their current pedagogical practices in the language classroom by creating an awareness of professional development to improve teaching skills. Furthermore, there is a potential for the researcher to suggest the use of the IS as an alternative teaching strategy in ELT in Thailand.

1.10   Limitations

Limitations are common in any research project as no study is perfect. The researcher has identified several limitations in this study. Firstly, the present study was only carried out in two Southern Thailand government secondary schools. Secondly, student participants in this study were limited to four intact classes of eleventh graders in these two schools, and those who enrolled in an English foundation course in the first semester of academic year 2017. Thus research findings of this

study can only make a generalisation to the government secondary schools in Thailand which share common characteristics with the two participating schools.

Thirdly, this study only had a four-week intervention to avoid disruption in teaching and learning activities as scheduled daily by the participating schools. The researcher followed the suggested time allocation (i.e., one month for each strand) in the Thailand basic core curriculum (Ministry of Education of Thailand, 2008) which encourages the teachers to emphasise equally the four strands of the English instruction (See Section 1.3 on page 28). In order to achieve the lesson plan objectives, the researcher trained two teacher participants in the experimental and control groups prior to the intervention phase. The teacher participants taught the students in the experimental and control groups twice a week, 50 minutes in each session. An extensive IS application in the language classroom may demonstrate a better improvement in students' level of WTC.

Lastly, a measurement using self-report in the present study might affect the accuracy of the adapted WTC scale results. Razavi (2001) claimed that social desirability bias is regarded a concern of using a self-report questionnaire. She contends that social desirability bias arises when respondents answer in a way that responses are socially desirable, but not truthful. This is considered a contaminating effect in research, thus, influencing the accuracy of self-report results. Social desirability bias is similarly discussed in many researchers' works such as Block (1990), Edwards (1953), Hogan and Nicholson (1988), and Nocholson and Hogan (1990).

To avoid such biases, before using the self-report WTC scale to collect data, the researcher took some steps. For instance, the participants were informed about the purpose of the study, their potential contribution towards the research, and privacy and confidentiality of their personal information in self-reports. Since the research was conducted in schools where academic achievement is a major concern, the researcher reminded student participants that their input in the self-reports would not affect their scores or grades in any of their subjects, especially English.

1.11 Operational Definitions of Terms

The key terms in the present study are operationally defined for clear understanding as presented below.

WTC (Willingness to Communicate) is an observable behavioural intention that students display in order to participate in the class and engage in language use (Cao, 2014). WTC in the present study stresses on two types of communication contexts (i.e., inside and outside the classroom), and three types of interlocutors (i.e., teacher, classmates/friends, and strangers). WTC is measured by using a WTC scale which was adapted from Pattapong's (2010) study.

English Proficiency Levels are based on the students' results of the O-NET examination which evaluates their English performance in four strands, namely, language for communication, language and culture, language and relationship with other learning areas, and language and relationship with community and the world. Using the evaluating criterion in the Thailand basic core curriculum (Ministry of Education of Thailand, 2008), the O-NET scores can classify test-takers into three groups; (i) high proficiency achievers refer to the students who have the scores ranging

from 75 to 100, (ii) moderate proficiency achievers refer to the students who have the scores ranging from 60 to 74, and (iii) low proficiency achievers refer to the students who have the scores ranging from zero to 59.

Interaction Strategies (IS) are different types of teaching strategies which have the potential to create an interactive learning setting to practise the target language for authentic communication based on two types of interaction patterns (i.e., teacher and students and among students) (Lee & Ng, 2010). The IS used by the teacher in the present study includes four substrategies, namely, (i) questioning techniques, (ii) teacher's scaffolding, (iii) time-waiting, and (iv) turn-taking.

1.12   Chapter Summary

This chapter introduces a study that is based on the significant role of interaction in SLA. The chapter briefly explains how the theory of SLA (i.e., Input, Interaction and Output Hypotheses), the sociocultural theory, and the cognitive constructivism theory support classroom interaction. This is followed by the background, definition, and concept of WTC. It also provides a brief review of previous research on L2 WTC which will be expanded further in Chapter Two. Next, the problem of unwillingness to communicate in English based on the Thai EFL context is discussed. This has led to the formulation of the research objectives, research questions and hypotheses of the study. In addition, the chapter establishes the prominence of creating interactive learning opportunities in the classroom through the teacher's pedagogical practice of the IS which can be seen in the rationale and significance of the study. Moreover, several limitations are identified from the scope and methodology of the study. Finally, the chapter provides a list of operational definitions of key terms for clear understanding.