

CHAPTER 6

A SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND THEIR IMPLICATIONS

This chapter presents a summary of findings which cover the teachers' views on the role of grammar, their teaching of grammar in the classroom, the relationship between teachers' learning experiences, their views on the role of grammar, their actual teaching and problems in teaching grammar towards communicative purposes. In addition, the implications and recommendations emerging from the study are presented at the end of the chapter.

1. A Summary of Findings

Major findings of the study can be summarized as follows:

1.1 The study reveals that most of the teachers viewed that the importance of grammar varies according to different purposes: academic and communicative.

According to the survey study, for the academic purposes, grammar was viewed as important in doing exercises and in writing and it should be emphasized in the classroom. On the other hand, for the communicative purposes, grammar was viewed as a tool for communication, and its importance depended on the situation. Grammar did not play a major role in communication, and it can be seen from the survey study that a number of teachers felt that the students should be able to appropriately use English for communication in a certain situation without focusing on the grammatical correctness. In addition, to the teachers' understanding, "communication" is closely related to "oral skills"; accordingly, vocabulary and pronunciation are considered more important than grammar.

Similar results can be found in the case study. Most of the teachers in the case study viewed that grammar plays important role in an academic context such as in writing and producing grammatically correct sentences. For the communicative purposes, the results from the case study showed that grammar has a less important role.

The participants viewed that without grammar students can still communicate if they have enough vocabulary and know how to pronounce correctly. However, they agreed that in communication, grammar considered as one of language components, played a role as a tool to communicate more effectively.

1.2 The survey study found that traditional activities were used in the teaching of grammar slightly more often than communicative activities although the mean scores of the practice of both groups of activities were not significantly different.

According to the close observation of the teachers' teaching, a similar teaching pattern actually occurred in the English classes. The focus of the lessons was on form and meaning at word and sentence levels, and translation was a common technique in teaching grammar. The teachers used it to check the students' understanding on the instruction and the content of what they were studying. The transformational and substitutional drills were mainly practiced in the classrooms. The students did not practice using language for communication since the activities did not provide much chance for this. It is obvious that the lessons were done at the grammatical recognition stage.

1.3 The teachers appeared to understand the concept of the communicative teaching approach. However, both the survey and the observation reveal that their actual teaching of grammar was mainly based on traditional approach. This practice may have been influenced by their learning experiences, their perception of the role of grammar and their beliefs about language learning.

1.3.1 According to the survey study, the analysis of the relationship of each pair of activities practiced in the teachers' learning experiences and their actual teaching showed that the teachers' learning experiences had an influence on their teaching. For example, traditional activities such as presenting grammar through patterns and using grammatical terms in explaining grammatical points, are often used in their teaching, as well as in their learning experiences.

The influence of the teachers' past experiences on their teaching can also be noticed from the observation and the interview. The participants often conducted activities they often experienced in their teaching, especially traditional activities which focused on form.

However, it was observed from the pair correlation between activities practiced in their learning and teaching that communicative activities were conducted in their teaching more often than in their past learning. Based on the case study, there was an attempt to conduct the lesson communicatively. For example, the participants often let the students work in groups and use English instructions. The use of communicative activities may be considered as a result of the 1996 curriculum which aims at developing learners' communicative competence.

1.3.2 Statistically, the results of the survey study showed no significant correlation between the teachers' views on the role of grammar and their actual teaching. In spite of that, a certain aspect of relationship between the teachers' views on the role of grammar and their actual teaching can be observed in the case study. Since the teachers viewed grammar as separate from communication, grammar teaching was conducted without the communicative purposes. From the observation, grammar was taught out of context, focusing on form and accuracy rather than its use for communication.

1.3.3 The results obtained from the survey study and the observation presented an overall picture of grammar teaching. Traditional activities were often used in the teaching. The emphasis on form in traditional activities can be seen as being influenced by the teachers' beliefs about English learning. The interviews in the case study revealed an interesting relationship between teachers' beliefs and their actual teaching. The participants felt that in order to use the language for communication, the students must have good grammatical knowledge. They believed that after the students learned grammar, they would be able to communicate. In accordance with their beliefs, the teachers focused their teaching on form and accuracy.

In addition, the results from the survey and the case studies clearly showed that the emphasis on grammar teaching in the classroom was also influenced by the teachers' views on the students' aim of attending the university entrance examination. To their understanding, the university entrance examination focuses on grammatical knowledge. Therefore, most of the participants focused their teaching on grammar.

1.4 According to the survey study, the informants were asked to rank the importance of the problems and limitations in teaching grammar using the communicative approach. The results showed that the most important problem was students followed by teaching techniques, teaching aids, curriculum, school policy and evaluation.

However, their descriptions of the problems appeared to focus differently from their ranking. They discussed in detail the problems about the students, the curriculum and the evaluation, especially the university entrance examination.

From the teachers' point of views, the students' cooperation was considered one of the most important factors in conducting a communicative lesson. In fact, many students are not interested in communicative activities because they do not see the importance of learning English for communication. Moreover, a large class makes it difficult to conduct communicative activities with close supervision.

In addition, most of the teachers felt that the English curriculum has not been clearly defined, nor does it suit the local people's need. Besides, they felt that the university entrance examination has a great influence on their teaching. They viewed the university entrance examination as focusing on grammatical knowledge, therefore their teaching of grammar appeared to take most of the class time rather than the practice of using the language for communication.

2. Implications of the Study

The findings of the study appear to point to the fact that the teachers are the most important factor in the teaching. As Nunan (1987 : 144) put it, "It is teachers themselves who need to become the prime agents of change through an increased sensitivity to what is really happening in their classroom." The implication of the study can be made as follows:

2.1 Based on the study, even though the teachers seem to understand the CLT, there is some confusion concerning grammar teaching as it is still taught separately from communicative teaching. According to the survey, 69.51% of the teachers graduated after 1979 when the communicative teaching approach was introduced. However, we can witness the influence of their traditional learning experience on their teaching. This suggests that they have not had adequate training on theory and practice on CLT. Seminars or training programs are urgently needed and the school administrators should realize this problem and encourage their teachers to attend seminars or training programs.

2.2 The Ministry of Education should consider the problems derived from ambiguity in the curriculum. Since a great number of teachers have some difficulties in following the curriculum, they should be supervised in order to understand the curriculum clearly and make use of it effectively.

2.3 The study reveals that most of the teachers viewed the entrance examination as focusing on grammar with no communicative use. Accordingly, the teachers' perceptions on the university entrance examination should be clarified. In addition, there should be a revision of the entrance examination with more consideration of the school curriculum.

3. Recommendations for Further Studies

For further studies, consideration should also be made of the students' side. Since the most important problem in teaching grammar communicatively from the teachers' point of view is the students, there should be an attempt to find out the cause of the problem. The study should investigate students' needs, motivation and attitudes towards learning English. In addition, their understanding and perceptions about grammar should also be paid attention to, in order to make teaching more effective and to serve the needs of the students.

This study focuses on the teachers in only one regional area. Therefore, there should be an in - depth study of the teachers in different areas around the country. This is in order to see the teaching situation and find the solutions to the problems. The result can lead to the improvement of English teaching in the Thai context.

It would be also interesting to further investigate how the teachers evaluate their students in the communicative curriculum.