

Investigating Thai English Teachers' Classroom Management Strategies in a Secondary School Context

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Abstract

The present study aims to investigate classroom management strategies employed by Thai English teachers, to compare classroom management strategies employed by experienced and novice teachers, and to explore how those teachers come to the decision of executing their classroom management strategies. Accordingly, an explanatory sequential mixed-methods research design was applied. 73 Thai English teachers from government high schools were surveyed; followed by individual semi-structured interviews of 4 experienced and 4 novice teachers. It was found that the teachers reported using rewards strategy most frequently (e.g., oral praise), followed closely by preventative strategies (e.g., set class rules). Also, the findings showed that there was no significant difference in using classroom management strategies between experienced and novice teachers. Meanwhile, thematic analysis revealed the different beliefs among experienced and novice Thai English teachers towards teaching experience and discovered that those teachers' decision to employ classroom management strategies was influenced by students' behaviors, teacher's attitudes, and teaching environment. The recommendations for teaching and teacher education were suggested.

Keywords: classroom management, Thai English teacher, teaching experience, teacher decision making, secondary education

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1. Introduction

Classroom management has been regarded as an important factor relating to student achievement and as a component of effective teaching (Korpershoek, Harms, de Boer, van Kuijk & Doolaard, 2014; Marzano, Marzano & Pickering, 2003). Effective classroom management leads students to actively engage in academic activities (Brophy, 1985), and provides classroom order to assist teachers in keeping consistent and effective instruction (Walters & Frei, 2007).

However, classroom management is still considered as a basic problem for teachers (Salem al-amarat, 2011). Teachers would encounter classroom management problems, especially in senior secondary school context, large class size is one major cause of ineffective classroom discipline, engagement, and communication (Ajayi, Audu, & Ajayi, 2017). Meanwhile, classroom management is still a challenge even for experienced teachers (Wichadee, 2011). Because that new students come every school year, it demands teachers to establish and employ classroom management practices and strategies after new students come into class (Walters & Frei, 2007).

In Thailand where a class size is normally over 40 students in English class (Teng & Sinwongsuwat, 2015), English language has been regarded as an important foreign language over a century (Darasawang, 2007), even in both undergraduate and graduate levels, English is required for graduation (OBEC, 2008). The purposes of this study are to investigate classroom management strategies that Thai English teachers employ, to compare classroom management strategies employed by experienced and novice Thai English teachers, and explore how those Thai English teachers come to the decision of executing their classroom management strategies.

2. Literature Review

This part reviews three sections, which are classroom management, classroom management strategies and Thai classroom setting. The classroom management and the classroom management strategies sections provide the definition of classroom management and discussion of the classroom management strategies. The section of Thai classroom setting provides the context where specific classroom management strategies can be applied by Thai English teachers

2.1 Classroom Management

Classroom management is a multidimensional concept. Wong and Wong (1998) defined classroom management as the organization of students, time, space, and materials to ensure that a teacher can allow the students to learn. Classroom management also consists of individual characteristics of the teacher, teacher's harmony with the social environment, students' characteristics and requirements, the cooperation between school and family, the structure of the school and the rules adopted by the school (Cayci & Ersozlu, 2016). Classroom management can be regarded as an umbrella term for the actions of teacher to manage class, students' behavior and students' learning thus to promote learning among the students (Korpershoek et al., 2014; Martin & Sass, 2010).

2.2 Classroom Management Strategies

As classroom management emphasizes on promoting learning among students, classroom management strategies are tools in which teachers can utilize to build the environment (Lane, Menzies, Bruhn, & Cmabori, 2011). Classroom management strategies contain various methods and practices which contribute to improve and maintain student behavior. Such as to utilize class-wide antecedent intervention approaches which focus on forming the environment to prevent students' behavior problems and raising students' motivation (Kern & Clemens, 2007); to employ strategies build and maintain teacher-student relationship (Aliakbari & Bozorgmanesh, 2015); and to find out and apply specific teaching practices to promote students' language learning in accordance with students' ability (Deng, Peng & Xie, 2017).

Andrea Reupert and Stuart Woodcock are both educators who have expertise in studying on teachers' classroom behavior management practices within the past decade, they identified the most commonly strategies dealing with student behaviors and categorized the classroom management strategies into four components: rewards, preventative strategies, initial corrective strategies and later corrective strategies. Rewards can be given to students when students complete a desired behavior. A reward can serve as either an incentive or a reinforcement (Wolff, 2001). For example, praise and provide positive feedback to students' desired behaviors. Preventative strategies are commonly considered to use to prevent behavioral problems from arising. For example, establishing rules and routines, seating arrangement, and effective teaching practices. Corrective strategies are employed to and correct students' misbehavior. According to the intrusive degree, corrective strategies can be classified into initial corrective strategies, such as signaling, frowning and move closer to students; and later corrective strategies, such as place a student in other environment for a period of time, and contact student's parents.

2.3 Thai Classroom Setting

In Thailand, along with the large class size, it was found that Thai students are lack of patience in practicing English and they have minimal exposure to English outside class. Later on, with less practice, the students become lack of confidence in speaking English (Noom-ura, 2013). With the aim to motivate Thai students in learning, Loima and Vibulphol (2016) found that teachers who are able to interpret their students' learning and motivation in the same way as the students could enhance the learning successfully, they also found the challenge which named "acculturated external interest" occurred when teaching Thai students, in which students are immediately influenced by classmates, or "reward" is needed to incent student's external motivation.

3. The Present Study

3.1 Research Questions

1. What classroom management strategies do Thai English teachers employ?
2. Are there any differences in classroom management strategies employed by experienced Thai English teachers and novice Thai English teachers?
3. How do those Thai English teachers come to the decision of executing their classroom management strategies?

3.2 Research Design

A mixed-methods research design was applied to answer the research questions. Mixed-methods research approach incorporates elements of both qualitative and quantitative approaches (Creswell, 2009). Meanwhile, it provides a best understanding of the research problems by applying different approaches to collect and analyze data (Creswell, 2009, p.11).

In the present study, quantitative data was collected and analyzed at first, followed by the collection and analysis of the qualitative data in the second phase based on the initial one's results. A priority was given to quantitative. Thus, quantitative and qualitative methods are separated but connected (Creswell, 2009, p.211).

3.3 Population and Participants

The target population was Thai English teachers in Chonburi province, Thailand. The estimated number of participants needed to conduct statistical tests with sufficient power is 70, calculated by using the G*Power Software (Erdfelder, Faul, & Buchner, 1996) with the large effect size of .8, statistical power of .95, and alpha level of .05. The participants were purposefully selected from Thai government high schools in the area of Chonburi province.

For collecting the qualitative data, four experienced and four novice Thai English teachers were selected as informants from the participants who have completed the survey. Experienced teachers were those teachers who marked the years of teaching more than 5 years, novice teachers were those teachers who marked the years of teaching 1 to 5 years.

3.4 Research Instruments

The instrument of the quantitative method is a questionnaire. The questionnaire was adapted from the Survey of

Behaviour Management practices (SOBMP) developed by Reupert and Woodcock (2010). The questionnaire includes 31 English-Thai language written items base on the classroom management strategies, each item is rated on a 5-point Likert scale from 5 being always to 1 being never; demographic information including gender (male/female) and years of teaching (1-5 years/ more than 5 years); and an open-ended question asks for teacher's specific classroom management strategies in Thai context. Three experts were asked to check the similarities and differences between the adapted survey with the original one as well as the accuracy of Thai language.

In qualitative method, the instrument was a semi-structured interview guide. The semi-structured interview questions discussed about the tentative findings from quantitative procedure with informants. The informants were asked what the student behavior problems are they ever met, their reactions to the misbehavior, what their opinions on the quantitative findings, and the reasons that influence their decision to use a classroom management strategy. And all the interviews were audio recorded.

3.5 Data Collection and Analysis

In quantitative method, the questionnaires were given out and waited for the participants to return back in order to maximize the response rate, and explanation of the purpose and directions were given to the participants to make sure they understand the questions. After data collection, two groups of teachers were compared. One group consists of novice Thai English teachers, the other one consists of experienced Thai English teachers. The dependent variables to be compared between two groups are the four components of classroom management strategies: preventative strategies, rewards, initial corrective strategies and later corrective strategies. Through comparing the means between two groups and went independent samples t-test, the difference between novice Thai English teachers and experienced Thai English teachers towards employing classroom management strategies were measured.

In qualitative method, semi-structured interview was applied to collect data. A consent form was signed by the interviewee at the very beginning. After that, all interviews were transcribed from record to text. Each text was read carefully, then the initial codes relate to the information about what influences a Thai English teacher's decision both to use and develop a classroom management strategy were identified. Next, the relationships among the codes were recognized to generate categories, which represent the factors influence a teacher's decision and development. Finally, the categories were combined into themes by selecting those related to teacher decision making and development on classroom management strategies.

4. Findings

Three parts of findings emerged to answer the research questions, namely, classroom management strategies Thai English teachers employed, comparison between experienced and novice teachers and teacher decision to execute classroom management strategies.

4.1 Classroom Management Strategies Thai English Teachers Employed

This section uses quantitative data from the questionnaire to answer the first two questions, 1) What classroom management strategies do Thai English teachers employ and 2) Are there any differences in classroom management strategies employed by experienced Thai English teachers and novice Thai English teachers. Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics of classroom management strategies employed by Thai English teachers

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of Classroom Management Strategies

Components	M	SD
Rewards	3.85	.62
Preventative Strategies	3.79	.36
Initial Corrective Strategies	3.32	.40
Later Corrective Strategies	2.52	.61

As shown in Table 1, the participants reported using rewards strategy the most ($M = 3.85$, $SD = .62$), followed closely by using preventive strategies ($M = 3.79$, $SD = .36$), the third strategy that they reported using is initial corrective strategy ($M=3.32$, $SD = .40$), which was used more often than later corrective strategy ($M = 2.52$, $SD = .61$). It is evident that the participants preferred to give positive feedback to help students learn appropriate behavior, and they also consciously intended to prevent misbehavior of students from arising at the first place. However, corrective strategies could be intrusive to students, when used to correct student's misbehavior, the participants would still rely on those strategies to stop students from misbehaving, but they chose the less intrusive ones.

4.2 Comparison between Experienced and Novice Teachers

To compare between experienced and novice teachers, an independent samples t-test was performed. The test was conducted at an alpha of .05. Table 2 reveals the results of independent samples t-test.

Table 2. Comparison between experienced and novice Thai English teachers towards employing classroom management strategies

Components	Groups	Levene's Test		T-test		
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig
Rewards	Novice					
	Experienced	3.97	.08	-1.17	67	.25
Preventative Strategies	Novice					
	Experienced	2.44	.12	-.89	67	.38
Initial Corrective Strategies	Novice					
	Experienced	.23	.63	.73	67	.47
Later Corrective Strategies	Novice					
	Experienced	.60	.44	-1.91	67	.06

The Levene's test shows there is nonsignificant equal variance. Levene's test of rewards is larger than .05 ($p = .09 > .05$), Levene's test of preventative strategies is larger than .05 ($p = .37 > .05$), Levene's test of initial corrective strategies is larger than .05 ($p = .72 > .05$) and Levene's test of later corrective strategies is larger than .05 ($p = .39 > .05$). Meanwhile, independent samples t-test shows that p -value of rewards is larger than .05 ($p = .27 > .05$), it indicates that there is no significant difference between experienced and novice Thai English teachers towards employing rewards. This finding goes with preventative strategies ($p = .61 > .05$), initial corrective strategies ($p = .39 > .05$) and later corrective strategies ($p = .08 > .05$).

4.3 Teacher Decision to Execute Classroom Management Strategies

Thematic analysis across participants revealed: (1) *Students' behavior problems as a cause to teacher's decision making on CMS*, (2) *teacher's attitudes towards CMS shapes decision making*, (3) *teaching environment influences teacher's decision making on CMS*, and (4) *teacher's self-development on CMS*.

4.3.1 Students' behavior problems as a cause to teacher's decision making on CMS.

The interviews revealed that both positive and negative attitudes towards classroom management strategies influence teacher to make decision.

Teacher's positive attitudes towards CMS.

On the one hand, teachers would like to either use a classroom management strategy when it is easy and useful to help teacher stop or prevent students from misbehaving.

"It is easy to control them at first, we have to let students know about the rules of the class before." (Novice teacher C).

"I usually use initial corrective strategies follow with preventative strategies, it is like reminder for them." (Experienced teacher J).

On another hand, teachers are willing to employ a classroom management strategy which can encourage students to be focus on learning and help students build good character.

"I have to give them points to encourage them for studying in my class." (Novice teacher Y).

"...It is the way that we live together, I think that it makes them respect me, if they respect the rules." (Novice teacher P).

"Yes, always to set class rules when we start the semester, we need to stress them to do for the rule of the class." (Experienced teacher N).

Teacher's negative attitudes towards CMS.

On the contrary, teachers will be hesitated to use a classroom management strategy when they question whether the strategy help student improve learning.

"I rarely give extra points, I just oral praise, the point is not related to their ability, and we made the students want more extra point..." (Novice teacher P).

"...they told me that I don't believe you, I don't tell that much to the parents." (Experienced teacher J).

As well as, teachers are not willing to involve others in their classroom management.

"I think I can solve the problems in the classroom by myself, in the past, I rarely talk to their parents." (Novice teacher B).

Meanwhile, teachers less use a classroom management strategy which creates bad feelings to students or is not helpful to promote students' learning.

"Separated from the whole group can make some students feel that they are too separated from the class, so they will mad at us..." (Experienced teacher J).

"If I separated them out of class, they don't have the knowledge and don't have...who takes care of them." (Novice teacher B)

4.3.3 Teaching environment influences teacher's decision making on CMS.

It also discovered that the teachers take teaching environment into consideration when to employ a classroom

management strategy. The teaching environment includes teaching content, limited teaching time and the characteristics of Thai students.

Influenced by teaching content and teaching time, teachers do not like to use classroom management strategy which occupies time.

“When I teach there is limited time, so I have to teach the content, to complete before. Sometimes, I have to teach a lot.” (Novice teacher Y).

“...There is no time.” (Experienced teacher L).

Moreover, teachers either more often use or less use a classroom management strategy depends on in what degree students have improved in their learning and consider how they can accept the misbehavior.

“Because, I teach Mattayom 1 and they are little kids, I have to add this, the rules, the positive behavior of students before I teach them.” (Novice teacher C).

“...only 1 or 2 students in my life of teaching I had to negotiate with them.” (Experienced teacher N).

4.3.4 Teacher’s self-development on CMS

Besides, it also discovered that teachers would like to learn a new classroom management strategy to develop their classroom management skill by discussion with colleagues and learning from teaching experience.

“I often talk with other teachers about the problems, and to solve the problems.” (Novice teacher B).

“It is like we observe the learner behavior, it is like a trail, like observation.” (Experienced teacher J).

Additionally, it shows there are different believes among novice and experienced Thai English teachers on teaching experience. Novice teachers normally concern about lack enough classroom management strategies and believe experienced teachers do better in classroom management.

“They can control the class better than new teachers, they have many experience, they know how to control students in a good way, they met a lot of students.” (Novice teacher C).

Experienced teachers believe that novice teachers are able to manage class well too, though novice teachers need to develop classroom management skill.

“The new generation teachers, some strategies, they are good at.” (Experienced teacher L).

“The novice teachers are younger, there are no wide gap with the students, they can talk together friendly, so they can manage the class well.” (Experienced teacher N).

5. Discussion

Various evidence has appeared from the findings to answer the research questions. The commonly used classroom management strategies of Thai English teachers were discovered; the comparison between novice and experienced Thai English teachers on applying the classroom management strategies has proven to be similar; and the various factors which influence Thai English teachers to make decisions to apply the classroom management strategies have emerged.

5.1 Classroom management strategies employed by Thai English teachers

Reward strategy is reported as the most frequently used strategy. This finding was not consistent with that of Reupert and Woodcock (2010). In their study, Reupert and Woodcock (2010) discovered that Canadian pre-service teachers used reward strategy at the second low frequency among four classroom management strategies. The different context among countries and studies can probably be taken as a reason to explain this difference. Meanwhile, this finding supports that teachers particularly employ rewards to encourage Thai students and incent their motivation in learning (Loima & Vibulphol, 2016). It may also add more evidence to the characteristics of English teachers that they are willing to encourage students to communicate and seize opportunity to keep good teacher-learner relationships (Borg, 2006).

Preventative strategy is the second most used one which contains some specific strategies that were reported used the most among all various classroom management strategies by Thai English teachers. This finding about Thai English teachers is in accordance with the trend that recommends prevention over reactive approaches to prevent students’ behavior problems, thus to help with improving the learning environment (Kern & Clemens, 2007).

Corrective strategies are still sometimes used by Thai English teachers, especially those are low intrusive or known as initial corrective strategies. It may result in the specific context in Thailand, students lack of patience in English study and they are inactive in learning (Noom-ura, 2013; Pruksakit & Kainzbauer, 2016), thus, they are likely to be talkative, use cellphone in English class and do not finish assignments. Therefore, corrective strategies are employed to decrease such student on-task behavior (Clunies-Ross, Little & Kienhuis, 2008).

5.2 The difference between experienced and novice Thai English teachers

The findings show that there is no significant difference between experienced and novice Thai English teachers towards applying classroom management strategies, it is in line with that there is no significant relation between teaching experience and choosing teaching strategies (Donnell & Gettinger, 2015). This may result in teachers

have acquired similar theoretical knowledge and encountered similar school context.

However, novice Thai English teachers believe that experienced teachers know more strategies and are better at classroom management. This finding confirms that novice teachers normally concern about lacking of strategies to handle students' disruptive behaviors (Browers & Tomic, 2000). Meanwhile, experienced Thai English teachers also state that they believe novice teachers have advantage in building good relationship with students, thus novice Thai English teachers can manage class well. This finding supports that it needs to help novice Thai English teachers build confidence in their performance, and to help them make experience be positive (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2007).

5.3 Teacher Decision to execute a classroom management strategy

The findings reveal that Thai English teachers prefer to discuss the problems they meet when teaching with colleagues, and learn a strategy from each other, as well as develop the strategy they choose through teaching experience. This finding adds a new knowledge that Thai English teachers are willing to communicate with colleagues, it is different from the research which conducted in European area that language teachers usually neglect the collaborative activities in professional development (Hismanoglu & Hismanoglu, 2010), this may reflect that, in Thai context, English teachers are confident in communicating with their colleagues and are supported in their teaching environment.

Meanwhile, several factors which influence Thai English teachers on their classroom management are identified. The factors can be summarized under three themes include Thai students' behavior problems, teacher's attitudes toward a strategy and teaching environment. This finding confirms the three factors which cause problems and influence teachers manage class, involving students, teachers and school environment (Sarıçoban & Sakizli, 2006). It also indicates that language teachers are continuously making decisions which are appropriate to the dynamic of classroom, and language teachers use different strategies based on their beliefs about how a strategy supports the teaching and learning process (Richard & Lockhart, 1994).

6. Implications

The present study sheds lights on the ideas of commonly used classroom management strategies in Thai English classroom in a secondary school context of Thailand. The findings can help those teachers who are looking for solutions to deal with the classroom management problems in Thai classrooms. First, the rewards include oral praise and to give extra point are suggested for teachers to employ to motivate Thai students in learning. Second, teachers are highly recommended to teach students the positive behaviors at very beginning,

Besides, school directors can use the findings to design the evaluation of teacher's teaching performance based on classroom management skill. Lastly, the teacher educators can use the knowledge to teach future teachers. Teacher educations can encourage the discussion among teachers, to help future teachers build confidence in classroom management, and to help teachers consider the factors which influence classroom management when making teaching plan, involve student, teacher and school environment.

7. Recommendations for future research

First, the present study has been conducted and completed in the context of Thai government high schools. The Thai government high school has its specific condition where the lower and upper secondary students share the same school area, thus a Thai English teacher may has experience in teaching both different level students. It will be interesting that the future study could be conducted to compare the difference between teachers' using classroom management strategies based on two different level students.

Second, the present study has applied survey to found the classroom management strategies used by Thai English teachers. It will be interesting to observe teacher teaching in real class, not only can we know what teacher do in class, but can we have a clear picture of what the behaviors of Thai students.

8. Conclusion

It was evident that the commonly used classroom management strategies by Thai English teachers were rewards strategy, preventative strategies and initial corrective strategies. Regardless of teaching experience, there was no significant difference in using classroom management strategies between experienced and novice teachers. Three factors were found to influence teachers' decision to employ classroom management strategies, namely students' behaviors, teacher's attitudes, and teaching environment

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