

Classroom Research: Challenging Experiences of Teachers Teaching Foreign Language in One Private School in Rayong Province, Thailand

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Abstract: *This study was designed to understand the difficult experiences of the teachers conducting classroom research and the steps they follow to do it. To reveal the difficulties that teachers faced and the necessary support various people within the school should offer to assist teachers in enhancing their classroom research journey. This study is a qualitative study applying a Phenomenological research strategy. Twelve Thai foreign language teachers (Chinese, English, and Japanese), who have at least two years of teaching experience in a selected sizeable private school in Rayong, Thailand were participants in this study. Purposive sampling was applied to identify the informants. The data collection method was semi-structured interviews. To code and categorize the obtained data systematically, this study followed the steps of data analysis proposed by Moustakas (1994), ATLAS.ti, which is the qualitative software for data analysis, was executed. This study reports four perspectives of foreign language teachers towards conducting classroom research; Six steps the foreign language teachers took when conducting their classroom research; About 12 types of difficulties found when foreign languages teachers conducted classroom research and three kinds of techniques to minimize the challenges while conducting classroom research.*

Keywords: foreign language teachers, difficult experience, challenging experience, classroom research.

Introduction

With the development of information and communication technology during recent decades, the quantity and power of knowledge has increased greatly, in order to adapt to the unprecedented global change, not only the developed countries, but also the developing countries have been making great efforts to build up international cooperation and networks in order to seek ways to develop their own country politically, economically and socially. Foreign language education becomes more and more important within the trend of globalization. In Thailand, among 19 languages taught, English and Chinese have been included at every level of education (Tangyuenyong & Choonharuangdej, 2010), in order to cope with the challenges of the 21st century and preparations for the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC). The Office of the Education Council, Thailand (2017) claims that, the

fields of science, technology, and English are becoming an essential requirement for Thai people's personal development. In this case, Thai foreign language teachers were highly regarded by the domestic society. However, some studies found that, most of the foreign language teaching outcomes produced poor results (Kaur, Young, & Kirkpatrick, 2016). This is caused by teaching in Thailand being predominantly teacher-centered and exam oriented. Students are given limited exposure to real life learning and less opportunities to involve themselves in hands-on experiences (Pennington, 1999, cited in Kaur, Young, Kirkpatrick, 2016). A lack of proficient teachers can also be attributed to Thai students' low academic performance (Baker & Lee, 2011). Another study found that, educators faced the challenge of low motivation among their students to engage in the language learning process (Saiyasombut & Voices, 2012). According to the education reform resulting from Thailand's National Education Act of 1999, which aimed to produce and develop educational personnel to meet the quality standards of an advanced profession (Office of the Education Council, 1999), it seeks to prepare teachers and improve the efficiency of the teaching profession by developing standard criteria of a professional teacher by following the 11th Education Development Plan of the Ministry of Education 2012-2016 (Office of the Permanent Secretary Ministry of Education, 2013).

In recent years in Thailand, there have been several attempts to change the way of educating teachers, with the belief that teachers are the most influential persons affecting universal student success. As stated in the National Education Act 1999 and Amendments Second National Education Act 2002, The National Education Act also outlined the requirement for teachers to conduct a classroom research project stating that "Besides a major responsibility of teaching, the teachers are required to research to develop suitable learning for learners at different levels of education" (ONEC, 2002, p. 13). It could appear that, teachers' professional development was highly demanded, classroom research could be one method for assisting teachers' professional development. For a long time, teachers tried to train learners to learn better and at the same time improve their teaching skills. As teachers gain more and more teaching experience, they could encounter and solve not only teaching challenges, but also they would come up with new teaching practices and ideas. Therefore, classroom research plays a vital role in the teaching career of teachers, classroom research is believed to be an essential tool for both pre-service teachers and in-service teachers to inquire into strategies for solving problems in the classroom and developing their teaching practice (Smith & Sela, 2005). Besides, Alexandra (2018) points out that using classroom research in the classroom allowed teachers to involve students in the curriculum process. Moreover, it gives teachers the confidence to get started, plan a project, collect data, publish findings, and then continue to enjoy the empowering energy of researching and learning (Stewart, 2013). At the same time, Conducting classroom research offers many benefits to teachers, such as professionalize teaching; enhancing their education and developing the motivation and efficacy of a weary faculty; meeting the needs of an increasingly diverse student group (Sagor, 2000). Mertler (2006) added that classroom research could foster the skill of inquiry in teachers. According to Zambo and Zambo (2006), through involvement in the research process, teachers can establish the habit and skills of reflection regarding their practices and thereby continue to learn from their own experiences and become better at teaching throughout their careers. Engaging in classroom research helps teachers to become more critical and analytical.

Because classroom research in the past, required teachers to develop various theoretical frameworks and methodological procedures for conducting classroom research (e.g., Allwright & Bailey, 1991; Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007; Dörnyei, 2007; McKay, 2006; Nunan & Bailey, 2009; Silverman, 2006), when teachers actually implement classroom research to try to enhance their teaching skills, numerous difficulties were found within the previous literature. Such as, Ulla (2018) conducted a report in the Philippines, he mentioned that lack of sufficient reference materials, lack of knowledge and skills in research contribute to a number of challenges. Wahyuni, (2020) also found lack of understanding of research and insufficient references caused difficulties in conducting classroom research.

In Thailand, Kunlasomboon, Wongwanich, and Suwanmonkha, (2015) highlighted that classroom research studies revealed problems in the Thai school system as follows: Classroom research has not been integrated into the teachers' standard working system; Classroom research has not been conducted on a continual basis, and there is not enough reflection in the classroom. Moreover, they also point out the Thai education system cannot fully utilize classroom research on an individual (researching teachers), organizational and professional level. The problems found in Thailand are similar to those found in other countries. Overseas research has revealed that classroom research does not have an impact on school learning as the learning happens only among the teachers who conduct isolated research that are sometimes rejected by other groups of teachers (Berge, Boles & Troen, 2005).

According to these previous studies, many researchers paid attention to foreign language teachers (Salmani-Nodoushan, 2006; Hassane, 2018; Edwards & Burns, 2015; Allwright, R., Allwright & Bailey, 1991), those researchers found that, compared with other teachers, foreign language teachers are also facing similar difficulties, when they are conducting classroom research. From the above review, one can see that while performing classroom research highlights a number of benefits and helps enhance both quality of students' learning and teaching professionalism of school foreign language teachers, there were many difficulties that impeded teachers from properly performing this critical task. To facilitate foreign language teachers in developing their teaching profession and solving students learning in classrooms, it is essential for educators and educational researchers to review points of concern, perspectives and experiences of Thai teachers teaching foreign language in a school, steps in conducting classroom research, survey problems teachers faced, and what kinds of necessary support that schools or government should offer to assist teachers in enhancing their skills in doing classroom research.

Research questions

The research questions of this study were:

1. What are the perspectives towards conducting classroom research of teachers teaching foreign languages in one private school in Rayong Province?
2. What are the steps of classroom research applied by teachers teaching foreign languages in one private school in Rayong Province when conducting their classroom research?
3. What kinds of difficulties and experience did the foreign language teachers face when conducting classroom research?

4. What are the suggestions teachers make in minimizing the challenges faced when doing their classroom research?

Literature Review

Definition of Classroom Research

In 1982, Kemmis and McTaggart defined classroom research as trying out the project ideas in practice as a means of improvement and as a means of increasing knowledge about the curriculum, teaching, and learning. Moreover, Gwyn (2001) highlighted that classroom research is a method of finding out what works best in the classroom so that it can improve student learning. There are different possible definitions for classroom research. Stewart (2013) identified classroom research as a process of investigating questions about teaching and learning that is undertaken systematically by teachers who want to understand their own work better. This agreed with Ferrance, (2000) that classroom research is a process in which informants examine their own educational practice systematically and carefully, using the techniques of analysis. Besides, classroom research refers to a wide variety of evaluative, investigative, and analytical research methods designed to diagnose problems or weaknesses — whether organizational, academic, or instructional — and to help educators develop practical solutions to address them quickly and efficiently (Glossary of Education Reform, 2015). According to Purohman, (2018) classroom research could be applied by the teachers as follows: 1) Students learning problems in school; 2) Teachers professional development; 3) Managing and controlling; 4) Learning design and strategy in the classroom; 5) Finding and developing behaviours and values as the thinking of students develops in a scientific way; 6) Learning tools development; 7) Treatment evaluation and 8) New teaching method implementation.

Above all, classroom research is a process in which teachers investigate teaching and learning to improve their own and their students' learning, allowing teachers to examine their own educational practice systematically and carefully. Moreover, it could help teachers develop practical solutions to address them quickly and efficiently when problems happened in the classroom.

Benefits of classroom research in education

Teachers could get huge benefits from conducting classroom research, and classroom research can help teachers understand what is happening in their classroom and identify changes that improve teaching and learning. It can also help answer questions that teachers have about the effectiveness of specific instructional strategies, the performance of particular students, and classroom management techniques (Kolk 2019). Moreover, classroom research provides teachers with new knowledge and understanding about how to improve educational practices or resolve significant problems in classrooms and schools (Mills, 2011; Stringer, 2008). Furthermore, classroom research provides multiple, beneficial opportunities for those professionals working within the teaching profession (Johnson, 2012; McTaggart, 1997). Additionally, classroom research could increase teacher empowerment (Book, 1996), empowered teachers can implement practices that best meet the needs of their students, and complement their particular teaching philosophy and instructional style (Johnson, 2012).

Above all, teachers who are willing to conduct classroom research could help them more and more become professionals in the education area. Using classroom research could assist them to identify the problems in the classroom quickly, using the right strategies and classroom management techniques could help them to solve the problems effectively and at the same time teaching and learning are improved.

Challenges in Conducting Classroom Research.

While conducting classroom research enhances the quality of education and helps both teachers and students to achieve learning goals, novice teachers lacking experiences in conducting this kind of action research could encounter various difficulties.

By reviewing relevant related studies, the research was able to find 11 types of difficulties, teachers may experience when conducting their classroom research. These include:

1. Teachers lack knowledge in conducting classroom research. (Norasmah & Chia, 2016; Biruk, 2013; Gulzina, 2019; Hackshaw, 2001; Glanz, 2014; Lo Castro, 1994; Office for National Educational Commission, 2002; Ellis & Loughland, 2016; Vásquez, 2017; Yohannes, 2011). This difficulty can clearly explain that limited training was one of the reasons limiting teachers from obtaining enough research knowledge necessary to address students' learning.

2. Many teachers do not have enough time to conduct classroom research (Norasmah & Chia, 2016; Joanna, 2018; Jantarakantee, Roadrangka, & Clarke, 2012). Working as a teacher; therefore, it is widely acknowledged that this job has a great number of responsibilities. Teachers were always busy in preparing teaching resources and plans. As a result, they could not find much time to work and continue on their research project. This was especially when conducting a study which required them to collect data and use a high-level of knowledge concerning statistics to analyse. Requiring a major portion of their time, thus, become hindrances encountered by teachers when conducting classroom research.

3. Many teachers could not identify the problems and questions when doing classroom research (Biruk, 2013; Gulzina, 2019; Jantarakantee, Roadrangka & Clarke, 2012; Hackshaw, 2001; Lo Castro, 1994; Vásquez, 2017). According to Hackshaw (2001), lacking knowledge and skills to identify the need or causes of classroom problems were regarded as one of their difficulties. Trying to determine the questions and challenges in conducting classroom research was sometimes too difficult for untrained teachers. It was found that many teachers do not know whether their research questions could correctly represent the existing problems, or the study could answer the questions or the hypotheses which were needed to formulate an investigation or improve their understanding of cases being studied.

4. Teachers do not know how to select teaching innovation to solve the problem in their classroom (Jantarakantee, Roadrangka & Clarke, 2012). There are countless teaching innovations and interventions for enhancing their teaching, not being able to identify what kind of innovative way they may use, limits their ability to design their research and solve the problems.

5. Support from the schools or universities for their research projects and research skills training were limited (Biruk, 2013; Jantarakantee, Roadrangka & Clarke, 2012;

Yohannes, 2011). The school or universities provided lack of research facilities and the classroom research training program which could help teachers develop the understanding of classroom research, and improve the teachers' research skills do not allow teachers to enhance their research knowledge and skills. Moreover, it has been reported that teachers find it hard to participate when opportunities arrived to conduct classroom research.

6. Teachers lacked confidence in conducting a classroom research project. (Gulzina, 2019; Jantarakantee, Roadrangka & Clarke, 2012; Hackshaw, 2001; Lo Castro, 1994). An example of the lack of confidence in understanding the correct procedures and employing the variety of data collection methods available

7. Teachers lack skills when conducting classroom research. (Norasmah & Chia, 2016; Biruk, 2013; Gulzina, 2019; Joanna, 2018; Jantarakantee, Roadrangka & Clarke, 2012; Glanz, 2014; Lo Castro, 1994; Vásquez, 2017). Teachers experience the problems of lacking the knowledge and skills to undertake action research to improve their actual involvement in conducting action research. On the other hand, teachers in the study area have insufficient knowledge and skills in undertaking action research.

8. Teachers are hesitant to undertake classroom research because the affective factors such as motivation and attitude of subjects. (Glanz, 2014; Hackshaw, 2001). Some teachers fear getting involved in classroom research; teachers could not see how research can enhance their work. Also, teachers concerns about validity when conducting the classroom research and the reliability of the study.

9. When teachers prepare to conduct the classroom research, some unexpected challenges may happen. (Baker & Lee, 2011). The unexpected difficulties here are when applying qualitative methodological procedures: classroom observations and stimulated recall interviews (SRIs) in classroom research.

10. Lack of collaboration among teachers when conducting classroom research. (Jantarakantee, Roadrangka, & Clarke, 2012; Nunan, 1990). Teachers may need to seek permission and understanding of other teachers in observing their students and/or in gaining feedback on the results of the study, or there may be administrative resistance to the research endeavor. Therefore, it caused some teachers a lack of opportunities to share their ideas and experiences in conducting classroom research as well.

11. Teachers could not conduct classroom research successfully because of an insufficient budget. (Biruk, 2013; Vásquez, 2017). The school or university where they are working lacks financial support when they are conducting their classroom research.

Steps of Conducting Classroom Research.

In doing educational research, teachers and educators have several choices for steps in conducting their classroom study. However, it has been found that the steps below in conducting classroom research were often reviewed and carried on.

The four basic steps in conducting classroom research are planning, action, observation and reflection, could also be seen as Kemmis and McTaggart (1988) mentioned in their study. These included 1) develop a plan of critically informed action to improve what is already happening, 2) act to implement the plan, 3) observe the effects of the critically informed work in the context in which it occurs, and 4) reflect on these effects as the basis for further planning, subsequent critically reported action and so on, through a succession of stages. In line with David Hopkins model (1993), plan, action, observe, and

reflection.

Sagor (2000) presented that classroom research can be engaged in by a single teacher, by a group of colleagues who share an interest in a common problem, or by the entire faculty of the school, he highlighted that classroom research always involves the same seven steps which become an endless cycle for the inquiring teacher, and these are the following: 1) Selecting a focus; 2) Clarifying theories; 3) Identifying research questions; 4) Collecting data; 5) Analyzing data; 6) Reporting results; 7) Taking informed action. Mettetal (2002) was in line with Sagor (2000), supporting similar steps to assist teachers who would like to conduct classroom research: 1) Identify a question or problem; 2) Review Literature 3) Plan a research strategy; 4) Gather data; 5) Make sense of the data; 6) Take action; 7) Share findings.

The above steps in conducting classroom research show that conducting classroom research is a continuous cycle process. Continuously conducting classroom research could support teachers to become more teaching professionals, grow up and can make use of their own experiences.

Research Design and Methodology

This study involved a qualitative research approach applying the phenomenological strategy. Twelve Thai teachers teaching foreign languages (Chinese, English, and Japanese), that have at least two years of teaching experience in a selected sizeable private school in Rayong, Thailand, were asked to attend semi-structured interviews with the researcher in a quiet room at their school. The steps of data analysis called “STEVIK-COLAIZZI-KEEN” proposed by Moustakas (1994) were used to analyses the data obtained from informants. The six steps of data analysis used in this study were presented below:

- 1) Begin with a full description of the personal experiences of the participants concerning the phenomenon.
- 2) Develop a list of significant statements.
- 3) Group the significant statements into “meaningful units” or themes.
- 4) Write a textural description.
- 5) Write a structural description.
- 6) Write a composite description of the phenomenon incorporating both the textural and structural descriptions.

Ethical Considerations

To prevent potential harm and promote the rights of informants in this study, the researcher considered the following ethical issues.

1. The interview questions were sent to a Burapha University research committee to ensure that all items were approved and aligned on the criteria of valid ethical standards. Teachers who had been willing to join this study were not identifiable.
2. Teachers who had been willing to join this study were not identifiable.
3. Since some informants were a bit worried that the consent form could identify their identity, the researcher could only persuade some participants to sign the consent documents.
4. The researcher did not release the names of the informants, who provided the researcher with their experiences. The researcher neither refers to the educational institution,

which was chosen for this study.

5. Before the interview, the researcher explained to his informants about the purposes of his research project and asked for their permission to record the conversation for the benefit of data analysis.

6. During the interview the informants had the right to provide only information that they feel comfortable to share with others and the informants could withdraw from the study at any time.

7. The researcher recorded the audio conversation, all transcriptions and any other type of data would never be shared with anyone. .

8. The ethical consideration in this study was submitted to Burapha University research committee for formal approval as required by Burapha University

Informants

Purposive sampling technique is the idea to draw up criteria that could help the researcher to identify the most suitable informants. The researcher believes that the informants who could provide him with useful information should be Thai teachers teaching foreign languages (Chinese, English, and Japanese), that have had at least two years of teaching experience in a selected sizeable private school in Rayong, Thailand.

Data instrument and data collection

In this study, the researcher applied semi-structured interviews to obtain data from his key informants. Harrell and Bradley (2009) noted that semi-structured interview technique allows researchers to adjust the order of their questions, ask some probing questions to clarify their understanding, go deeper into details as well as cross-checking information received from different interviews. Moreover, the semi-structured interview technique can, therefore, be used best if the interviewers have already planned areas and questions they want to ask, have skills and competence to ask additional questions to clarify their unclear answers as well as manage their limited time to cover all their set areas (Handcock, 1998)

Moreover, the researcher followed the “Data collecting process” proposed by Creswell (1998). This is because this method could assist the researcher in gathering the data, which the researcher needs in order to understand the meaning of the problems in this study from his informants, effectively. According to Creswell (1998, p. 110), the data collecting process refers to “a series of interrelated activities aimed at gathering good information to answer emerging research questions”. The data collecting process can be divided into seven activities consisting of 1) Locating site/individual, 2) Gaining access and making rapport, 3) Purposefully sampling, 4) Collecting data, 5) Recording information, 6) Resolving field issues, and 7) Storing data.

Data analysis

To analyze the data obtained from interviewees, the researcher transcribed the recorded audio files into text or document files. After all text files were created, the researcher identified possible themes according to steps of data analysis called modification of the STEVICK-COLAIZZI-KEEN Method of Phenomenological Data. These well-known steps of phenomenological data analysis were proposed by Moustakas (1994). Moustakas suggested that the following steps allowed the researcher to understand and search for essence experiences of the subjects of interest. This method consisted of six steps. They

were as follows: 1) Begin with a full description of the personal experiences of the informants concerning the phenomenon, 2) Develop a list of significant statements, 3) Group the significant statements into “meaningful units” or themes, 4) Write a textual description, 5) Write a structural description, and 6) Write a composite description of the phenomenon incorporating both the textual and structural descriptions.

Summary of findings

Table 1 Overview of findings

Research Question One: <i>What are the perspectives towards conducting classroom research of teachers teaching foreign languages in one private school in Rayong Province?</i>				
1. Conducting classroom research could benefit teachers		1) Allowing teachers to acknowledge students’ learning problems		
		2) Teachers could develop some potential solutions to solve the students’ learning problems.		
2. Conducting classroom research allows teachers to become aware of the effectiveness of teaching materials and may develop some additional ones to improve students with learning difficulties.				
3. Conducting classroom research is one of the teachers’ responsibilities.				
4. Conducting classroom research is an unnecessary process to improve students’ learning.				
Research Question Two: <i>What are the steps of classroom research applied by teachers teaching foreign languages in one private school in Rayong Province when conducting their classroom research?</i>				
Step 1 Identify the students’ learning problems.				
Observing/ interview students’ performance in/after their classroom	Suggestions given by other teachers or experts’ experience	Students test performance	Choosing their topics based on their interest	Reviewing existing research topics
Step 2 Considering potential classroom research solutions.				
Teachers’ own teaching experience		Reviewing the related literature		
Step 3 Developing and detailing the classroom research strategies				
Students’ reaction in the classroom	Students’ pretests performance	Experts’ suggestions	Review resources online/ literature review	
STEP 4 Developing tests to identify students needing additional learning				

Step 5 Evaluating students' learning performance
Step 6 Reporting of the findings
Research Question Three: <i>What kinds of difficulties and experience did the foreign language teachers face when conducting classroom research?</i>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Foreign language teachers facing difficulties in identifying the research topics while conducting classroom research 2. Teachers facing problems in searching related literature 3. Teachers experienced problems in research design section 4. Teachers have difficulties in identifying participants 5. Teachers have difficulties in choosing and developing materials 6. Teachers have difficulties in data collection and analysis 7. Teachers faced difficulties in implementing additional teaching materials 8. Teachers faced difficulties in evaluating the student's improvement 9. Teachers could not report their findings properly 10. Lack of support from colleagues/school 11. Time insufficient 12. Unexpected challenges happened
Research Question Four: <i>What are the suggestions teachers make in minimizing the challenges faced when doing their classroom research?</i>
1 Self-learning to minimize the challenges
2 Asking for assistance from outside school to minimize the challenges
3 Asking for assistance from their school to minimize the challenges

Source: developed by the researcher (2021)

Discussion

The participants in this study are Thai teachers teaching foreign languages (Chinese, English, and Japanese). They have at least two years of foreign language teaching experience in a / the selected school. The informant who has the longest teaching experience in this study has been teaching English for 31 years. All of the informants have experience in conducting some classroom research and, while about half of the informants have conducted more than five classroom research events. Over 90% informants are teaching over 18 hours/week. About 60% of informants in this study obtained Master's Degree.

Research question one "What are the perspectives towards conducting classroom research of teachers teaching foreign languages in one private school in Rayong Province?"

The researcher summarized four main points to address the first question:

1) Conducting classroom research could benefit to teachers.

Conducting classroom research allows teachers to acknowledge and identify students' language learning problems systematically. Moreover, teachers could gain

greater teaching experience, through acknowledging their students' learning difficulties, apply a suitable method to solve the students' learning problems. Thus, the professional development of teachers also increased.

Some examples of direct quotations supporting the above theme include:

- *//I think that conducting Classroom research benefits both teachers and students. It allows teachers to see students' learning problems and start thinking about what could be potential learning solutions they know or probably come across that could improve students' learning difficulties. (Teacher 1)//*
- *//... classroom research is a study to address problems in teaching and learning. I, therefore need to do my best to identify the problems and develop extra training programs to improve students with low performance. (Teacher 4)//*

The findings in this part were agreed with by Burns, Westmacott (2018), they found classroom research offers a form of systematic inquiry that is usually appealing to teachers as it enables a focus on areas of their own practice that they consider worth investigating. Meanwhile, Toquero (2021) believes that classroom research could provide a systematized process to reflect, implement and evaluate possible solutions, it enables teachers to search for solutions to real problems in schools to improve instruction and increase student learning. Moreover, Poole, Yue & Liujinya (2021) highlighted that, benefits of teachers engaging in classroom research could enable them to gain a deeper understanding of the learning process in the classroom, and the fostering of professional growth and pedagogical activity.

2) Conducting classroom research allows teachers to become aware of the effectiveness of teaching materials and may develop some additional ones to improve students with learning difficulties.

Around half informants in this study agreed, classroom research is a way to come up with additional methods to improve students' learning. Teachers could apply some treatment or additional practice to improve students' study they may wish to evaluate.

Some examples of direct quotations supporting the above viewpoints include:

- *//... I got useful sources of information guiding me on how I may arrange teaching activities (Teacher 3)//*
- *//I normally develop extra teaching materials to help my students with English learning difficulties... (Teacher 5)//*
- *//I personally like to organize games and activities to help improve my student learning who could not catch up with their friends in class... (Teacher 6)//*

Wulandari, Narmaditya, Utomo and Prayi (2019) conducted a study and found that, through classroom research teachers or lecturers could apply new methods and propose innovative learning. They believe that it is an effective way of exploring both teachers and students to achieve learning goals. Moreover, Poole, Yue, & Liujinya (2021) believe that, classroom research can help the teacher to develop as a teacher by addressing instrumental issues that relate to language learning. All the same, Borja (2018) (Borja) believed that research supported their instructional practices through improved teaching approaches, strategies, methods, styles, and instructional materials as additional techniques are being added to the repertoire of teaching technique.

3) Conducting classroom research is one of a teachers' responsibilities.

Around 30% of informants in this study thought conducting classroom research is the teachers' responsibility, they have to do the research due to the school and teaching certificate requirements.

Some examples of direct quotations supporting the above theme include:

- *//Research is something that I need to understand in order to pass my teaching certificate I am studying at the moment. It is also required by the school. (Teacher 2)//*
- *//It is the must do job. Instead of we should do it, we need to do it. This is because the school puts classroom research as one of the performance evaluation criteria...(Teacher 3)//*
- *//The school has required all the teachers to complete one classroom research paper. We all need to do as being requested. It is one of our performance evaluation criteria. (Teacher 10)//*

Sato and Loewen (2019) conducted a study that found that most of their participants expressed that it was the teacher's responsibility to access classroom research. Doing research has now become a part of every teacher's teaching evaluation and performance appraisal at the end of the school year. However, informants in this study mentioned that they were only motivated to do research because it was part of the requirements for their personal development, or school requirements, this implies that foreign language teachers doing research is more for teachers' personal rather than professional development (Mellati, Khademi, 2018; Ulla, 2018; Trent, 2018).

4) Conducting classroom research is an unnecessary process to improve students' learning.

Some foreign language teachers in this study view that it would be easier for them to help their students by giving alternative explanations to improve their students understanding, straight away when students express their unclear understanding in class.

Some examples of direct quotations supporting the above theme include:

- *//...many teachers found that it is a big burden. It may not really help students. It is just a task of making a five-chapter book. Teachers need to make this book according to the outlined format. (Teacher 11)//*
- *//...When the word "classroom research" is mentioned, many people feel bored, complicate and do not want to do it...The real benefits of conducting classroom research become not clear. (Teacher 12)//*

Lack of support from the school and the lack of sufficient reference materials (Ellis & Loughland, 2016), heavy workloads (Vásquez, 2017), caused teachers to not have enough time conducting research studies. This could be the reason why some teachers showed no interest in doing and conducting a research study (Ulla, 2018; Trent, 2018).

Research question two "What are the steps of classroom research applied by teachers teaching foreign languages in one private school in Rayong Province when conducting their classroom research?"

The researcher in this study summarized six steps that foreign language teachers in this study applied in their classroom research:

1. Identify the students' learning problems. According to the findings from the informants in this study, the foreign language teachers could identify their classroom

research topic in five ways, which is also in line with Haerazi, Vikasari, Prayati (2019), Macintyre (2000) Wulandari, Narmaditya, Utomo and Prayi, (2019); James and Augustin (2018):

1) Teachers identify research questions by observing students' performance in their classroom, some teachers may prefer to identify research questions by interviewing their students after class;

Some examples of direct quotations supporting the above theme include:

- *//I observe students who move up to my class. Most reactions, which students respond to in my classes, are noticed and observed... (Teacher 1)//*
- *//I detected students learning problems from how students answer my questions... (Teacher 6)//*

2) Teachers identify their research topics from suggestions given by other teachers or experts' experience;

Some examples of direct quotations supporting the above theme include:

- *//I have known that other teachers have sometimes used a computer game... I then thought that I will try using a game which shares the similar characteristic in my class. As a result, it became the idea of my research topic. (Teacher 2)//*
- *//The inspiration of my classroom research was from listening to a lecturer from my M.Ed lecturer... (Teacher 10)//*

3) Teachers identify their research topics by giving students some tests, the test performance could later on be used to distinguish students with learning difficulties;

Some examples of direct quotations supporting the above theme include:

- *//I can tell whether my students carefully read the passages in their test paper or not. This is because even though the answers were clearly displayed in the passages, my students still chose wrong answers. From this point, it started thinking that I should do something to attract their reading interest. This was the point leading me to come up with my classroom research. (Teacher 5)//*
- *//To begin my research process, I intentionally asked my students and developed my own test paper to evaluate them to find out their additional learning needs. (Teacher 8)//*

4) Teachers choosing their classroom research topics based on their interest, those topics they are interested in may be chosen from previous classroom research, or students' frequent learning problems;

Some examples of direct quotations supporting the above theme include:

- *//I am interested in improving the ways students pronounce the ed sounds. Each year, I did the same research with all new students studying with me. I closed my eyes and asked students to pronounce the word with ed sounds from the slides showed on the screen. I always found that most students pronounce the words wrongly. (Teacher 10)//*
- *// I had some new research idea that I think it sounds interesting. However, without having knowledge or finding related previous studies, I do not know where to start, or how to design the study. I don't know how deep I should go to bring up the acceptable answers. (Teacher 11)//*

5) Teachers identify their research topics from reviewing existing research topics, teachers in this study believe by reviewing previous studies could support them to get ideas from research topics selection.

Some examples of direct quotations supporting the above theme include:

- *//...To get a research topic which sounds possible, I need to get more ideas from surfing the internet. By doing this, I can see how other people wrote their research title. Then ask myself whether I may develop mine from these ideas. (Teacher 3)//*
- *//...I remember that I used to read an article teaching students to memorize the tense structure by just teaching only 6 tenses. If teachers could help students memorize 6 tenses, the teachers can further help their students to convert them to the rest. I think I may conduct this study in the near future. (Teacher 10)//*

2. Considering potential classroom research solutions. In this study, the informants shared two ways of considering potential classroom research solutions.

1) Making the decision about potential solutions to improve student-learning difficulties by teachers' own teaching experience.

Some examples of direct quotations are:

- *//...I think most foreign language teachers usually design new teaching methods that they could do to help their students based on their personal viewpoints and experience they have come across or from seeing other teachers do in the past. (Teacher 2)//*
- *//After I identified the problem, I used my own judgement to make the decision of the solution, which I could do to address the language problems of my students. As experienced teachers, most of the time I could recognise how to improve certain language skills. (Teacher 4)//*

2) Reviewing the related literature to get some solution ideas for improving student learning before making the classroom research plan.

Some examples of direct quotations are:

- *//...My research design is based on my personal viewpoints towards the problem and the belief about the ways that problem may be solved. To support the belief, I then reviews some studies that introduced the similar problem solving technique I had planned to implement. (Teacher 7)//*
- *//..., before making the decision about the approach or solving problem techniques, I did review the previous research paper addressing the similar problems I found with my students...(Teacher 9)//*

These two kinds of ways are in line with Da, Araújo, Rodriguez, Vasquez (2018); Beninghof (2020); Holstein, Hong, Tegene, McLaren, and Alevan (2018); Stronge (2018).

3. Developing and detailing the classroom research strategies.

The majority of the informants in this study prefer to identify the participants by applying purposive sampling technique, some teachers prefer to identify their participants through their students' reaction in the classroom and, some may apply pretests to identify their students who need to be included in their classroom research study. After that some foreign language teachers will do it according to the experts' suggestions, some may review resources online/literature review or by their own experience developing additional

teaching materials to address students' learning problems (Pramantik & Burhaein, 2019; James & Augustin, 2018).

Some examples of direct quotations are:

- *//I started by identifying students who needed to improve their pronunciation skills even before I developed the teaching materials. (Teacher 4)//*
- *//...I am aware that I need to deliberately select the words students should know in their level of the CEFR group. That is the way I used to guide me developing pre-test, post-test and additional teaching materials. (Teacher 10)//*
- *//I surfed the internet to review possible games, which I could use in my classroom. (Teacher 6)*
- *//...I picked up the reading passages and exercises, which were one grade lower than their current grade... (Teacher 5)*
- *//..., Grade 7th to Grade 8th students play games on their mobile phone during their lunch break and before going back home. When they played the game, they also concentrate..., I just think that playing games asking them to compete with each other could well motivate them to do their best. Everyone would love to have their names together with their high scores on the score board on the big screen at the front of the class... (Teacher 2)//*
- *//I always found more than one related research to study potential methodology. This is because the chance is some researchers came up with easier research methodology which I could follow. (Teacher 3)//*
- *In fact, when I found any learning problems, I quickly jump from the problems to what research plans I need to develop to improve my students. (Teacher 12)//*

4. Developing tests to identify students needing additional learning.

Developing tests could assist foreign language teachers to collect students' performance data and students' performance analysis, choosing and applying suitable additional learning for their students (Herrera, 2018; Spencer, Molina 2018; Ulla, 2018). In this step, foreign language teachers in this study applied:

1) Choosing/developing tests

- *//I did pretest and posttest technique so that I could analyze the averages between the two tests to report the students' improvement... (Teacher 7)//*
- *//The words which I want my students to do in the pretest, I deliberately use the ones based on the level they need to know for the CEFR group. (Teacher 8)//*

2) Dividing students into different groups. James and Augustin (2018) mentioned in their research that, monitoring the implementation of classroom research step, should precede the evaluation of its effects.

- *//...I had to divide my students into two groups... each group could then receive different treatment... (Teacher 2)//*
- *//I need to divide students into two groups. Those who already enjoy reading English and the ones who do not like reading English. (Teacher 5)//*

5. Evaluating students' learning performance.

In this study, all the foreign language teachers applied pretest and posttest as a tool to evaluate the students' performance improvement after treatment.

Some examples of direct quotations are:

- *//I evaluate students' improvement at the end of my study by giving a posttest to the students in both groups. (Teacher 1)//*
- *//...I simply displayed and compared only the average scores between Pretest and posttest scores... (Teacher 5)//*
- *//I did pretest and posttest technique so that I could analyze the averages between the two tests to report the students' improvement... (Teacher 7)//*

Tests could be used to measure and compare students' achievement before and after treatment (Nurhayati, Rosmaiyadi, Buyung, 2018). Indradhini, (2018) also agreed treatment evaluation could be applied by designing a pre-test before treatment and post-test after treatment for the students.

6. Reporting of the findings.

In this step, the researcher found that, most teachers did not present the discussion part in their findings report. Meanwhile, some teachers did not use related literature to support their findings as well.

- *//..., I just report the differences between their pretest score and posttest. I did not further discuss or provide any supporting theories or reasons to support the claim. We are not required to do. (Teacher 2)//*
- *//...I simply displayed and compared only the average scores between Pretest and posttest scores. I did not discuss or compare whether my findings agreed or disagreed with other research... (Teacher 5)//*

The researcher suggests adding discussion points into classroom research. The purpose of adding the discussion point is to allow the teachers to step back from their own classrooms and interpret how their work might be anchored to the larger problems and issues addressed within the field of education (Spencer, Molina, 2018).

Research question three “What kinds of difficulties were experienced by the foreign language teachers that they had to face when conducting classroom research?”

Addressing the research question three in this study, the researcher found 12 kinds of difficulties that foreign language teachers experienced while conducting classroom research,

1. Foreign language teachers faced difficulties in identifying the research topics while conducting classroom research. Which in line with Wulandari, Narmaditya, Utomo and Prayi (2019), Toquero, (2021), Ulla, (2018).

- *//... If I cannot identify the real cause of the problem impeding their learning, improving students learning will be too challenging. Identifying causes of students learning difficulties, which lead to the research topic, is tough. (Teacher 7)//*
- *//I think to identify problems in students learning is also difficult. It is easy for me to misunderstand what is the root cause of the problem... (Teacher 8)//*

2. Teachers face problems in searching related literature. Wahyuni, (2020), Toquero, (2021), Poole, Yue, Liujinya, (2021) also found this problem in their research.

- *//..., the difficult phase of conducting classroom research is to find out previous studies relating to the research I am doing. I think this process often took too much time... (Teacher 4)//*
- *//One difficulty I encountered when conducting my classroom research was to find out some literature review for chapter 1... (Teacher 5)//*

3. Teachers experienced problems in the research design section. Which also supported by Toquero, (2021), Joanna, (2018), Ngulube, (2018).

- *//I do not know other research design apart from conducting quantitative research study... (Teacher 1)//*
- *//I found the problem, which I do not know how to design my research... I do not know which areas I should fix first and how to design my research... (Teacher 7)//*

4. Teachers have difficulties in identifying participants. Some foreign language teachers found difficulties in identifying their participants, which may be caused by the limited knowledge / skills in participant selection (Tindowen, Guzman, Macanang, 2019; Wulandari, Narmaditya, Utomo, and Prayi, 2019).

- *//Some students may not understand why they had to repeat the same lesson they had already done in their classroom because not all students need the treatments... ((Teacher 1)//*
- *//I don't have knowledge on selecting students to participate in my study. I don't know whether I need to include all the students in my classroom research or not... (Teacher 10)//*

5. Teachers have difficulties in choosing and developing materials. In this study, the researcher found that some teachers could not amend their teaching material impeded teachers from developing effective treatment or developing and choosing appropriate teaching materials (Burns, Westmacott, 2018; Ulla, 2018).

- *//Because I have a very limited knowledge and ideas about designing other forms of classroom research, I have never organized other styles of treatment in my research except introducing students to some games. (Teacher 6)//*
- *//Another difficult thing I found is that searching for learning innovation that properly meets the needs of my students..., selecting suitable additional training materials to train them was not easy for me. (Teacher 7)//*

6. Teachers have difficulties in data collection and analysis (Toquero, 2021; Wulandari, Narmaditya, Utomo & Prayi, 2019). The researcher has found three root causes that impede foreign language teacher's data collection process:

1) Without a proper hypothesis impedes teachers applying data collection and analyzing techniques;

- *//...but I don't know how to set the proper hypothesis and if I could set the complicate one which I don't know how to, the next problems are how to collect data and analyze it (Teacher 2)//*

2) Limited analysis skills caused teachers to face difficulties in developing and analyzing data;

- *The most difficult phase to me was choosing correct statistics to analyze my data... (Teacher 4)//*

3) Students' poor cooperation influenced teachers' data collection.

- *//It is also difficult for me to meet my students. As a result, often I cannot collect the data as planned. Some students did not come at the time we agreed (Teacher 8)//*

7. Teachers facing difficulties in implementing additional teaching materials which supported by Zwane, Malale, (2018). Poole, Yue, Liujinya, (2021) and Ulla, (2018) found

that improving teachers' basic research knowledge could enhance their teaching material development and implementation.

- *//Choosing suitable reading books for training students in my study is also difficult. Sometimes, I do not know whether the passages I chose are too difficult for my students...(Teacher 4)//*
- *//... After playing games, I found that only half of them could remember new words learned from games in the classroom...(Teacher 6)//*

8. Teachers facing difficulties in students' evaluation improvement. According to the information in this study, foreign language teachers believe that lacking data evaluation methods/limited teaching materials may impede foreign language teachers understanding and evaluating the results of the treatments assigned to their students, supported by Wulandari, Narmaditya, Utomo and Prayi, (2019) and Toquero, (2021).

- *//...I would not know how my students actually start their Chinese alphabet writing or write correctly. In other words, in writing Chinese alphabet, teachers need to make sure that each line needs to be written in sequence. (Teacher 2)//*
- *//...,if I had understood more about various statistics I could use. Perhaps comparing the averages between pretest and posttest could not clearly confirm the improvement of the students. (Teacher 5)//*

9. Teachers could not report their findings properly. Most foreign language teachers in this study experienced difficulties in findings report section, which included they could not report their findings properly, and they do not know how to present their results. Which in line with Wahyuni, (2020), Wulandari, Narmaditya, Utomo, and Prayi (2019) and CORTES, (2019).

- *//I finally reported my research findings by comparing the differences between the averages of pretest and posttest scores. However, I did not cite other research to support my findings. I do not know if I have to... (Teacher 6)//*
- *//...I do not know how to report or provide any supports. (Teacher 1)//*

10. Lack of support from colleagues/school. In this study, some foreign language teachers could not receive suitable suggestions about conducting classroom research from their colleagues or from their school. Which in line with Carpenter, Linton (2018), Ulla (2018), Toquero, (2021).

- *...I do all of this without getting my work checked or receiving proper consultation from experts. I really think that the school should get some experts to train how to use SPSS because our teachers may need to use the similar calculation techniques to analyze other research projects. (Teacher 1)//*
- *..., there was no one who could help provide the teachers with correct guidelines. What I could do was surfing the internet to review related paper myself. (Teacher 9)//*

11. Time insufficient. Teachers' heavy workload and tight timetable, impeded foreign language teachers conducting classroom research while teaching class at the same time (Wahyuni, 2020, Borja, 2018, Ulla, 2018).

- *//...,I have a number of heavy workload. Therefore, completing one classroom research was not an easy task. (Teacher 5)//*

- *//...I planned to implement my research planned with a large group of the students during the limited time. The result was I could not do as I had planned. (Teacher 9)//*

12. Unexpected challenges happened. The COVID-19 pandemic is a huge challenge to the foreign language teachers conducting classroom research, which caused the teachers, not being able to design classroom research, or developing/applying additional training materials for their students in the classroom. Moreover, it also influenced teachers' data collection process. Social distancing and restrictive movement policies have markedly transformed traditional educational practices (Kaup, Jain, Shivalli, Pandey, & Kaup, 2020), schools and colleges now have to apply online teaching and virtual education (Daniel, 2020).

- *...During the spread of the covid 19 situation, parents might not feel safe enough to let their kids come to school. As a result, I could not get everybodys test result. (Teacher 8)//*

Research question four “What kinds of techniques do foreign language teachers apply to overcome their difficulties when conducting classroom research?”

According to the informants in this study, the researcher summarized three kinds of techniques that foreign language teachers applied to overcome the difficulties while conducting classroom research.

1. Self-learning to minimize the challenges. Teachers solve their problems by using related resources, which they could find online or related books/literatures, this point of view matched with Kalman (2019), McGrew, Breakstone, Ortega, Smith, & Wineburg (2018), and Tan, Wu, Li, & Xu (2018) agreed that teachers could get support from reading books and searching on the Internet.

- *//... I surf the internet and see what materials are free and available for me to download and use. ... (Teacher 1)//*
- *//When I encountered some difficulties in conducting classroom research, I often search for the solutions on the internet. (Teacher 5)//*

2. Asking for assistance from outside school to minimize the challenges. Some foreign language teachers prefer to attend some classroom research training courses which are organized by their school, some may ask for suggestions from the university where they used to study, to enhance their classroom research skills and knowledge. Which was in line with, Ong, Smith, and Ko (2018), Habibi, Mukminin, Riyanto, Prasojo, Sulistiyo, Sofwan, and SAUDAGAR (2018).

- *// I learned from attending the teaching research training advised by a lecturer from BUU ... (Teacher 4)//*
- *//..., I have a chance to review some interesting pieces of research work, as well as some research designs presented by my classmates and comments by the lecturer. (Teacher 6)//*

3. Asking for assistance from their school to minimize the challenges. Some foreign language teachers usually ask for help/suggestions from other teachers in their school, a few teachers also asked for help from their students assisting them with data analyzing. On the other hand, some teachers may ask for support from their school.

- *//I also learned how to compute mean scores and standard deviation of my data by asking 12th grade students. Some students are good at mathematics. They*

could help me with the numbers. (Teacher 10)//

- *//...a teacher is responsible for research of all teachers in this school. She graduated in the education research field... (Teacher 4)//*

Poole, Liujinya (2021) claims that, the school could provide academic support by involving academics to facilitate teachers' academic writing, provide ongoing and timely support during the research process to guide the teachers to overcome difficulties, and also to review their papers before being submitted to peer-reviewed journals. Pambuena and Bernarte (2018) recommended that support in terms of research training could strengthen teachers' research skills, which was in line with Toquero (2021).

Contributions and Recommendations

This research was conducted with qualitative research. The purpose of this study is to investigate perspectives toward classroom research based on experiences of foreign language teachers, the researcher viewed that by using a qualitative study, the researcher could get the details of the interviewees' experiences.

Some suggestions based on findings in this study are presented as follows:

- The school management team and Thai universities aside, teachers required rich experience in conducting classroom research, including scientific and technical knowledge, methodological experience, knowledge of technological means, correct grammar, proper procedures in identifying and planning the issues and time needed for the formulation of the research project. According to this study it found that, foreign language teachers know that, classroom research could benefit teachers themselves for professional development, and gaining teaching experience. However, foreign language teachers are hesitant to undertake classroom research, due to various difficulties they have experienced and which have impeded them from conducting research, such as lack of classroom research skills and knowledge, lack of support from the school and lack of time to conduct classroom research. In order to support foreign language teachers conducting classroom research.

1. Schools and universities could design classroom research training programs for the teachers, the contents which should be included in the training program could be, classroom research basic knowledge, research skills, and methodology. Moreover, developing strategies, solving problems and acquiring academic skills and research skills that incorporate the ability to observe, hypothesize, analyse, evaluate results, developing and implementing additional teaching materials, should all be included.

2. Schools should provide a budget or journals' membership to support teachers' accessing literature and developing and choosing teaching materials for teachers.

3. Foreign language teachers need to balance their work life and personal life, the school management team should give them a considerable number of hours for teaching and conducting research, they will then be able to deliver their work more effectively and efficiently.

4. Classroom research could promote collaboration - schools and universities should provide a collaborative environment between each other, so that, teachers could share their findings with others, see the solutions to common issues in teaching, and discussing problems experienced in conducting research. At the same time, schools and

universities could acknowledge the voice from teachers, understand their difficulties, knowing their needs, and providing appropriate support, it also could improve teachers' motivation to undertake classroom research.

On the other hand, heads of education departments and educational institutions, could develop an appropriate reward system, which might include bonuses or could establish benefits for the teacher's career development awards. Encouraging teachers to produce high quality and creative research, could enhance education quality and educator's professional teaching.

- On the foreign language teacher's side, classroom research is one of the techniques to improve teachers, it is also a process of lifelong learning, so teachers should participate in classroom research courses and activities. With rich classroom research experience, it could help teachers arrange their time more reasonably and achieve effective research. Moreover, the steps found in this study could be a guideline to support teachers to undertake classroom research, and all the difficulties which were found in this study and the ways that teacher's implemented solutions to overcome the challenges, could also help teachers to minimize or avoid the challenges which may be experienced.

Recommendations for Future Research

As this study is a qualitative study, which has only 12 foreign language teachers in one selected school as informants, the data and the findings may not provide a sound representation of all school teachers in Thailand. The researcher highly suggests that more qualitative and quantitative studies should be undertaken in all private and public schools, which could explore or test the teachers' standard of classroom research knowledge and difficulties the other teachers faced while conducting classroom research, as well as to find out effective training methods to enhance teachers' classroom research skills and knowledge, improving educational development in Thailand.

Studies of classroom research to explore or investigate using a different focus, the researcher also suggested that, future study could focus on the teachers who have rich classroom research experience, to explore or acknowledge what are the steps they applied while conducting classroom research, and how they dealt with challenges they faced while conducting classroom research, it could show the teachers some good examples for professional development.

Another study could focus on the difficulties that teachers faced while conducting classroom research, to design suitable classroom research training programs to observe or as an experiment to evaluate the outcomes.

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