Enhancing Four English Skills for Pre-Intermediate Students in the Mon Buddhist Society at Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University (Main Campus), Thailand

Mi Non Htaw Mon, Ven. Ponnyar Nonda
Faculty of Education, Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University
Corresponding Author E-mail: nonhtawmon74@gmail.com

Abstract

This research aims to: (1) compare pre- and post-learning test results to evaluate the effectiveness of English Language skills enhancement program, (2) analyze student feedback and behaviors during the learning period to define the factors that influence the development of the language skills and, (3) advance the four English Language skills such as listening, speaking, reading and writing of pre intermediate students in Mon Buddhist Students Society (MBSS) at Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University (Main Campus). A quasi-experimental one-group pretest-posttest design utilized in this study and a sample of eighteen students designated through the purposive sampling. The data collection instruments included a four-skills proficiency test (pre-test and post-test) and a feedback survey, as well as behavioral observation during the 10-week program. Descriptive statistics were used to analyze the quantitative data from the pre- and post-tests, while qualitative data from feedback and observations underwent a thematic analysis to identify emerging factors and trends.

The research findings showed that listening skills improved significantly by 30%, while speaking and reading skills improved slightly by 2% and 1% respectively. Writing skills, however, saw a slight decline by 6%. The students' feedback and behavioral observations reflected increased engagement, practical application of knowledge, and development in group collaboration. The findings highlight that the practical, task-based activities are significantly effective for improving language proficiency particularly listening and speaking skills. On the other hand, there is an urgent need to develop more effective teaching strategies and practices to boost the writing skills in the near future.

Keywords: English Proficiency, Four English Skills, Task-Based Learning, Engagement, Quasi-Experimental

Introduction

In the contemporary global context, Proficiency in English is crucial for the academic achievement, career advancement and successful cross culture communication. Thailand has recognized this significance regarding the 2023–2027 English Language Policy Framework, which highlights English as a strategic tool to foster regional integration and mobility (Ministry of Education Thailand, 2023). Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University (MCU) has implemented plenty of English language programs in alignment with this national policy to contribute to both global goals and national education strategies (Mahachulalong kornrajavidyalaya University, 2023). Among these initiatives, the Mon Buddhist Students Society (MBSS) plays a crucial role by setting up student-centered, community-based events that enhance peer learning and cultural interaction in academic contexts (Mon Buddhist Students Society, 2023).

Despite these initiatives, a large number of MCU students still struggle with their English language skills, which has a detrimental effect on their academic performance and future employment opportunities. Similar trends may be seen across Thailand's higher education system, where students regularly fall short of practical proficiency while receiving formal training for years. Students' lack of confidence in speaking and listening is one of the primary problems, according to Kongsom (2016) and Khamkhien (2010). This is frequently caused by a lack of exposure to real-life communication opportunities and cultural norms that discourage active participation in interactive language activities.

These persistent difficulties highlight the necessity of creative and contextually aware methods of teaching English, especially in specialized Buddhist educational environments. Richards & Rodgers (2014) stress the value of communicative techniques in fostering accuracy and fluency, while Nunan (2004) supports task-based language teaching (TBLT) as a technique that encourages student participation and practical application of language abilities. These approaches fit in well with Thailand's present emphasis on developing functional language proficiency and are ideal for meeting the unique requirements of students in monastic settings.

Although Communicative language teaching (CLT) and Task based language Teaching (TBLT) are increasingly common in mainstream education, their implementation in Buddhist monastic institutions remains underexplored. Students in these environments frequently have distinct learning preferences that are shaped by institutional, cultural, and religious factors. This study aims to address that gap by applying a task-based instructional model grounded in Kolb's experiential learning theory and Vygotsky's social development theory. These frameworks place a strong emphasis on the value of social interaction and experiential learning. The objectives of the study are (1) to evaluate the effectiveness of the teaching program through pretest and posttest, (2) to investigate the factors influencing language acquisition through the student feedback and classroom observation and (3) to improve the four English language skills of pre-intermediate MBSS students. The results are intended to guide English instruction in similar religious and community-based educational environments.

Research Objectives

1. To compare pre-test and post-test results to determine the effectiveness of the language intervention program.

2. To analyze student feedback and behavioral observations to identify factors contributing to language skill development.

3. To enhance English language proficiency across the four core skills—reading, writing, listening, and speaking—among pre-intermediate students in the MBSS.

Research Methodology

This section outlines the methodological approach employed to evaluate the impact of a communicative, task-based English language program on pre-intermediate learners. A comprehensive mixed-methods approach was utilized to gain a thorough understanding of both language performance outcomes and learner experiences throughout the intervention.

Research Design

This study utilized a quasi-experimental one-group pretest-posttest design, combining both quantitative and qualitative methods to present the comprehensive of the effectiveness of the language intervention. Regarding to Pregoner (2024), This design is especially appropriate for educational settings where randomized control groups might not be practical. This approach allows the researchers to investigate the effectiveness of the targeted interventions by comparing the performance of the students before and after implementation simultaneously gathering insightful through qualitative data collection methods

Theoretical Framework

The use of interactive, contextually relevant tasks in second language acquisition is supported by all three theoretical frameworks considered collectively

particularly for students who gain from socially mediated learning experiences.

Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) (Richards & Rodgers, 2001), which emphasizes the functional use of language for meaningful communication rather than rote memorization of grammar rules. This method supports Hymes (1972) idea of communicative competence by placing a high value on learner interaction and genuine language use in everyday contexts.

Experiential Learning Theory (Kolb, 2015) which promotes learning through a cycle of direct experience, reflection, conceptualization, and application. This framework encourages students to actively engage with language in order to generate knowledge, supporting the interactive, hands-on aspect of the language exercises used in the study.

Social Development Theory (Vygotsky, 1978) which highlights the role of social interaction and scaffolding in cognitive development. Since learning happens best in the "zone of proximal development" through peer interaction and directed engagement, this theory supports the collaborative elements of the intervention.

Population and Sample

The target group was made up of pre-intermediate English language learners at Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University (MCU), Main Campus, who were members of the Mon Buddhist Society (MBSS). The selection of 18 students was based on their availability, consistency of proficiency level (as assessed by initial placement examinations), and willing involvement in the program. Purposive sampling was used, as explained by Creswell (2014). The instructional content and intervention goals were in line with the participants' skill levels thanks to this sampling strategy.

Research Procedure

The ten-week language intervention was divided into three weekly sessions lasting 120 minutes each to give participants regular exposure to English language training. The intervention was structured to offer early help that progressively decreased as learners developed confidence and independence, in accordance with Gibbons (2015) scaffolded approach to language learning.

Table 1 Research Activities

Week(s)	Focus	Activities
Week 1	Orientation, Pre-Test, feedback & behavior Track	- Brief of the program, Pré-test- Collection of qualitative feedback from learners
Weeks 2-9	Task-Based Instruction	- Role-play for pragmatic and situational language use- Group discussions to build fluency and collaborative communication- Listening tasks using audio-based materials- Real-life applications to reinforce authentic language use- Collection of qualitative feedback from learners
Week 10	Post-Test, feedback & behavior Track	- Final post-test- Collection of qualitative feedback from learners

Data Collection

Data were collected through both quantitative and qualitative instruments to provide a comprehensive understanding of the intervention's impact:

Table 2 Techniques

Method	Tools/Techniques	Purpose
Quantitative	Pre- and post-tests	- Measuring proficiency in reading, writing, listening, and speaking
	Student satisfaction surveys	- Assessing engagement and perceived usefulness
Qualitative	Semi-structured interviews	- Exploring student reflections on the learning process
	Behavioral observations during classroom activities	- Assessing interaction and participation

Data Analysis

Mixed-methods approach required distinct analytical strategies for different data types:

Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics (percentage changes) to evaluate skill development across the four domains. Pre-test and post-test scores were compared in accordance with Andrade and Du's (2007) suggestions in order to ascertain the statistical significance of the performance changes that were found.

Qualitative data underwent thematic analysis as outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006) to identify recurring patterns in learner engagement, attitudes, and application of language skills. The process included data familiarization, generation the initial codes, looking for, reviewing and defining the themes as well as producing the analysis. The impact of the intervention was then better understood by triangulating the qualitative insights with the quantitative results

Research Findings

This section presents the key results of the study in alignment with the three research objectives. Student's progress in English proficiency, the evaluation of their perceptions of the learning experience and observe behavioral changes during the intervention are all evaluated through a systematic analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data.

Objective 1: Comparison of Pre-Test and Post-Test Results

Table 3 illustrates the differences in student performance across the four English language skills before and after the intervention.

Table 3 Pre- and Post-Test Performance by Skills

Skills	Pre-Test (%)	Post Test (%)	Improvement (%)	Key Factors
Listening	53	83	+30	Audio-based activities
Speaking	78	80	+2	Role-playing, discussions
Reading	67	68	+1	Limited comprehension tasks
Writing	83	77	-6	Lack of feedback, insufficient scaffolding

These findings demonstrate that listening skills have significantly improved, speaking skills have moderately improved, and reading abilities have hardly improved. Writing scores marginally decreased, indicating that more instructional support is needed in that area.

Objective 2: Analysis of student feedback and behavioral observations

Student feedback was collected through pre- and post-intervention surveys, offering insights into learners' satisfaction and perceived effectiveness of the instructional approach as shown in Table 4. Then, qualitative observations were systematically recorded throughout the intervention to monitor changes in student behavior and participation as presented in Table 5.

Table 4 Summary of Student Feedback

Category	Pre (1-5)	Post (1-5)	Improvement
Course Content	2.5	3.5	+1.0
Teaching Methods	3.0	4.0	+1.0
Learning Materials	3.0	3.5	+0.5
Relevance to Daily Life	3.5	4.5	+1.0

The data indicates that students found the learning experience increasingly relevant and engaging, particularly due to the real-life application of tasks and interactive teaching methods.

Table 5 Summary of behavioral observations

Behavior Category	Pre (%)	Post (%)	Improvement (%)
Peer/Teacher Engagement	78	83	+5
Punctuality/Attendance	100	100	-
Group Contribution	75	95	+20
Individual Contribution	76	81	+5
Participation	50	88	+38

These observations reflect enhanced student engagement, improved collaboration, and increased active participation—suggesting the effectiveness of task-based, socially interactive learning methods.

Objective 3: To Enhance English Language Proficiency Across the Four Core Skills

Table 3 demonstrated varied progress in students' proficiency across the four English skills

Listening improved significantly by 30%, largely attributed to the implementation of audio-based, real-life tasks that provided authentic language input.

Speaking increased by 2%, with students reporting higher confidence and willingness to participate through structured role-plays and facilitated group discussions.

Reading saw a slight improvement of 1%, indicating a need for more engaging and challenging texts that better support comprehension development.

Writing declined by 6%, suggesting insufficient feedback mechanisms and inadequate scaffolding during writing activities.

Discussion

The study indicated various levels of proficiency in the four language abilities, which has significant implications for teaching language in specialized educational settings

Regarding Objective 1, The findings of the pre-test and post-test show significant improvement, particularly in listening abilities, which increased by 30%. This notable improvement supports the findings of Vandergrift & Goh (2012), who found that realistic audio assignments successfully improve comprehension by exposing students to contextual signals and natural language patterns. In line with Richards & Rodgers (2014) focus on communicative practice, speaking abilities improved by 2%, indicating that role-plays and group discussions contributed to an increase in pragmatic competence and confidence. But writing decreased by 6% and reading only increased by 1%, underscoring the need for more interesting reading materials and focused writing exercises, as recommended by Lynch (2013) and Harmer (2007).

In relation to Objective 2, Qualitative data revealed important new information about the variables influencing language development. Although many students continued to struggle with vocabulary restrictions, which Nation (2013) describes as a significant aspect in effective language use, students consistently claimed that role-plays and group discussions boosted their speaking confidence. Additionally, observations showed that students' focus and involvement decreased when working on reading assignments, indicating the need for more interactive reading exercises that link communicative results and text comprehension (Schmitt, 2008). Theory of socially constructed knowledge (Vygotsky, 1978) is supported by the notable rise in participation rates (+38%) and group contribution (+20%), which illustrates the motivating effect of collaborative learning methodologies.

Regarding to the Objective 3, the varied progress across skills requires targeted instructional adjustments:

Listening: The 30% improvement which demonstrates the effectiveness of the authentic audio materials that offer language in context, supporting Vandergrift & Goh (2012)

focus on metacognitive listening techniques. Incorporating explicit strategy training with a variety of real-world listening resources should be a feature of future programs.

Speaking: There is potential for progress despite the slight 2% improvement. According to Nation (2013) research suggests that vocabulary restrictions frequently impede speaking improvement. highlighting the necessity of more focused lexical development exercises combined with communicative practice.

Reading: The minimal 1% improvement indicates insufficient attention to reading skill development. The significance of intentional reading exercises that foster both top-down and bottom-up processing abilities is emphasized by Grabe (2009). More difficult and engaging readings that encourage vocabulary development and critical thinking should be incorporated into future lessons.

Writing: The 6% decline in writing performance represents a significant concern that aligns with Hyland (2003) research which highlights the nature complexity of writing skill development. The findings suggest that more structured support is needed for writing instruction, including explicit instruction in text arrangement, unambiguous modeling, and systematic feedback procedures.

Suggestions for Improvement

Several significant enhancements are suggested for future language training based on the findings and relevant literature.

Vocabulary Enhancement: Employ systematic pre-task vocabulary exercises in accordance with Nation (2013) vocabulary acquisition principles and Schmitt (2008) lexical instruction framework to enhance speaking and writing fluency, applying.

Reading Engagement: Implement more engaging and challenging texts that integrate vocabulary-building tasks with critical thinking activities as recommended by Grabe (2009) and Harmer (2007).

Writing Support: Develop a more structured method of teaching writing that emphasizes organizational structure and coherence while offering regular, thorough feedback on writing assignments as suggested by Hyland (2003) and Ferris (2011).

Technological Integration: Implement technology-enhanced learning tools and interactive tasks to increase student motivation and expand language exposure beyond the classroom, aligning with Godwin-Jones (2018) research on technology-mediated language learning.

Research Contributions

This research advances knowledge in English language teaching (ELT) in several key areas:

1. Listening skill development: The study confirms that real-life, audio-based tasks significantly enhance listening comprehension in specialized educational contexts. This supports Hadjer (2024) and Zhang & Suwanarak (2021), who highlight the role of authentic input in improving receptive skills, particularly for learners with limited exposure to English

2. Writing Instructions: The decline in writing performance highlights the critical need for scaffolded instruction and timely feedback within the writing process. This finding aligns with Nunan (2015) and Kongsom (2016), who emphasize the importance of structured support for writing development, particularly for learners from educational backgrounds that may not emphasize process-based writing approaches.

3. Peer Interaction and Engagement: The substantial rise in group contribution (+20%) and participation (+38%) validates the effectiveness of collaborative learning environments in enhancing motivation and language use. This is consistent with the views of Ellis (2003) and Ching (2014), who emphasize social interaction as a catalyst for language acquisition.

4. Framework Contribution: The findings strengthen the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) framework by demonstrating how task-based, interactive, and real-life activities improve learner motivation and skill development across language domains. The research also extends the application of these approaches to religious educational settings, which have been underrepresented in current ELT research.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This study demonstrates that task-based, interactive learning methods can significantly enhance English language proficiency among pre-intermediate students in specialized educational contexts. The intervention notably improved listening skills (30% increase) and fostered greater student engagement and participation. However, the minimal progress in reading (1%) and decline in writing performance (-6%) highlight areas requiring more targeted instructional approaches.

The findings underscore the effectiveness of authentic audio tasks for listening comprehension and interactive activities for building speaking confidence. Concurrently, they reveal the need for more engaging reading materials and structured, feedback-rich writing instruction. These insights provide valuable direction for refining language programs in similar educational settings.

Future interventions should focus on expanding task variety, integrating systematic vocabulary-building activities, enhancing reading materials, and developing comprehensive writing support systems. By implementing these recommendations, language instructors can create more balanced, effective learning experiences that address all four language skills while maintaining the motivational benefits of collaborative, task-based approaches. This research contributes to understanding effective language instruction in religious educational contexts and offers practical strategies for enhancing English proficiency across all core language skills.

To enhance language proficiency in pre-intermediate learners, particularly for Buddhist universities, several key recommendations are proposed based on the study findings and theoretical foundations.

Expand Listening and Speaking Tasks: To further enhance the impressive gains in listening comprehension, implement a wider variety of authentic audio tasks with varied accents, speech rates, and content types. This approach aligns with Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) principles (Ellis, 2003) that emphasize meaningful input and authentic language use. Speaking tasks should be carefully structured with focused pronunciation practice, vocabulary preparation, and constructive peer feedback to improve both fluency and accuracy. This recommendation draws from Richards (2008) comprehensive approach to speaking development and Thornbury (2005) emphasis on deliberate speaking practice.

Enhance Reading Instruction: To address the minimal improvement in reading comprehension, develop a more structured approach to reading that provides engaging, vocabulary-rich texts at appropriate challenge levels. This approach should utilize the principles of Schema Theory (Anderson, 2005) to activate prior knowledge and build comprehension frameworks. Additionally, implement extensive reading programs to build both reading fluency and vocabulary acquisition, as emphasized by Day & Bamford (2002) and Nation (2009), who demonstrate the cumulative benefits of regular, enjoyable reading experiences.

Revise Writing Tasks with Scaffolded Feedback: To reverse the decline in writing performance, redesign writing instruction to include more scaffolded activities that progress from controlled to guide to independent writing. This process should be supported by regular, personalized feedback focusing on content, organization, and language accuracy as recommended by the Writing Process Model (Raimes, 1983). This approach aligns with the suggestions of Kongsom (2016) and Nunan (2015) for enhancing writing proficiency through process-oriented instruction and targeted feedback mechanisms.

Foster Collaborative Learning Environments: Continue to develop and enhance the collaborative aspects of the learning environment that contributed to increased participation and engagement. Implement structured group discussions, peer teaching opportunities, and collaborative problem-solving tasks to promote student interaction and language development. This recommendation builds on the Collaborative Learning Model (Johnson & Johnson, 1999) and is supported by the observed improvements in group contribution and participation rates. These collaborative approaches should be designed to foster communication, critical thinking, and teamwork, as highlighted by Ching (2014).
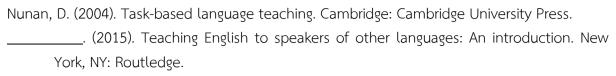
References

Anderson, R. C. (2005). Role of the reader's schema in comprehension, learning, and memory. In R. B. Ruddell & N. J. Unrau (Eds.), Theoretical models and processes of reading (5th Ed.). (pp. 594–606). International Reading Association.

Braun, V. & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. Qualitative Research in Psychology, 3(2), 77–101.

Ching, H. S. (2014). Enhancing speaking skills through role-play activities. International Journal of Language Education, 6(3), 210–219.

Creswell, J. W. (2014). Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approach (4th ed.). California: SAGE Publications.

Day, R. & Bamford, J. (2002). Top ten principles for teaching extensive reading. Reading in a Foreign Language, 14(2), 136–141.

Ellis, R. (2003). Task-based language learning and teaching. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Ferris, D. R. (2011). Treatment of Error in Second Language Student Writing (2nd ed.). Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

Gibbons, P. (2015). Scaffolding language, scaffolding learning: Teaching English language learners in the mainstream classroom (2nd ed.). Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Godwin-Jones, R. (2018). Using mobile devices in the language classroom. Language Learning & Technology, 22(3), 3–17.

Grabe, W. (2009). Reading in a second language: Moving from theory to practice. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Hadjer, M. (2024). Digital storytelling and podcasting in language acquisition: A systematic review. Journal of Educational Technology, 39(1), 67–83.

Harmer, J. (2007). The practice of English language teaching (4th ed.). China: Pearson Longman.

Hyland, K. (2003). Second language writing. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Hymes, D. (1972). On communicative competence. In J. B. Pride & J. Holmes (Eds.), Sociolinguistics: Selected readings (1st Ed.). (pp. 269–293). Penguin.

Johnson, D. W., & Johnson, R. T. (1999). Learning together and alone: Cooperative, competitive, and individualistic learning (5th ed.). Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon.

Khamkhien, A. (2010). Teaching English speaking and English-speaking tests in the Thai context: A reflection from Thai perspective. English Language Teaching, 3(1), 184–190.

Kolb, D. A. (2015). Experiential learning: Experience as the source of learning and development (2nd ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education.

Kongsom, T. (2016). Investigating the effect of peer feedback on EFL students' writing. PASAA: Journal of Language Teaching and Learning in Thailand, 51, 73–102.

Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University. (2023). MCU annual report in 2023. Phranakorn Sri Ayutthaya: Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University.

Ministry of Education Thailand. (2023). English language education policy framework 2023–2027. Bangkok, Thailand: Office of the Basic Education Commission.

Mon Buddhist Students Society. (2023). Decadal review of language programs. Phranakorn Sri Ayutthaya: Mon Buddhist Students Society Publications.

Nation, I. S. P. (2009). Teaching ESL/EFL reading and writing. New York, NY: Routledge.

_____. (2013). Learning vocabulary in another language (2nd ed.). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Nunan, D. (2004). Task-based language teaching. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

_____. (2015). Teaching English to speakers of other languages: An introduction. New York, NY: Routledge.

Raimes, A. (1983). Techniques in teaching writing. Oxford : Oxford University Press.

Pregoner, J. D. (2024). Research approaches in education. New York, NY: Academic Insight Press.

Richards, J. C. (2008). Teaching listening and speaking: From theory to practice. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Richards, J. C., & Rodgers, T. S. (2001). Approaches and methods in language teaching (2nd ed.). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

_____. (2014). The changing face of language learning: Learning beyond the classroom. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Schmitt, N. (2008). Vocabulary in language teaching. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Thornbury, S. (2005). How to teach speaking. Harlow, England: Pearson Education.

Vandergrift, L., & Goh, C. C. M. (2012). Teaching and learning second language listening: Metacognition in action. New York: Routledge.

Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Zhang, J., & Suwanarak, K. (2021). Understanding the role of meaningful input in second language acquisition. Journal of Asia TEFL, 18(2), 493–512.