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**LEARNER-CENTRED APPROACHES IN TEACHING ENGLISH  
IN THAILAND**

**A thesis presented in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of**

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in  
Education**

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**Ong-Art Namwong**

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## **DEDICATION**

This thesis is dedicated to my beloved parents  
who are always with me in my journey.

## ABSTRACT

This thesis investigates the implementation of learner-centred pedagogies in English classes in public secondary schools in Thailand. It explores the understanding of learner-centred approaches from a range of stakeholders, how these approaches are implemented within classrooms, and the factors supporting or impeding implementation. The thesis also aims to contribute to understanding on how the Thai culture influences the implementation of learner-centred approaches. Past research in this context has typically been small in scale, with low numbers of participants, and a single participant type, e.g. teachers. The current exploratory case study focused on small and extra-large public secondary schools in the educational service area 25, Khon Kaen, Thailand. Data were obtained from a range of participants from Ministry level to students using three different data collection methods: questionnaires, individual interviews and student focus group interviews. In total, data were obtained from 117 questionnaire respondents, 16 interviewees and six student focus groups. This approach allowed for data to be obtained from a wider range of perspectives than previous studies, and also provided methodological triangulation.

The findings revealed that teachers did not have a consensus over what learner-centred approaches constitute. In interviews, they provided very brief responses, and demonstrated limited, and somewhat superficial, understanding. This limited understanding was further evidenced when teachers talked about their implementation of learner-centred approaches. In reality, much of what was discussed reflected practices that were traditional and teacher rather than learner-centred. The main barriers in implementing learner-centred approaches were reported as: other school duties and responsibilities, a limited understanding of learner-centred approaches, large class sizes, and inadequate teaching and learning resources. Other issues related to the level of English language proficiency of teachers, opportunities for students to use English outside the classroom and pedagogical training for teachers. Across all phases of this study, it was apparent that the Thai cultural context is influential, and tensions were seen between the policy intentions and Thai cultural norms. For example, discrepancies were observed between the policy directive of learner-centred teaching and the dominant examination-based assessment, the power distance that exists in Thai society and

large class sizes which are typical in many Thai schools. The findings of this thesis have significant implications for policy makers, educational trainers, school management, teachers and students. In particular, there is an urgent need to consider how learner-centred approaches can be adapted to align more closely with the Thai culture. Professional development and support for teachers is another aspect in need of urgent attention so that teachers are supported to make changes to their teaching and pedagogy in line with learner-centred approaches. Additionally, support for teachers to improve their levels of English language proficiency is needed so that teachers are more comfortable using English in their teaching. This will also help to provide students with increased opportunities to communicate in English.

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

|       |   |
|-------|---|
| AEC   | ASEAN Economic Community                        |
| APA   | American Psychological Association              |
| ASEAN | Association of Southeast Asian Nations          |
| BEC   | Basic Education Curriculum                      |
| BECC  | Basic Education Core Curriculum                 |
| CLT   | Communicative Language Teaching                 |
| GTM   | Grammar Translation Method                      |
| iBT   | Internet-based Test                             |
| LCPs  | Learner-centred Psychological Principles        |
| LR    | Learning Reform: A Learner-centred Approach     |
| MoE   | Ministry of Education                           |
| NEA   | National Education Act                          |
| NIETS | National Institute of Education Testing Service |
| OBEC  | Office of the Basic Education Commission        |
| ONEC  | Office of the National Education Commission     |
| O-NET | Ordinary National Education Test                |
| TOEFL | Test of English as a Foreign Language           |

# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Introduction

There are many different approaches used by educators when teaching students in classrooms. Traditional approaches to teaching saw the educators talking, while the students sat and listened, taking notes. The last two decades have seen a significant shift from these more teacher-centred approaches toward learner-centred approaches to teaching and learning. In line with international trends, in 2008 the Thai Ministry of Education (MoE) revised core policy and curriculum documents mandating the use of learner-centred approaches across all subject areas (MoE, Thailand, 2008). This study explores how learner-centred approaches in English language teaching are understood by teachers, and other participants who have responsibility for making curriculum and pedagogical decisions, in Khon Kaen, Thailand. In addition, how teachers implement learner-centred approaches is explored, along with student voice and perceptions of their English language learning experience. The third and final aim of this thesis is to explore the factors that impede or support teachers in implementing learner-centred approaches within this context.

This chapter begins with discussing the importance of English in Thailand, followed by an overview of Thai educational reforms, which mandate the implementation of learner-centred approaches into teaching and learning. Following this, a statement of the problem which led to the need for this research is presented together with the significance of this study. The chapter concludes with a chapter summary and an overview of the chapters that are presented in this thesis.

### 1.2 The importance of English in Thailand

Since the 1980s, English has become an essential language for developing countries, such as Thailand (Wongsothorn, Hiranburana & Chinnawongs, 2002; Baker, 2012). In a globalised world where English is used as a lingua franca, being proficient in English enables countries including Thailand to grow and compete in the areas of business, education, science and technology (Wiriyaichitra, 2002). In addition, Thailand's dependency on English has

increased through globalisation and increased connections with international organizations, and through the areas of global advertising, media, tourism, education, safety, law, language interpretation and translation, academic conferences and scientific publications, technology transfer and internet communication (Foley, 2005).

In an attempt to benefit from a free-trade zone and compete in a globalised world, Thailand and other members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) formed the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) in 2015. The AEC aims to transform ASEAN into a regional economy with free movement of goods, services, investment, skilled labour, and the free flow of capital (ASEAN, 2014). Within the AEC, English is designated as the standard language of communication (Departments of ASEAN Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Thailand, 2012), and as a result, Thailand's education system is required to produce graduates who are competent and fluent in all aspects of English. As Tansubhapol (2011) reports, Thai students are now encouraged to be competent in English to enable them to compete alongside students from Southeast Asian nations.

Despite the need for improved levels of English, Thai students typically have low proficiency when compared to other countries in the region such as Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines and Singapore (Hayes, 2010; Noom-ura, 2013; Wiriyachitra, 2002). In the 2014, Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) Report, analysis showed that the average score of entrants was 74 out of 120, which was lower than Vietnam, Myanmar, Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines and Singapore (Test and score data summary for TOEFL iBT® test, 2014). Similarly, according to the Education First English Proficiency Index report (2018), Thailand was globally ranked 64<sup>th</sup> out of 88 countries by its average adult English proficiency. It was also ranked 16<sup>th</sup> out of 21 countries in Asia, lower than other countries in the region, such as Singapore, Philippines, Malaysia, Vietnam and Indonesia. This indicates that relative to students internationally, and other students in Asia, Thai students generally have low levels of English proficiency.

In addition to international indicators, through an analysis of the aggregated results achieved by public secondary school students in the Thai Ordinary National Education Test (O-NET)

in grades 6, 9 and 12 from 2007-2009, the National Institute of Education Testing Service (NIETS, 2009), found that the students in these grades had low scores in the use of English for communication. The O-NET test aims to measure students' knowledge and their thinking skills at grades 6, 9 and 12 in relation to the Basic Education Core Curriculum (BECC) 2008. The O-NET is designed to evaluate the education quality at the national level and to provide schools with test results which can be used to adjust teaching and learning to improve students' learning. Concerns about student test scores in the O-NET are not new. For example, the Nation (2018) reported that the average English score among 700,000 grade six students was 36.34%, and among 640,000 ninth graders was 30.45%. In the most recent administration of the O-NET, Mala (2019) reported that the average English scores in 2019 for grades six and nine students were still low; 39.24% and 29.45% respectively. Therefore, across both national and international measures, Thai students do not perform well in English language assessments. Concerns have been expressed about the impact of this on Thailand's development and ability to respond to regional and global changes. This has serious implications for English language teaching and learning, because if there is no improvement, it is considered highly likely that Thailand will fall behind other countries in business, education, science and technology (Wiriyachitra, 2002).

### **1.3 The development of English language teaching in Thailand**

Thailand has had a relatively short history of English language education. In fact, English has only been taught in Thai secondary schools since 1980 (Rungwaraphong, 2012; Wiriyachitra, 2002; Wongsothorn et al., 2002). Kirkpatrick (2010, cited in Baker, 2012) details the short history of English language teaching in Thailand compared to other countries in the region, such as Malaysia, Singapore, and Myanmar which were colonised by the British.

Since the mid-1900s, Thailand has had three major phases of educational reforms (Fry & Bi, 2013). Phase one was in 1868-1910, in which King Rama V initiated policies to convert the traditional Siamese (Thai) education system to one that had a highly centralised approach and was relevant to the society of that day. Phase two occurred in 1973-1980, which began with a student uprising for democracy from dictatorial military leaders, which led to a greater

degree of democracy and saw major educational reforms emerge. Phase three in 1997-2010 followed the Asian economic crisis, and led to the 1997 Constitutional reform and the National Education Act (NEA) 1999, which mandated further education reforms at all levels. In each of the three phases, the reforms were aimed at improving English proficiency in order to communicate effectively with other countries and to make full use of technological developments and increased globalisation.

The Thai English curriculum together with national standards and benchmarks for foreign language learning, were introduced through the Basic Education Curriculum (BEC) in 2001 (MoE, Thailand, 2001). As part of this, English became a compulsory subject (Foley, 2005) from Level 1 in primary schools to Level 12 in upper secondary education (Wiriyaichitra, 2002). The curriculum reforms required students to have the ability to use English as a foreign language and to be able to communicate in English in for a range of purposes, for instance, seeking knowledge, earning a living or moving into higher education (MoE, Thailand, 2001). Seven years later, the Office of the Basic Education Commission (OBEC) revised the 2001 curriculum and produced the BECC 2008, outlining a curriculum framework, guidance and learning outcomes for Grades 1 to 12. In addition, the curriculum policy outlined and mandated the use of learner-centred approaches across all subject areas (MoE, Thailand, 2008). Hence, this represented a major change in the Thai education system.

#### **1.4 The implementation of learner-centred approaches in Thailand**

In a bid to promote learner autonomy, improve learning outcomes and develop a knowledge-based society, the Thai government launched the NEA 1999 (Nonkukhetkhong, Baldauf Jr., & Moni, 2006). As noted above, one of its key foci of the new curriculum was the introduction of learner-centred approaches across all year levels. This reform was significant as it required teachers to change their style of teaching from a more traditional style where they imparted knowledge to a more facilitative style of teaching.

However, these changes have not been without controversy. For example, Nonkukhetkhong et al. (2006) claimed that Thai teachers who have a limited understanding of learner-centred principles will be reluctant to use learner-centred approaches in their teaching. In addition,

it is suggested that if teachers have a limited understanding of the principles underpinning learner-centred approaches, this may negatively affect student learning and improvement (Naruemon, 2013; Powell & Kalina, 2009; Thamraksa, 2011). These studies highlight potential areas of concern around the extent of teachers' understanding of the underlying principles of learner-centred approaches, and that this may impact teachers' implementation of learner-centred approaches, and it is these aspects that I aim to investigate further in this study.

### **1.5 Statement of the problems and rationale for the study**

Thai students spend between 9 and 12 years studying English in both their primary and secondary school education (Noom-ura, 2013; Wiriyaichitra, 2002). However, as noted above, they have tended to perform poorly in national and international tests of English. From as early as 1997, researchers identified a number of impediments in English language teaching and learning in Thailand. These have been identified as poorly qualified teachers (Kaewmala, 2012; Kirkpatrick, 2012), workload issues with too many other duties and responsibilities (Baker, 2012; Hayes, 2010) and the dominance of teacher-centred approaches (Hallinger, 2010; Office of the Education Council of Thailand, 2009; Sinthopruangchai, 2011). It has been suggested that a reliance on rote learning has resulted in students finding it difficult to navigate English language conversations in a real context outside the classroom (Hodal, 2012). Similarly having large class sizes, which are common in Thailand (Dhanasobhon, 2006; Hayes, 1997; Kirkpatrick, 2012), can impact pedagogy and lead to a lack of opportunity for students to use English (Hays, 2010; Khamkien, 2010).

Some barriers to the implementation of learner-centred approaches in English classrooms may lie within the cultural norms of Thai society. For example, showing respect for authority, rank, age and status are important to Thais and are a well-documented cultural characteristic of Southeast Asian cultures (Hallinger, 2010). According to Hofstede (1997), Southeast Asian nations exhibit high levels in the cultural dimension of power distance. This is particularly evident in institutions where those who hold senior positions are held in great respect, and have a lot of power (Hofstede, 1997; Hofstede, Hofstede & Minkov, 2010). For Thai people, age is an important cultural factor and in places like school systems, junior

teachers must show respect to their senior colleagues (Hallinger & Kantamara, 2000b; Naruemon, 2013; Thongthew, 2014). Also, Vanichakorn (2003) found that the senior teachers' beliefs in traditional approaches to education often inhibit the implementation of new approaches by younger teachers who may be better trained and have more understanding of the benefits of new approaches to learning.

I have seen this through my observations as a senior lecturer at the Faculty of Education, Khon Kaen University, Thailand. For example, here I have seen two ways that power distance relationships operate in schools. First, in the administrative hierarchy where principals and heads of departments have a lot of power, and young novice teachers have very little. Second, there is a hierarchical social structure related to age where young novice teachers have to defer to their older colleagues. The impact of this is that sometimes policies or directives are accepted by those lower in the hierarchy even if they disagree with them or do not fully understand them.

A further dimension of culture which may affect the way policies are understood or implemented in the Thai education system is collectivism. Hofstede et al. (2010) suggest in collectivism a lot of importance is placed on the interests of the entire group. As members of the group, they work as a team to promote unity, which is seen to benefit them as a whole. Furthermore, changes in society generally occur through groups, rather than individuals (Hallinger & Kantamara, 2000a). Kirkpatrick and Young (2014) also assert that a collectivist culture is crucial in Thai society and it is important for individuals to maintain good relationships within the group. Rungwaraphong (2012) also added that individuals consider themselves as part of a group with the emphasis on the group's cohesion, common interests and harmony. Combining the two elements above, Hallinger and Kantamara (2001) pointed out that the use of groups could be a powerful agent or possible inhibitor of change. Therefore, it is suggested that traditional culture norms can have a direct impact on educational change (Hallinger & Kantamara, 2000a).

However, overall relatively little research has been done on learner-centred approaches in English teaching and learning in Thailand. In contrast to previous studies which have

typically been small in scale, this study aims to gather multiple sources of data from a wide range of stakeholders in Thailand, including from the Ministry of Education and English educational supervisors in the secondary educational service area 25 (Khon Kaen province). At school level, participants include chairpersons of school boards, principals, heads of foreign language departments, English teachers and students at both small schools and extra-large schools.

Despite the educational reforms that were introduced over the last ten years, as a senior lecturer at the Faculty of Education, Khon Kaen University, Thailand, I have observed a number of English language classes in Thailand, and found that learner-centred approaches are not common and that more traditional approaches such as rote learning were emphasised. I observed students learning passively by receiving the knowledge provided and transmitted from teachers. They mostly followed teachers' instructions, did exercises individually and had little opportunity to practice using English in class. These observations sparked my interest in this topic, and led me to develop and undertake this study.

This study intends to provide insights into the level of understanding of learner-centred approaches, their implementation and the factors that influence its implementation from the perspectives and practices of various stakeholders involved in Thai education. It has been almost two decades since the NEA 1999 mandated the educational reform and advocated for learner-centred approaches. However, little is known about how participants understand this concept, and whether learner-centred approaches have actually been implemented in practice. The objectives of this study are to explore the understanding of stakeholders from the Ministry of Education level, to the school level, in relation to learner-centred approaches, and how public secondary school teachers implement learner-centred approaches in their classroom practices, as well as the factors that influence their implementation. It is hoped that the findings of this study will be useful for policy makers in understanding how policy directives are understood and implemented, and for those with direct responsibility for improving the quality of teaching and learning and pedagogy in the classroom. This study also aims to contribute to understanding of how aspects of Thai culture influence the implementation of learner-centred approaches. This is an important contribution as policy

initiatives in Asian countries frequently adopt or follow Western trends without adequate adjustment or tailoring to the context.

## **1.6 Chapter summary**

In summary, English is important for Thailand's future development and is becoming even more important with the growth of the ASEAN Economic Community. Despite this, Thai students have consistently featured low down the ranking tables in international studies with students also performing poorly on Thai national English tests. While policy changes, such as the introduction of learner-centred approaches, have been made in an attempt to address this situation, there has been no noticeable improvement in student performance. There have been several small-scale studies which have suggested that Thai teachers may have a limited understanding of learner-centred principles and are therefore reluctant to use them in their classes. However, these studies have tended to focus on very small numbers of teachers so that it is difficult to obtain a wider perspective on the issue. This study aims to explore these issues, together with the factors which support or impede teachers in implementing learner-centred approaches on a larger-scale, and the perspectives of a wide range of stakeholders so that a more comprehensive overview can be obtained. A particular focus of the current study is in shedding light on aspects of the Thai culture which impact on participant understanding and implementation of learner-centred approaches.

## **1.7 Outline of thesis chapters**

This thesis is comprised of six chapters, and is structured as follows:

**Chapter 1** outlined the importance of English in Thailand, followed by the development of the English language teaching in Thailand. The implementation of learner-centred approaches was described before identifying the statement of the research problem and rationale for undertaking this study.

**Chapter 2** provides a review of the literature. Aspects covered include teacher-centred approaches, constructivism and social constructivism, as well as learner-centred approaches to teaching. This is followed by a detailed look at the implementation of learner-centred

approaches in Thailand. Challenges involved in implementing learner-centred approaches are examined, and the research questions are presented in the final section of the chapter.

**Chapter 3** focuses on the research paradigm and research design of this study. This chapter describes the qualitative case study approach used in this study. Research participants and sampling decisions are presented. Subsequently, the data collection methods are detailed. These include questionnaires, interviews and student focus groups. This is followed by an overview of data analysis procedures and the framework that was used to guide the data collection and data analysis. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the ethical considerations for the study.

**Chapter 4** reports the findings for the research questions derived from an integration of questionnaire, interview and student focus group data. The main findings for research questions one and two are presented separately and are organised through the categories and sub-categories of the framework discussed in chapter 3.

**Chapter 5** brings together the key research findings from Chapter 4 and discusses the implications of these in relation to the literature presented in Chapter 2. Here two key themes are discussed in detail: Implementation that is reflective of teacher-rather than learner-centred approaches; and the Thai cultural context where the challenges of implementing learner-centred approaches in a hierarchical non-western society are teased out.

**Chapter 6** summarises the main findings and draws together the key conclusions and contributions of this study. The implications of the findings are discussed for a range of stakeholders. The limitations of the study are also reflected upon and recommendations for future research are suggested.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.1 Introduction**

This literature review is divided into five major sections. First, teacher-centred approaches and learner-centred approaches in general are critically reviewed and then compared. Second, the terms constructivism and social constructivism are differentiated, and the latter is examined in more detail as it underpins this study. Third, the concept of learner-centred approaches to teaching is explored in further detail. This includes the roles of teachers and learners, communicative language teaching, collaborative learning, learning tasks and resources, student participation and engagement, and assessment. Fourth, learner-centred approaches in Thailand are discussed. An overview of the education reforms in Thailand is also presented. Fifth, challenges associated with implementing learner-centred approaches in the literature are discussed. These challenges comprise the educational assessment system, power distance, professional development and learning, large class sizes, limited use of learning tasks and resources, and students' levels of English proficiency. Lastly, the research questions for this study are presented. A summary is also provided at the end of the chapter.

#### **2.2 Teacher-centred approaches**

As Naruemon (2013) noted, teacher-centred approaches contrast with learner-centred approaches due to their differing philosophical and psychological foundations. Teacher-centred approaches are founded on behaviourism which focuses on the need to impart a body of knowledge. Teacher-centred approaches place the emphasis on teaching in which rote learning is often used as its aim is academic content coverage (Harden & Crosby, 2000, cited in Naruemon, 2013; Thamraksa, 2003; Weimer, 2013). The strengths of teacher-centred approaches include teachers' authority to control the classroom and to give a lecture to 'efficiently' and 'comprehensively' cover the desired content. As noted in Weimer (2002), teachers typically give a lecture, explain the content, demonstrate, ask questions and assign seat work in the teacher-centred classroom. Within a teacher-centred approach, students follow the models of learning steps that teachers provide for them to learn. Contrary to the benefits of teacher-centred approaches mentioned above, this guided pattern of teaching can

limit students' thinking skills for problem solving, their social interactions, and knowledge discovery. Students can thus become passive recipients (Thamraksa, 2003; Weimer, 2002).

Various studies have found that teacher-centred approaches still dominate in non-western countries which have recently introduced learner-centred approaches (Abahussain, 2016; Aliusta, 2014, Chang, 2011; Mangan, 2011; Nonthaisong, 2015). For example, Aliusta (2014) studied the teaching practice of 309 teachers in 11 high schools across North Cyprus and found that even though learner-centred approaches had been adopted as policy by high schools since 2005, traditional approaches still dominated. Reasons for the continued dominance of traditional approaches were put down to a range of factors. These included large class sizes (more than 30 students per class) within physically small classrooms, classrooms not equipped with technology, and a lack of teachers' learner-centred knowledge and necessary skills, due to insufficient teacher training. Nonthaisong (2015) also examined how two Thai teachers at a public secondary school understood the English language policy outlined within the BECC 2008 and how they implemented this in their classroom practice. It was found that teacher-centred teaching was dominant as teachers imparted knowledge to students and used translation and choral repetition drills. There was little evidence of learner-centred approaches and communicative approaches used in the classroom. The study suggests that further professional development and training for these teachers may be required.

In the Thai context, teacher-centred approaches have been widely used in the classroom in formal education (Peters, 2000) and have been found to be deeply rooted in the Thai education system (Foley, 2005; Naruemon, 2013). Nonkukhetkhong et al. (2006) asserted the teacher-centred approaches are also embedded in English as a Foreign Language classes. Naruemon (2013) outlined some typical characteristics of teacher-centred practices in Thai classrooms where the teacher controls the learning process, decides on what to learn, how to learn it and sees their role as imparting their knowledge to their students. They rely on a given textbook, use whole class teaching methods and make use of standard instruction materials. Their teaching strategies tend to focus on lower order thinking skills and the recall of factual information, learnt by memory, with rote and drill practice. Vanichakorn (2003) explored the

experiences of four in-service English teachers from four different schools in Thailand using interviews, classroom observations and self-reporting. The findings showed that teacher-centred assessment of student learning was used with tests focused on giving the “right” answers. The focus on the correct answers made the students hesitate to express their opinions as they were afraid that they would give incorrect answers. The prominent use of teacher-centred approaches in Thai classrooms may explain the resistance that some teachers have in implementing learner-centred approaches in their classroom teaching practices. As noted in Nunan (2013) and Weimer (2013), some teachers think that learner-centred approaches diminish their roles. Regarding Thai cultural norms, some teachers may feel that students do not pay respect to them as the senior teachers in the classrooms due to their role as active learners within learner-centred approaches, and that this goes against the authoritative role that teachers have in a teacher-centred approach.

Furthermore, it has been found that some Thai teachers still employ the grammar translation method (GTM) in classes, which is more suggestive of teacher-centred approaches, rather than communicative practices (Cheewakaroon, 2011; Padermprach, 2017). The GTM emphasises grammar, syntax structures, vocabulary memorisation and written text translation (Maleki, 2005). Thamraksa (2003) reported that Thai teachers used rote learning for memorisation purposes in classes. Teachers emphasised choral repetition drills, translation, and student reading of passages out loud (Nonkukhetkong et al., 2006; Nonthaisong, 2015). Similar findings have been reported in other contexts. For example, it was found that Saudi Arabian teachers still emphasised grammar, text translation and memorisation in their practices (Abahussain, 2016). There might be some factors which mean that teachers maintain their use of the GTM. As noted in Prapaisit de Segovia and Hardison (2008), some barriers that hinder teachers in successfully implementing learner-centred classrooms include teachers’ lack of confidence in the application of learner-centred approaches and limited teaching time.

According to Chang (2011), Taiwanese teachers presented students grammar rules with sentence structures, followed by students being drilled and asked to translate those sentences. Students’ mother tongue is normally used in this teaching method. Students benefit from the

GTM in that they study closely the grammar rules. However, they can find it hard to apply the grammar learnt in real situations as the GTM focuses on language accuracy rather than fluency of the language, as communicative approaches do. Practices focused on grammar are much more reflective of a teacher-centred approach than a learner centred one as teachers take an authoritative stance in classes to control classroom activities and direct what learners do, such as repeating a dialogue, reading out loud and translating passages (Brown, 2014). Tasks of this nature limit the potential for interactive discussion (Al-Zu'be, 2013). As Wilhelm and Pei (2008) stated, students are familiar with the traditional approach in which knowledge is transmitted; accordingly, they have not yet adjusted their learning to the active learning where learning responsibility and interaction are required. In addition, Vanichakorn (2003) found that one of the negative impacts of learner-centred implementation in Thai secondary schools was students were familiar with the teacher-centred approach. This suggests that teachers and learners are familiar with the teacher-centred ways of teaching and that it may be difficult for them to change the ways they teach and learn in classrooms. This perspective has been seen in other studies which have found that not all learners are ready to take control of their own learning when learner-centred approaches are used (Prapaisit de Segovia & Hardison, 2008; Soysal & Radmard, 2017; Zohrabi, Torabi & Baybourdiani, 2012). This issue, however, is also closely related to teachers' limited knowledge and skills to adapt learner-centred approaches. As Nonkukhetkhong et al. (2006) reported, although teachers may wish for students to take responsibility in their learning, they do not know how to integrate learner-centred approaches in class nor how to involve students in their learning.

### **2.3 Constructivism**

As explained above, teacher-centred approaches are founded on behaviourism and the focus is on teaching that allows teachers to transmit knowledge to students. In contrast, as Jordan, Carlile and Stack (2008) state, constructivism focuses on learning where learners actively construct knowledge and understanding by integrating their prior knowledge with new knowledge, and by having teachers support their learning. Constructivism is based on the work of Piaget and Vygotsky (Fosnot & Perry, 2005). As Cornelius-White and Harbaugh (2010) state, "Constructivism is fundamentally an active and interactive view of learning" (p. 20). Constructivism is essentially the building of learning and thinking based on the

learner's prior knowledge (Hoover, 1996; Mvududu & Thiel-Burgess, 2012; Young & Paterson, 2007). Learning is seen as an internal process and learners learn through their experiences (McMahon, 1997). In addition, Fosnot and Perry (2005) view learning as a knowledge development process where teachers need to involve students in classroom communities using discussion and communication of ideas to formulate answers to given questions.

Learners construct their own knowledge actively through interaction between their own ideas and experiences in the social and physical world with interesting and meaningful language contexts provided (Chaillé, 2008; Scholnik, Kol, & Abarbanel, 2006; Weimer, 2002). Furthermore, the collaborative process helps develop a learner's potential through authentic learning activities (Weerathammo, 2005). Constructivist teaching is therefore grounded on the belief that learning occurs when learners are actively involved in a process of meaning and knowledge construction instead of passively receiving information. Learners are the makers of meaning and knowledge which fosters critical thinking, motivation and independence (Gray, 2015). However, in practice, learners have different capabilities of language and skills to learn. Therefore they require support with their learning and language skills to construct meaning and knowledge.

Social constructivism refers to the process of constructing knowledge through interpersonal learning based on social interactions. Vygotsky's theory of social constructivism situates the understanding of human cognition and learning as social and cultural phenomena (Kozulin, Gindis, Ageyev, & Miller, 2003). Social constructivists believe that knowledge is shared among a community rather than separated in the minds of individuals (Tobias & Duffy, 2009). Saylag (2013) stated that learners interpret realities and learning situations through their own views. According to Jordan et al. (2008, p. 59), "Social constructivists argued that knowledge is the result of social interaction and language use" by constructing knowledge in the context of the environment through discussions which connect individuals to their experiences. This is the foundation of social constructivism and forms the core concept of learner-centred approaches (Alsharif, 2014; Young & Patterson, 2007), which can be contrasted with teacher-centred approaches to learning and teaching. Regarding these points

of view, the participants in the current study might interpret learner-centred approaches differently from one another based on their own experiences.

## **2.4 Learner-centred approaches to teaching**

As Weimer (2013) notes, learner-centred approaches focus on students' learning by empowering and motivating learners to engage in learning through collaboration as well as reflecting on what and how they learn. According to Brown (2008) and Naruemon (2013), learner-centred approaches are based on social constructivism and humanism which emphasise the involvement of students in the learning process and the construction of their own knowledge with a teacher taking the role of facilitator who supports the process. This explanation of learner-centred approaches contrasts with teacher-centred approaches, in that learner-centred approaches involve students learning by doing. Students actively learn to construct their own knowledge and understanding with the facilitation of teachers, rather than through transmission of knowledge.

As mentioned in section 1.3, the NEA 1999 reforms aimed at improving teaching and learning processes in Thai schools and other educational institutions, and a key factor of the educational reforms was the adoption of learner-centred approaches (Cheewakaroon, 2011; Weerathammo, 2005). As learner-centred approaches are relatively new to Thai classrooms, stakeholders may not have clear ideas about learner-centred approaches. Therefore, this is likely to impact how effectively they are able to implement learner-centred classrooms.

In exploring learner-centred approaches further, the principles outlined in the literature serve as a useful guide for implementing learner-centred approach in classrooms. The psychological principles which underline learner-centred teaching emerged in the 1990s to reform the American educational system. The American Psychological Association (APA) Work Group of the Board of Educational Affairs in 1997 revised the original 12 learner-centred psychological principles (LCPs) which were the result of reviews of over a century of research on teaching and learning to contribute to educational reform. The APA in 1997 proposed 14 learner-centred principles categorised into four domains for learning (see more details in Appendix A). They provide a framework for learner-centred practices for all

teaching levels (McCombs & Miller 2007). The main ideas of the document are summarised on the right hand column to explicate the 14 principles in Table 2.1 below.

**Table 2.1: The learner-centred psychological principles (APA Work Group of the Board of Educational Affairs, 1997)**

| <b>Domains</b>                             | <b>The principles</b>  | <b>Summary</b>  |
|--|--|---|
| <b>Cognitive and metacognitive factors</b> | 1. Nature of the learning process.<br>2. Goals of the learning process.<br>3. Construction of knowledge.<br>4. Strategic thinking.<br>5. Thinking about thinking.<br>6. Context of learning. | The nature of learning and the characteristics of good learners are emphasised. The effective learning process is based on constructing meaningful knowledge between new information and existing knowledge in the supportive learning environment to achieve learning goals. |
| <b>Motivational and affective factors</b>  | 7. Motivational and emotional influences on learning.<br>8. Intrinsic motivation to learn.<br>9. Effects of motivation on effort.  | Learners' motivation and emotion influence learning. Tasks related to personal interests stimulate learners' intrinsic motivation to learn.   |
| <b>Developmental and social factors</b>    | 10. Developmental influences on learning.<br>11. Social influences on learning.  | The use of appropriate materials, social interactions, interpersonal relationships and communication affect learners' learning.   |
| <b>Individual differences factors</b>      | 12. Individual differences in learning.<br>13. Learning and diversity.<br>14. Standards and assessment.  | Learners have different prior experience and heredity. Valuing learners' differences helps enhance their motivation and achievement levels. Using appropriate standards and assessment help support individual differences.   |

Table 2.1 presents the four learning domains of the learner-centred psychological principles framework to inform teachers about factors associated with facilitating learners. These include cognitive and metacognitive factors, motivational and affective factors, developmental and social factors, and individual difference factors. These learning domains

are important because each principle examined provides a framework for teachers to understand a learner's learning processes and types of individual differences which can inform their teaching practice. Furthermore, a number of renowned educators such as Dewey, Bruner, and Schwab have advocated these principles in education reform (McCombs & Miller, 2007). The principles are also widely shared and used in a large number of the studies and education programs; for example, Alfassi (2004), Salinas and Garr (2009), and de la Varre, Keane and Irvin (2010).

According to the APA Work Group of the Board of Educational Affairs (1997), cognitive and metacognitive factors refer to learners' cognitive capabilities to set learning goals, use strategies, monitor, and reflect on their learning. Motivational and affective factors bring to the importance of motivation and emotion in learning such as curiosity, effort and creativity. Developmental and social factors focus on social interactions, interpersonal relations and communication with other learners to collaboratively learn. Factors related to individual differences emphasise varied strategies, methods, and capabilities in learning as well as the use of assessment to support individual learning progress and outcomes.

These four domains of the learner-centred psychological principles are related to one another to enhance learners' learning. They also guide teachers to understand the learner-centred learning process so that they are able to use the strategies to support individual learner's learning in their teaching practice. The understanding of teachers about the principles of learner-centred approaches links to the current study that aims to explore what teachers understand about learner-centred approaches, how they implement them in their pedagogical practices along with the factors that might influence their implementation of this approach. As described above, the important components of learner-centred approaches include the role of the teachers and the learners, collaborative learning, learning tasks and resources, and assessment. These aspects are important to examine because the pedagogical shift from a teacher-centred approach to learner-centred approaches may lead to changes in teaching and learning processes, and the roles of teachers and learners (Barman, 2013).

### 2.4.1 The role of teachers

Teachers play an important role in learner-centred approaches. As Ramsey and Fitzgibbons (2005, p. 336) propose, teachers are initiators of pedagogical techniques in the classroom, urging teachers to move beyond “doing something *to* the student” (teaching) to “doing something *with* students” (teaching and learning) and “*being with* the students” (learning). Ramsey and Fitzgibbons follow on to discuss how *doing something to students* involves imparting knowledge to students, such as using the PowerPoint presentations and textbooks. *Doing something with students* involves guiding, demonstrating and creating student learning experiences through exercises, discussions, role plays and activities. Students are actively engaged in experiential learning through their own introspection, reflection and discussion. And *being with the students* involves facilitating students to learn and learn together with other students. According to Jony (2016), active learning activities involve problem solving, questioning, answering questions, discussing, explaining, debating and brainstorming. These learner-centred activities indicate that the role of teachers is not passing on knowledge to students. Rather, students are active and responsible for constructing their own knowledge through learning activities provided with teacher support.

Regarding learner-centred approaches, Weimer (2013) and Handa (2009) point out that the learning paradigm has shifted from teaching to learning emphasising the role of teachers as a learning scaffolder, while learners take on the role of collaborators responsible for their own learning. Handa (2009) further stated that both teachers and learners build a learning community together. Teachers take into account learning outcomes, content, strategies, learning evidence and the environment in their planning as well as providing creative and critical problem solving and independent study skills to foster learning. This suggests that the characteristics of independent student learning include a variety of study skills including: critical and creative thinking, collaborative learning and self-directed learning. Dörnyei (2001) states that learner autonomy is relevant to self-determination in that learners can select choices to learn, and group dynamics which increase learner responsibility and control with other group members. According to Powell and Kalina (2009), cognitive constructivism focuses on how individuals construct knowledge through a personal process while social constructivism focuses on individuals constructed knowledge through social interaction with

the teacher and peers. Similarly, Scholnik et al. (2006) pointed out that cognitive constructivists focus on the importance of the mind in learning with the purpose of the development of cognitive structures in learners. Social constructivists, on the other hand, focus on the key role played by the environment and the interaction between learners together with the effect of social interaction on learning.

Within a learner-centred approach, teachers are facilitators or guides to encourage and support learning, rather than knowledge transmitters (Jony, 2016; Kaplowitz, 2012; Larasati, 2018; Nunan, 2013; Weimer, 2013). For example, teachers act as facilitators who support learners with guidance, constructive critiques, explanations and encouragement to motivate learners to perform better in their learning (Weimer, 2013). Teachers are facilitators and learners are the centre of learning (Jony, 2016; Larasati, 2018). Jony (2016) also stated that the role of teachers was to support learners in their learning, to encourage individual responsibility for learning; for example, using self-regulation for students to give feedback on their tasks helps them control their own learning, and to encourage peer communication, interaction and discovery learning. Furthermore, rapport with students is also important for the learning process as it helps decrease students' anxiety and stress. Dörnyei (2001) states that teachers who build trust, respect and acceptance from students by listening, paying attention, and providing available time for them, facilitate and motivate students to learn. He further highlights that teachers share responsibility with students for their learning experience to make them feel in control of what they are learning by giving students choices, such as topics, teaching materials, assignments, and working with peers. Brown (2008) mentioned that with teachers' support, learners learn in pairs to assist the other student to learn, thereby building a learning community. Learners gradually become aware of their own learning strengths and, in turn, work with their classmate to improve their learning. When teachers believe that knowledge is constructed by learners, they come to understand that learners learn in different ways, and by being more explicit about the learning process, can help learners to learn (Fosnot, 1996 cited in Feden, & Vogel, 2003).

However, the past research in non-western countries adopting learner-centred approaches found that many teachers remained in an authoritative role as knowledge transmitters (e.g.,

Aliusta & Özer, 2017; Marcellino, 2015; Thamraksa, 2003; Vanichakorn, 2003). For example, Vanichakorn (2003) stated that four Thai teachers, who taught English subjects in grades 8, 9, 10, 11 and 12 with students whose ages were between 14-18 years old in different secondary school contexts in Bangkok, Thailand, tended to control the class, decided what learners read and led the discussions. Aliusta and Özer (2017) also explained that teachers did not give students choice and control in their learning as they felt that students need to depend on their decisions. They further stated that students performed their traditional roles including listening to teachers quietly, taking notes, reading textbooks, doing homework and taking tests or exams due to teachers' authority.

#### **2.4.2 The role of learners**

In learner-centred approaches, students are active in learning to seek and construct new knowledge (Handa, 2009; Hardman, Abd-Kadir & Smith, 2008; Hitotuzi, 2005; Huba & Freed, 2000; Weimer, 2013). When active learning is taking place in class, students discuss ideas, demonstrate their thinking, explain and answer questions (Hardman et al., 2008). A number of previous studies emphasised that learners take charge of their own learning within a learner-centred approach (Al-Zu'be, 2013; Jacobs & Farrell, 2001; Loh & Teo, 2017; McCombs & Vakili, 2005; Nonkukhetkhong et al., 2006). For example, Al-Zu'be (2013) stated that learners took charge of their own learning by setting the classroom rules and regulations with teachers, planning choices of activities to learn, reading, working and sharing ideas with peers, checking their understandings, and asking teachers questions when they need assistance. Within a learner-centred approach, Jacobs and Farrell (2001) emphasised the role of learners in the learning process while Nonkukhetkhong et al. (2006) emphasised the need for learners to take responsibility for their learning. According to Al-Zu'be (2013), student-centred approaches can increase intrinsic motivation as students plan what to learn from their internal desire to develop their skills.

According to Nunan (1989), students have opportunities to take control of their own learning, make decisions on choosing the content, teaching methods and evaluation on their learning. In comparison to teachers taking control, students are encouraged to take control of their learning by choosing what and how to learn (Doyle, 2008, cited in Aliusta & Özer, 2017).

Many research studies reported that the teacher and students collaboratively design what content to learn and how to learn the content in the classroom, such as through social interactions with their classmates (Huba & Freed, 2000; Kaplowitz, 2012; Naruemon, 2013; Weimer, 2013).

As Thamraksa, (2003), and Van Dang (2006) stated, learners' awareness of their role in the learner-centred classroom is important because learners' involvement in the learning process was key to their learning success. Van Dang (2006) also found that when learners were aware of their role as language learners, they were motivated and confident in their learning. Learners also assessed their learning to reach their learning goals. Barman (2013) also stated that since knowledge was not transmitted to students, it was important for students to put effort in to uncover knowledge through problem-solving activities and self-engagement. Brown (2008) expanded on this point stating that learners also needed to become learning designers and knowledge producers within a learner-centred approach. To do this, teachers share classroom control with students by giving them choices on strategies to be used in their learning. Students were also encouraged to think of new strategies to assist them learn better, such as through a conversation and a written reflection.

Research suggests that teachers should gradually give students choices and control to scaffold them to make decisions about their learning (Bansberg, 2003; Dörnyei, 2001; Nunan, 2013; Thamraksa, 2003). This will make them feel that they are involved in their learning and have control over it. Furthermore, learners are expected to be more active and responsible to make choices in their own learning (Bansberg, 2003; Dörnyei, 2001; McCombs & Vakili, 2005; Naruemon, 2013; Van Dang, 2006). They are provided with choices so that they can lead their learning and support one another to learn. Learners are information sources for their peers and they can learn through interactive discussions with one another. However, learners may require support in developing collaborative and communicative skills to ask for information and answer questions from their group members (Al-Zu'be, 2013).

### **2.4.3 Communicative language teaching**

According to Brown (2014), communicative language teaching (CLT) focuses on communicative competence in which fluency is emphasised more than accuracy. Kumaravadivelu (2006) notes that the CLT provides opportunities for learners to practice communicative activities in the target language. He further states that authentic language is used to build students' fluency to communicate in real world contexts. Nunan (1988) explains that the underlying principle of communicative approaches is for learners to improve their own ability by using language in real-world tasks through communicative interaction. According to Harmer (2007), task-based learning emphasises on real-life tasks and communicative activities. Nunan (1989) states that authentic language regarding communicative tasks focusing on meaning is used, therefore, task-based approach is useful to support the CLT. Darasawang (2007) also stated that this approach is related to the CLT as it could enhance learners to use language to complete given tasks.

It has been found in non-western countries, e.g., Bangladesh, China, Indian and Saudi Arabia, that there have been attempts at using CLT in the classroom to improve learners' English skills; however, teachers tended to have insufficient knowledge of the CLT to effectively implement this approach in classes. For example, Abahussain (2016) investigated the implementation of the CLT with Saudi Arabian teachers and found that they had some misconceptions, which resulted in the use of tasks that were not really communicative in nature, and reduced teacher confidence in adopting the CLT in their teaching practice. Walia (2012) studied the use of CLT by administering a closed ended questionnaire with 20 language teachers from different colleges in Rajasthan, India, and found that there were limitations of implementing the CLT including time constraints, large class sizes, the limited use of technology devices and minimal student participation. It was also challenging for teachers to encourage students to actively participate in communicative activities as they were shy to speak.

Within the Thai context, Western English teaching approaches like CLT, which emphasise English for communications, have been promoted as recommended approaches to teach English in Thai education (Darasawang, 2007). However, previous studies have found that

communicative activities were rarely used in the classroom (Nonkukhetkong et al., 2006; Prapaisit de Segovia & Hardison, 2008; Razmjoo & Riazi, 2006). For example, Prapaisit de Segovia and Hardison (2008) studied the implementation of the education reforms from Thai teachers' perspectives with four teaching supervisors, and ten English teachers. It was found that there was no communicative interaction in classes between the teacher and students or between students in classrooms. Findings from these studies showed that teachers corrected students' pronunciation when students repeated words after them (Prapaisit de Segovia & Hardison, 2008; Razmjoo & Riazi, 2006). Furthermore, Nonkukhetkong et al. (2006) found that teachers focused more on reading and writing than listening and speaking within English language classes in Thailand. They further reported that teachers also asked students to read model dialogues from their textbooks or handouts, and rehearsed and presented the dialogues in class. Moreover, Thai was found to be the main language used in English classes rather than English (Khamkhien, 2010; Naruemon, 2013; Nonkukhetkong et al., 2006; Noom-ura, 2013).

#### **2.4.4 Collaborative learning**

Collaborative learning where students work with their peers is common within learner-centred approaches (Huba & Freed, 2000; Kaplowitz, 2012; Naruemon, 2013; Weimer, 2013). Dörnyei (2001) highlights how a positive relationship among group members brings about a positive learning environment that supports and motivates learners to learn. According to Panitz (1999) and Killen (2016), collaboration refers to the interactions between learners who share and accept responsibility, respect other learners' strengths and weaknesses and develop their positive interdependence. Working collaboratively in groups can support a learner-centred approach as learners have more opportunity to take responsibility for their own and other students' learning. They also learn more when they work collaboratively in small groups. Cornelius-White and Harbaugh (2010) point out that students can learn from one another's strengths and weaknesses through collaborative learning. Hence, cooperation is the form of interacting and working together in groups to achieve a particular common goal (Killen, 2016; Panitz, 1999). Panitz (1999) further stated that building agreement through group members' cooperation is the fundamental evidence of collaborative learning. Additionally, their engagement is reported to increase through

working in groups and from increased awareness of the importance of their involvement in the learning process (Van Dang, 2006). Killen (2016) highlights that learners seek knowledge from other learners and learning sources. Similarly, Dörnyei (2001) states that learners increasingly share responsibility for the group's goals and assist one another's learning for achievements. Students learn from each other through interactively supportive learning activities (Kimhachandra, 2010; McCombs, 2004; Naruemon, 2013; Nunan, 1988). For instance, Kimhachandra (2010) provided some examples of supportive and interactive learning activities, such as songs, games, pair chatting, role-play, group working and simulation.

Kirkpatrick and Jianrattanapong (2010) conducted interviews with eight teachers and had 378 questionnaire responses from students in nine leading high schools in Bangkok, Thailand. They found that teachers combined students with different proficiency levels and encouraged students with higher levels of English proficiency to assist those with lower proficiency levels in the same group to guess meanings of vocabulary during a pre-reading activity. Dhanasobhon (2006) highlights that teachers find it challenging to plan learning activities for mixed ability students in large classes. He further states that in managing groups of students, teachers need to know students' learning capabilities so they are able to provide appropriate activities and materials for students. In contrast, Jony (2016) studied 100 teachers from 20 schools in Bangladesh about their perceptions of learner-centred teaching and found that group work was rarely used. This means that different groups of teachers in different contexts have varied views which impact their teaching practice.

In relation to the use of group activities, Boo, Chew, Lee, Ambrose-Yeoh and D'Rozario (2001), and Naruemon (2013) argue that the use of pair work or group work does not mean that learner-centred approaches are used. This is because working together with limited interaction is not cooperative learning. In cooperative learning, group members must have face-to-face interaction to improve group interactions and to help one another to learn (Johnson & Johnson, 2009). Similarly, Johnson and Johnson (1994, cited in Killen, 2016) stated that group members have to take responsibility and accountability for the success of each individual member. Also, they need to show their understanding of the task and help

one another to learn through asking questions for effective interactions. However, it is important to note that the type of group work should be determined by the desired learning outcome. For example, Schunk (2012) states that tasks should be designed so that individual members can work together to accomplish task components, and not simply completed by a more competent group member.

#### **2.4.5 Learning tasks and resources**

The MoE of Thailand policy puts a major focus on organising teaching and learning activities in Thai classrooms by using learning tasks and resources associated with individual differences, such as responding in a differentiated way to students' needs and capabilities to enhance students' learning. According to the Thai policy documents, students have the potential to learn and to develop their learning through a variety of learning resources and the learning environment responsive to their differences (Office of the National Education Commission (ONEC), 1999). Therefore, developing individual students' learning at their own pace to reach their own potential is considered important in organising learning activities (Naruemon, 2013; ONEC, 2000).

International studies have also found that having an adequate provision of learning resources could motivate students to learn (Bansberg, 2003; Dörnyei, 2001; McCombs, 2004; Nonkukhetkhong et al., 2006). Findings suggest that a wide variety of appropriate learning resources both inside and outside the classrooms were needed to support student learning and needs, such as books, magazines, newspaper, video, television and the internet, and that these helped with allowing students to access more authentic experiences (Bansberg, 2003; Chantarasorn, Suwattananand, & Soranastaporn, 2003; Thamraksa, 2003; Tudor, 1996). Furthermore, researchers have found that the use of a wide range of practical and authentic teaching materials is important to support students' self-learning (Kaplowitz, 2012; Kimhachandra, 2010; Kumaravadivelu, 2006; Nonkukhetkhong et al., 2006; Nunan, 1988). According to Bansberg (2003), tasks which relate to individual students' interests can help enhance students' intrinsic motivation, and help them develop their own strategies to create solutions and assess their learning needs (Thamraksa, 2003).

Thamsaksa (2003) states that schools should create a student learning environment integrated with technology, such as computer and internet as tools to empower students to learn and enhance their learning experience, by connection to authentic learning contexts. As noted in Chantarasorn et al. (2003), students could also use search engines to search for information from the internet which allows them to engage with, and experience authentic learning materials, in the searching process. A wide range of activities and project work are necessary, not only for students' learning choices to suit their learning preferences, but also to develop capabilities in thinking skills such as problem solving (Howie, 2011).

According to Naruemon (2013), encouraging students to think is an important aspect of learner-centred approaches. To achieve learner-centred learning goals, it is suggested that open-ended situations or tasks that involve thinking skills, creative and critical problem solving for students are needed (Handa, 2009; Hardman et al., 2008; Howie, 2011; Thamraksa, 2003; Vavrus, 2009). Thamraksa (2003) suggests that students should be encouraged to engage in learning tasks through various types of thinking skills, such as reasoning, decision making, reflecting, making inferences and problem solving.

#### **2.4.6 Participation and engagement**

While learning, students can show their engagement through their participation to build up their skills to collaborate with others and self-regulate to achieve higher levels of engagement (Cornelius-White & Harbaugh, 2010). Tinio (2009 cited in Killen, 2016) explains there are three dimensions to engagement: cognitive, behavioural and affective. The cognitive aspect involves students' self-motivation and efforts made in their learning. The behavioural aspect includes concentration, attention, persistence, participation and contribution to discussions. The affective aspect comprises the relationship between students and teachers as well as classmates, and a range of learning and school concerns. Gibbs and Poskitt (2010) suggest that the aspects of enthusiasm and volitional learning or learning by choice demonstrate students' learning engagement. Teachers can assist learners to learn about their learning by concentrating on what they are studying, and directly engaging them to generate their own examples, ask questions, solve problems, and summarise content with their classmates (Weimer, 2013).

#### **2.4.7 Assessment**

Within the Thai system, according to policy directives, both formative assessment and summative assessment should be used to assess students' learning (Naruemon, 2013; ONEC, 1999). Popham (2012, cited in Eggen & Kauchak, 2012) states that formative assessment refers to the use of the assessment results to provide feedback to promote student learning, and to inform or adjust subsequent learning. Eggen and Kauchak (2012) state that summative assessment refers to the assessment at the end of the course for grading. They further state that when formative and summative assessments are appropriately utilized to offer students feedback, they are beneficial in improving teaching and learning, in encouraging student learning and in increasing learner motivation. Many studies have found that teachers can assess learners' learning development through a wide range of assessments including: learning behaviour observation, learning conversations, structured interview questions, tasks, rubrics, portfolios, projects, performance, tests, and giving feedback (Cooper, 1997; Huba & Freed, 2000; MoE, New Zealand, 2018; MoE, Thailand, 2008; Nitko & Brookhart, 2011). It is also noted that assessment results from a range of measures inform teachers about learners' learning to make decisions to enhance their future learning progress and achievement (Harlen, 2007; Lamprianou & Athanasou, 2009; McMillan, 2007). A range of assessment measures are desirable as there are different learning targets, varied purposes for using assessment results, and different strengths of particular assessment methods to suit specific intentions (Nitko & Brookhart, 2011). Comprehensive assessment necessitates using a range of tools to gain different insights into student learning such as patterns of errors, partially understood concepts, and accuracy of their knowledge.

According to the APA Work Group of the Board of Educational Affairs (1997) and Bansberg (2003), formative assessment is important to ensure a focus on assessing learners' strengths and weaknesses of both existing knowledge and skills to inform future teaching and learning, by adjusting what is taught, and how and when to better support learners to achieve their learning goals. Similarly, Nitko and Brookhart (2011) highlight that teachers use formative assessment evidence to plan activities, diagnose students' learning, improve teaching to support student learning, and give students feedback to improve their learning to achieve the learning targets. In addition, Huba and Freed (2000) and Van Dang (2006) state that

formative assessment helps learners to learn from their mistakes and to gain more accurate information about their own abilities.

To assess students' learning in learner-centred approaches, authentic assessment may also be applied (Fook & Sidhu, 2010). Authentic assessment in teaching directly assesses learners' ability to apply knowledge and skills to real world tasks (Huba & Freed, 2000; McMillan, 2007; Mueller, 2005) and prepares learners to solve problems and learn from their errors for better understanding (Huba & Freed, 2000). Nitko and Brookhart (2011) explain that authentic assessment is considered important within learner-centred approaches as authentic tasks are argued to be more directly relevant, and more meaningful, to learners' lives and thus better support their learning. Teachers (and peers) can provide feedback to support students about steps to improve their learning through authentic assessments (Kaplowitz, 2012). As such, students are able to use the feedback to improve their own learning and application to real world situations.

Within a learner-centred approach, one of the roles of learners is to assess their own learning and also that of their peers (Weimer, 2013). The MoE in Thailand (2008) supports this view and states that students should have the opportunity to assess their own learning and their classmates' learning. Self-assessment and peer assessment help to diagnose learning needs and to promote learning among students (Al-Zu'be, 2013). Self-assessment is considered important as it deepens students' awareness of their own strengths and weaknesses (Cooper, 1997; Darasawang, 2007; Dörnyei, 2001; Nunan, 2013; Van Dang, 2006). Self-assessment, where learners are involved in setting their learning goals, is also reported to enhance learner motivation and support learners in becoming more self-directed and autonomous learners (APA Work Group of the Board of Educational Affairs, 1997; Eggen & Kauchak, 2012; Lea, Stephenson & Troy, 2003; McCombs & Miller, 2007; Nitko & Brookhart, 2011). Nitko and Brookhart (2011) emphasise that while the goal is for learners to be self-directed and autonomous they need support from teachers in terms of strategies to assess their learning, criteria to assess their work, and how to discuss and reflect on their work with classmates. Where these practices are promoted, it is suggested that learners are able to develop more responsibility and control of their own learning rather than being dependent on teachers (Lea

et al., 2003), thus helping them to become more active and independent learners (Cooper, 1997).

As mentioned earlier in section 2.2, summative assessment, like tests, tends to dominate in teacher-centred approaches. In contrast, students evaluate their own learning in learner-centred approaches which puts the focus more on formative assessment, when it is used to inform subsequent learning (MoE, Thailand, 2008; Nitko & Brookhart, 2011; ONEC, 1999). Despite the fact that formative assessment and summative assessment are recommended to promote student learning within a learner-centred approach, previous studies have reported that tests were the most widely used assessment tool in assessing learners (e.g., Black & William, 2005; Darasawang, 2007; Kirkpatrick & Jianrattanapong, 2010; Weimer, 2013; Zohrabi et al., 2012). For example, Zohrabi et al. (2012) compared the use of a learner-centred approach to a teacher-centred approach in teaching English grammar as a foreign language with 60 male students in an Iranian junior high school in Tabriz, Iran. They reported that tests such as multiple choices, cloze and blank filling tests were used to test students' knowledge on grammar in their study. In Thailand, a multiple choice test is used for the university entrance examination as it is easy to grade. It has been found that this use of tests in the university entrance examination also influences teachers in using tests to assess students' English learning at secondary schools (Darasawang, 2007). Furthermore, Naruemon (2013) reported that only summative assessment was used for assessing students in her study. Students thus did not have the opportunity to monitor their own learning progress through the use of self-assessment and peer-assessment. As will be mentioned in section 2.6.1, the exam-based system which focuses on obtaining high levels of achievements may deter teachers from using formative assessments in classroom practices.

## **2.5 Learner-centred approaches in Thailand**

The 1997 Constitution and the NEA 1999 mandated education reform at all levels. The NEA 1999 provides the national educational guidelines for all stakeholders to follow. Learner-centred approaches are the main focus in this reform. In particular, Section 24 (see Appendix B) focuses on organising the learning process to benefit all learners, and this will be summarised later in this section. Since this reform, the intention was to communicate to all

stakeholders the directive to use learner-centred approaches across all subject areas and at all year levels. The reform led to introduction of the BEC 2001 which replaced the BEC 1990. In the 2001 curriculum, there was a focus on the Thai English curriculum together with national foreign language standards and benchmarks. This curriculum aims to equip students with capabilities to use English as a foreign language for communication.

The BEC 2001 was subsequently revised to form the BECC 2008 to specify a framework, guidance and learning outcomes from Grades 1 to Grade 12. The BECC 2008 provides more details about the learning standards and learning indicators, as well as assessment and evaluation to guide teachers to apply them in their teaching. It also aims to develop five key student learning capacities. These include communication, thinking, problem solving, applying life skills and the technological application. The MoE of Thailand disseminated these documents to schools and related educational organizations. Subsequently, seminars and training about educational reforms were organised by the educational service area 25 Khon Kaen, so that principals and teachers in this area would know about these documents. Additionally, teachers were required to ensure their lesson plans related to the BECC 2008 and the NEA 1999 to implement them in their learner-centred classrooms.

The importance of learners are emphasised in the NEA 1999 and learner-centred approaches are stated as the main approach for teaching and learning in Thai classrooms. According to Section 22 of the NEA 1999, the main principles of providing education are ensuring that all learners are given the potential to learn and develop their learning at their own pace. Thus, developing students' learning capabilities is the aim of the learning process. Furthermore, Section 24 mentions the expectations of teachers and their practice, and the implementation of the educational institutions and agencies involved in a learning process as follows:

- Arrange content and activities related to the learners' interests and aptitudes based on individual differences.
- Provide thinking skills to apply knowledge in preventing and solving problems.
- Organize activities for learners to learn from authentic experience, to practice and think critically.

- Create the learning environment, utilise a range of teaching and learning resources, and facilitate learners to learn.
- Assess learners' learning progress with a wide range of assessment methods.

From my analysis, the NEA 1999 provides guidelines that are broadly consistent with the academic literature on learner-centred approaches. While the information contained is somewhat general, from my wide reading on this topic in the international literature, it appears to cover most of the main principles about learner-centred approaches. However, the policy does not provide teachers with adequate information about the implementation of learner-centred approaches. There is no guidance for teachers on what to do to implement learner-centred approaches. Thus, according to the ONEC (2000), numerous stakeholders, such as teachers and administrators, are still confused by the concepts of learner-centred approaches. As Thamraksa (2003) and Darasawang (2007) state, teachers are confounded with their roles and teaching methods to be used in the classroom to facilitate learners' independent learning. Darasawang (2007) highlighted the level of confusion stating that some Thai teachers understood that they just needed to assign students to study on their own without much support from them. It was also found by Nonkukhetkhong et al. (2006) that teachers lacked confidence about the underlying principles of learner-centred approaches. In their study, they explored five in-service teachers from different public secondary schools about their perceptions and implementation of learner-centred approaches to teaching English as a Foreign Language in Thai contexts. What they implemented in their teaching practices was based on their limited understanding. Similarly, Naruemon (2013) studied six Thai pre-service English teachers' beliefs about learner-centred approaches and their classroom practices, and found that they had different views of learner-centred approaches. Furthermore, they had limited understanding and misconceptions of this approach so they did not know how to apply it into their teaching practices. However, it should be noted that the studies reported above were very small in scale and focused on relatively low numbers of teachers, and so it is difficult to obtain a broader understanding of the situation.

As teachers felt that they did not have enough information to support them to implement learner-centred approaches, the ONEC (2000) provided further indicators (guidance) on

learners' activities and teachers' activities. These include indicators regarding the roles and responsibilities of learners (see Appendix C) and teachers (see Appendix D) with the intention of ensuring a more uniform approach to learner-centred teaching is implemented. Key details from these indicators are presented in Table 2.2 to show how teaching and learning principles relate to one another in terms of the roles and responsibilities of teachers and learners.

These teaching and learning principles are important as they articulate the Thailand MoE expectations of teachers' classroom practice. The activities that teachers provide for the learners show that learners are encouraged to learn when the teaching activities are well-planned. In terms of the learners, they ought to be able to link their classroom learning experience to real life situations, and use the teachers' feedback to improve their learning progress.

According to the MoE, Thailand (2008), the BECC 2008 emphasises the application of learner-centred approaches in the classroom. Individual differences, curriculum, teaching methods and techniques, learning resources, and evaluation are outlined as key components to facilitate students' learning and development. In this context, students are responsible for their learning including practicing, interacting with peers and teachers, seeking knowledge, using learning resources, analysing information, synthesising information, finding answers and solutions and assessing their own learning. Thailand's MoE encourages active learning practices to be implemented in classrooms, which in turn leads to a significant change in teaching practices and learning processes with implications for the roles of teachers and learners, teaching methods, teaching resources and assessment criteria.

**Table 2.2: A relationship between the indicators regarding teachers' activities and the indicators regarding learners' activities (ONEC, 2000)**

| Teachers' teaching process  | Learners' learning process  |
|---|---|
| - Teachers prepare content relating to methods of teaching.   |   |
| - Teachers provide an environment to motivate and reinforce learners to learn based on their interests and aptitudes.                     | - Learners practice through a variety of interesting activities to find out their own aptitudes and working methods.            |
| - Teachers pay attention to an individual learner.  |   |
| - Teachers arrange activities and situations relating to real life which encourage learners to express themselves and think creatively.   | - Learners engage in authentic experiences.<br>- Learners practice thinking skills to enhance their imagination and creativity. |
| - Teachers use teaching materials to encourage learners to think independently, do activities, solve problems and improve their learning. | - Learners learn to solve the problem solving by themselves.<br>- Learners practice activities and thinking skills.             |
| - Teachers encourage group activities for learners to exchange their knowledge and experiences.   | - Learners answer the questions through a mutual group.<br>- Learners exchange their knowledge and experiences.                 |
| - Teachers use a variety of learning sources to relate learners' experience to real life.   | - Learners engage in authentic experiences.   |
| - Teachers continuously observe and assess learners' strengths and weaknesses to improve their learning.                                  | - Learners assess their learning for learning improvement.  |

## **2.6 Difficulties associated with implementing learner-centred approaches**

Over the past ten years, Thai teachers have faced challenges in English language teaching in secondary schools. A number of researchers have attempted to investigate the factors that affect the implementation of learner-centred approaches in Thailand (e.g., Nareumon, 2013; Nonkukhetkhong et al., 2006; Nonthaisong, 2015; Noom-ura, 2013; Vanichakorn, 2003). For example, Nonkukhetkhong et al. (2006) used interviews to investigate the experiences of five in-service teachers from five different public secondary schools. The findings revealed that teachers lacked confidence in applying the learner-centred approach principles in their teaching. Hence, they implemented them differently based on their understanding of the principles. Furthermore, considerable time was required for students to complete activities, and therefore, the participants were concerned about time pressures to cover the content. In a further study, Vanichakorn (2003) studied four in-service English teachers' learner-centred teaching experiences that were from an international school, a private school and two public schools. It was found that there were many difficulties in implementing learner-centred approaches including the use of traditional approaches to teaching, students' unfamiliarity with learner-centred approaches, a small classroom with large numbers of students, time, and limitations of technology and resources, the seniority system that exists in Thai society, expectations of content coverage and preparation for entrance examination. As these examples show, there were many perceived barriers to implementing learner-centred approaches which impacted on the ability of teachers to teach effectively. The result is many English lessons remain unchallenging and students continue to learn passively. However, as noted above, these studies were reliant on small samples and to date, there has been no large-scale study exploring this issue.

The following section presents the factors that influence the implementation of learner-centred approaches more generally. These include the educational assessment system, power distance, professional development and learning, large class sizes, limited use of learning tasks and resources, the lack of communicative activities, and students' levels of English proficiency – each of which are examined below.

### **2.6.1 The educational assessment system**

As outlined in section 2.5, the Thai educational reforms mandated the implementation of a learner-centred approach in Thai classrooms. However, the implementation of learner-centred pedagogy may be challenging for teachers as the Thai educational system is exam-oriented. Hence, the majority of students put substantial effort into passing the university entrance examination (Darasawang, 2007). As Cheewakaroon (2011) and Pan and Block (2011) noted, policies to adopt learner-centred approaches and the implementation of the CLT can be mismatched with an exam-based assessment. For example, Cheewakaroon (2011) stated that the policy was incompatible with the actual practice where grammar knowledge was the main focus, rather than communication. As noted in Watson Todd (2008), English listening and speaking skills are generally excluded from the exams in Thailand. This focus on achievement is also seen in other non-western contexts. For example, Pan and Block (2011) stated that the exam-oriented syllabus in China was inconsistent with the CLT which aims to improve students' English for communication, as teachers had prioritise preparing students for written exams. Zohrabi et al. (2012) argued that Iranian principals, teachers, students and parents put a significant focus on achieving high exam scores. Similarly in Indonesia, there is a strong focus on teaching students to pass exams (Mokoginta, 2013).

Within an exam-based culture, both students and teachers may be more inclined to focus more on the content needed to pass the exam, and on achieving high grades, rather than on learner-centred approaches and communication (Aliusta & Özer, 2017; Kirkpatrick & Ghaemi, 2011). Ghaicha and Mezouari (2018) further explained that students were competitive and they placed importance on exams and grades. They stated that teachers had to utilise teacher-led teaching to support learners with their goal of achieving good examination grades. The standardized curriculum and testing system, and grading culture are dominant problems in implementing a learner-centred approach (Aliusta & Özer, 2017; Ghaicha & Mezouari, 2018). In the Turkish context, Altinyelken (2011) stated that teachers deemed that learner-centred teaching did not provide students with sufficient knowledge for national exams as the exams aimed to evaluate students' knowledge acquisition. They thus thought that students needed to receive adequate information in their learning for entrance exams. Added to this, entry into Turkish universities is very competitive, and therefore

teachers felt pressure from both students and their parents to focus on student achievement and preparing students to pass the national exam. As a consequence, teachers imparted knowledge to students and additional private tutoring is common. Due to the pressures and expectations teachers feel to support students in achieving high student grades, there was minimal uptake of learner-centred approaches.

In the Thai context, a high score on the O-NET and the university entrance examination influences Thai students' future learning opportunities (Jianrattanapong, 2011). The O-NET aims to assess the knowledge of students at grades 6, 9 and 12 as prescribed by the BECC 2008. These results are designed to be used for schools to improve curriculum and instruction decisions and to evaluate national education quality (NIETS, 2019). Dhanasobhon (2006) states that the national test and the university entrance examination promote an emphasis on tests rather than on language skills or communicative skills. Students may therefore view that listening and speaking skills are less important to learn. Similarly, Islam and Bari (2012) found two important problems in implementing the CLT in Thai contexts: students focus primarily on their grades rather than English proficiency, and examinations were not CLT based. In addition, Noom-ura (2013) asserted that teachers had to organise tutorial sessions for students for both school exams and the university entrance exams. In other contexts, e.g., China and Turkey, Altinyelken (2011) and Maskhao (2002, cited in Nonkukhetkhong et al., 2006) also reported that teachers put greater focus on exam knowledge, such as on grammar, vocabulary and reading. Accordingly, learners tend to place more focus on grades rather than their learning (Weimer, 2013). Many Chinese students in Shang's (2018) study also focused on their assessment results rather than on applying their knowledge. Therefore, it has been found that teachers feel they have to spend more time preparing students to pass standardized tests (Kirkpatrick & Jianrattanapong, 2010; Yilmaz, 2009).

### **2.6.2 Power distance**

Within the Thai culture there is a hierarchical system in which a lower status person politely accepts orders from a higher status person (Cheewakaroon, 2011; Hallinger & Kantamara, 2000b). This is often referred to as a high power distance (Hallinger & Kantamara, 2000a). High top-down decision making is still common in the Thai educational system (Hallinger,

Piyaman & Viseshsiri, 2017) as well as in educational organisations in Thai society (Chalapati, 2007; Thamraksa, 2003). Nonkukhetkhong et al. (2006) also stated that the NEA 1999 mandated the education reform top-down.

Thai cultural norms also influence the Thai educational system. These include “greng jai” and “sia naa”. *Greng jai* refers to the consideration of others or compliance with a person who has a higher status in the society. Thai people do what they are requested to do, even though they may be opposed to it, due to their politeness and deference (Hallinger & Kantamara, 2001). *Sia naa* means lose face or to embarrass someone (Hallinger & Kantamara, 2000b). Age is also an important cultural factor for Thai people and junior teachers must show respect to their senior colleagues (Hallinger & Kantamara, 2000a; Naruemon, 2013; Thongthew, 2014). Previous studies have found that the senior teachers might inhibit the implementation of learner-centred approaches (e.g., Hallinger & Kantamara, 2001; Naruemon, 2013; Thongthew, 2014; Vanichakorn, 2003). For example, one of the four teachers in Vanichakorn’s (2003) study found that experienced teachers in her department used traditional approaches in teaching such as focusing on textbooks. Despite trying to implement learner-centred pedagogies, she had to comply with more senior conventional teachers. Maskhao (2002, cited in Nonkukhetkhong et al., 2006) also stated that Thai students were obedient to teachers. Similarly, Mokoginta (2013) and Novera (2004) reported that Indonesian students obeyed and listened to the seniors like teachers. Shang (2018) also found that Chinese students paid high respect to teachers who controlled the learning process.

Loh and Teo (2017) argued that culture affects learners’ learning. In Thai culture, teachers are viewed as the main knowledge source responsible for transmitting knowledge to students and role models for teaching moral values to students. Thamraksa (2003) reports that it is common for students to learn passively by receiving knowledge imparted from teachers. A similar situation is found in other cultures and countries. For example, in Indonesia, teachers believe that they are knowledge givers and students deem that they are knowledge receivers who learn passively and comply with teachers (Marcellino, 2015).

The perception that teachers are the source of knowledge and need to transmit this to learners may result in teachers having difficulties in implementing learner-centred approaches in classes. For example, teachers may face problems in encouraging students to actively engage in learning due to their limited responses in class (Mokoginta, 2013). In Bangladesh, it has been argued that the culture influences interactions between teachers and students because students view teachers as authoritative sources of knowledge (Chowdhury & Le Ha, 2008). Similarly, Le Ha (2008) stated that taking on the role of facilitators conflicted with the image teachers have of themselves as knowledge imparters in Vietnam. In China, it has been found that students have to keep their opinions to themselves to avoid expressing views which oppose those of teachers (Shang, 2018). It has also been reported that cultural factors affected the implementation of learner-centred approaches in Namibia. For example, O’Sullivan (2004) discusses how Namibian children are expected to pay respect to elders as authorities. A learner-centred approach is seen as a contradiction to this. He also argues that the Western learning approach like the learner-centred approaches focusing on individuals seem to be more appropriate within Western cultures, and are not suitable for all other contexts.

The culture and nature of Thai students has also been reported as a factor which could inhibit the implementation of learner-centred approaches (Chorrojprasert, 2005; Marcellino, 2015; Mokoginta, 2013; Stainton, 2017; Wiriyachitra, 2001). For example, Stainton (2017) found that Thai students are shy and hesitant to speak due to Thai cultural norms. Students’ unwillingness to speak English is reported as a common barrier in Thai English language classrooms (Wiriyachitra, 2001). Islam and Bari (2012) also reported that all 10 Thai teachers in their study stated a cultural conflict between the nature of the students and the nature of the CLT as a significant barrier to implementing the CLT in Thai contexts.

According to Hallinger (2010), there is tension between Thai cultural values and the educational reforms that have taken place. For example, he views the policy of teaching communicative English as incompatibility with the requirements of summative exams that focus on written English and suggests that this may be a barrier for teachers to implement new teaching approaches into their practices (Abahussain, 2016). Hallinger and Kantamara (2000a) further stated that Thai cultural norms impacted the successful implementation of

educational reforms. They suggest that the strength of Thai culture limits the implementation of change in Thai society. Considerations on the appropriateness and duration of time to adopt a new approach from Western to Eastern cultures are crucial as there can be clashes between pedagogy and the cultural practices of practitioners (Hallinger, 2010). Hallinger and Bryant (2013) suggest that considerable time is required to make changes in education reforms when they challenge cultural values. The Thai educational system has a high hierarchical structure in which the lower status person(s) comply with the higher status person(s), even though they may be opposed to what they say. Thus Thai teachers may appear to comply with the policy of the Thai MoE to implement learner-centred approaches in Thai classrooms even though they do not understand what learner-centred approaches are or know how to implement them into their teaching practices. The current study makes a contribution to knowledge by exploring the perspectives from a variety of stakeholders on the understanding of learner-centred approaches and how teachers implement this in their classes on a larger scale than previous studies. Additionally, this study also contributes to further understanding of the factors that may influence teachers' implementation of learner-centred approaches in the Thai context.

### **2.6.3 Professional development and learning**

As Jordan et al. (2008) state, some teachers may not have adequate training in learner-centred approaches to develop students' English learning capability. There are several reasons that teachers might resist the change to learner-centred approaches. For example, it has been reported that some teachers may not be willing to implement learner-centred approaches because they are new, complicated to implement and they prefer to rely on more traditional teacher-centred approaches (Naruemon, 2013; Nonkukhetkhong et al., 2006). According to Mesa and Guzman (2006), some teachers did support learner-centred approaches. However, they lacked theoretical knowledge about constructivism, resulting in their practice reverting back to familiar teacher-centred approaches in which teachers had authority to direct and control content, classroom activities, and assessment criteria in the classroom. These findings suggest that teachers tend to need more pedagogical training related to constructivist learning theories.

Naruemon (2013) reported that Thai pre-service teachers had different levels of understanding, and often a superficial level of understanding of the underlying principles of learner-centred approaches and their implementation. She further stated that teachers had some misconceptions and limited application of learner-centred approaches in their pedagogical practices. Teachers perceived that students are actively involved in learner-centred teaching when students just sit and listen to teachers and undertake activities such as answering teachers' questions and presenting a dialogue in pairs in class. As mentioned in section 2.2, Nunan (2013) argues that some teachers have negative attitudes toward, or misinterpret underlying concepts of, learner-centred approaches. Thamraksa (2003) further states that a number of teachers doubt whether this approach could help improve student learning and they are unsure how to implement them. Thus, to address this, teachers need opportunities to gain a deeper understanding about learner-centred concepts and how to utilise them in the classroom (Rasyidah, 2017).

The perceived need for training is in line with other studies in which teachers require training support or workshops to shift from teacher-centred concepts to implement learner-centred principles in their classroom practices (Altinyelken, 2011; Yilmaz, 2009). To implement and manage effective learner-centred approaches, skilful teachers are needed. Powell and Kalina (2009) suggest teachers need to learn social constructivist teaching strategies or activities to use them in the classroom. Behroozizad, Nambiar and Amir (2012) suggest that teachers should use different mediated strategies to help learners effectively in communicative classrooms. For example, they could learn from interaction during pair-work, group work, whole class activities and interaction. Additionally, experienced teachers who understand learner-centred approaches can develop teaching activities targeted at learners' needs, interests, and abilities (Powell & Kalina, 2009). To effectively implement learner-centred approaches, teachers need to be well-trained through intensive profession development and learning comprising professional reading, discussions, expert demonstrations, and sustained periods of supportive coaching and feedback (Poskitt, 2014).

#### **2.6.4 Large class sizes**

Previous studies have found that large class sizes were a factor in hindering teachers from implementing learner-centred approaches (e.g., Cheewakaroon, 2011; Chen, 2007; Marcellino, 2015; Noom-ura, 2013; Yilmaz, 2009). For example, Nonkukhetkhong et al. (2006) found that a Thai school located in the city had a typical class of 65 students which prevented teachers from implementing learner-centred approaches in an overcrowded class. Similarly, Aliusta and Özer (2017), and Altinyelken (2011) reported that a large class with 35 or 40 students hindered the use of a wide range of activities and students' active involvement in class. Altinyelken (2015) reported that Turkish teachers found it was challenging to organise teaching and learning activities with large class sizes, due to noise levels with several students talking simultaneously in a confined space, classroom management, taking more time to teach, and having time pressures for topic coverage.

It has also been found to be challenging to organise group work with limited classroom space as having large numbers of students and limited space reduced students' interaction and collaboration in class (Ghaicha & Mezouari, 2018). In this environment, as Chen (2007) discusses, teachers can struggle to support individual students' needs and respond to requests for support. Dhanasobhon (2006) also notes, it is challenging for teachers to arrange group work and student interaction in this environment as Thai teachers and students have only brief and limited interactions in a large class, and teachers have to monitor other students' learning. Additionally, Soysal and Radmard (2017) found that some students did not participate in teaching and learning activities. This barrier thus discouraged the teacher from implementing learner-centred approaches in large classes. According to the barrier of large class sizes, Ghaicha and Mezouari (2018) suggest that the number of students per class should be decreased to enhance opportunities for students to learn collaboratively. Altinyelken (2011) also suggests 20-25 students per class as ideal.

Large classes also influence teachers' pedagogical methods. For example, as Soysal and Radmard (2017) reported, large classes affect teachers' pedagogical decisions such as classroom management strategies and the use of sufficient learning materials and technological resources for students' learning. They further found that a teacher might spend

more time to control class with a large number of students in a classroom. In addition, Nagaraju, Madhavaiah, and Peter (2013, cited in Emaliana, 2017) stated that the teacher-centred approach was appropriate for large class sizes as teachers prepared materials and activities that were time efficient.

### **2.6.5 Limited use of learning tasks and resources**

Past studies have reported that restricted resources at schools prevent the implementation of learner-centred approaches (Cheewakaroon, 2011; Ghaicha & Mezouari, 2018; Manqele, 2017; Nonkukhetkhong et al., 2006; O’Sullivan, 2004). It was also found that teachers who have limited access to resources rely on textbooks to support their teaching practices (Diniah, 2013; Nonkukhetkhong et al., 2006; Noom-ura, 2013; Padermprach, 2017). For example, Nonkukhetkhong et al. (2006) reported that teachers frequently utilised textbooks rather than authentic materials and audio-visual aids in classes even though they reported the use of a range of communicative activities. They further suggest that this limited use of learning tasks and resources were more reflective of teacher-centred than learner-centred approaches. A reliance on textbooks has been criticised by Padermprach (2017) who concludes that Thai teachers and learners viewed textbooks as uninteresting and lacking in topics relevant to learners’ needs. The impact of this was that learners were less attentive and engaged in their learning. It is suggested that sufficient teaching and learning resources should be supplied to schools to support learner-centred activities (Altinyelken, 2011; Ghaicha & Mezouari, 2018).

Inadequately equipped classrooms to support teaching and the lack of educational technology support, such as computers and projectors, have also been cited as impediments to the development of learner-centred approaches to English teaching and learning at the secondary level (Aliusta & Özer, 2014; Altinyelken, 2011; Biyaem, 1997 cited in Wiriyachitra, 2002; Noom-ura, 2013). For example, Ghaicha and Mezouari (2018) found that teachers could not implement learner-centred activities properly due to the lack of needed materials such as internet connection. This issue might also relate to the level of teacher knowledge and skill and to a need for additional professional development to support and guide teachers. As Thamraksa (2003) states, teachers lack technology training and technical support and do not always have sufficient skills to integrate technology in their teaching practices.

### **2.6.6 Students' levels of English proficiency**

Some studies in countries where English is not the first language have found that low levels of students' English language proficiency can be a factor in preventing teachers from implementing learner-centred approaches (e.g., Aliusta & Özer, 2017; Cheewakaroon, 2011; Ghaicha & Mezouari, 2018; Noom-ura, 2013; O'Sullivan, 2004). For example, some studies have found that pair and group work were ineffective for students' interaction and collaboration due to students' poor English proficiency (Aliusta & Özer, 2017; Ghaicha & Mezouari, 2018). Ghaicha and Mezouari (2018) further explained that teachers found students' low English proficiency was a barrier to using learner-centred approaches because students needed to have a good level of English proficiency to share their ideas or to work together in groups. Teachers thus felt that they needed to focus on the role of imparting content knowledge and viewed that this kind of teacher-centred teaching was better able to support the development of students' English proficiency.

## **2.7 Research questions**

Previous research in Thailand has been limited in scale with small numbers of participants and data sources. Previous research has primarily focused on teachers, and has not sought the perspectives from a wider range of stakeholders who impact and are impacted by policy decisions concerning learner-centred approaches. Furthermore, there has been a lack of research comparing teachers' understanding of learner-centred approaches with their implementation. While there has been some research on the barriers to implementing learner-centred approaches, due to the small scale of these studies it is difficult to pull together a clear picture of the main factors. Additionally, there has been no research focused on the factors that are perceived to support learner-centred approaches in Thailand. As described in sections 2.6.1 and 2.6.2, Thai cultural norms may impact the way that participants both understand and implement learner-centred approaches. For these reasons, a larger-scale research project is needed to collect data from multiple data sources to gain a deeper understanding of what teachers understand about learner-centred approaches, the extent of implementation, and the barriers and supporting factors in their teaching practice for using learner-centred approaches in Thai secondary school classrooms. As such, this culturally bound exploration of learner-centred approaches has the potential to provide more

meaningful information to shed light on ways to improve the teaching and learning of English in Thai public secondary schools. This current study attempts to answer the following research questions:

- 1) What understanding do stakeholders have about learner-centred approaches?
- 2) How do practitioners implement learner-centred approaches?
- 3) What are the factors that support and impede implementation of learner-centred approaches?

## **2.8 Chapter summary**

This chapter has presented relevant literature describing teacher-centred approaches. The literature related to constructivism and social constructivism was also reviewed as they are the theoretical foundations of learner-centred approach concepts that focus on students' construction of knowledge through interactions with one another.

The shift from teacher-centred approaches to learner-centred approaches requires learners to play an active role, to construct their own knowledge and to take responsibility for their learning. Teachers also need to change from being knowledge transmitters to facilitators who support learners in their learning by providing a variety of teaching and learning tasks and resources, and to engage learners in active learning and collaborative interactions with their classmates to create solutions to open-ended tasks. Within learner-centred approaches, a range of assessments are used to assess learning with the aim of providing learners with feedback to support their future learning.

Salient issues were investigated in the implementation of learner centred approaches. Thai teachers, as well as teachers in non-western countries, have reportedly found it challenging to implement learner-centred approaches in a culture that is hierarchal and highly respects age, and teachers as sources of knowledge. The few studies in this area suggest that teacher-centred practices still dominate in non-western countries which have recently introduced learner-centred education policies. Other tensions cited in the literature include high pressures and expectations around exam results, limited resources, large class sizes, and minimal on-going professional development for teachers. The NEA 1999 of Thailand

adopted learner-centred approaches aiming to shift traditional teaching to learner-centred classrooms. The few studies in this area suggest that there are issues with the implementation of learner-centred approaches and that teacher-centred approaches are still common in Thai classrooms.

This research aims to explore the stakeholders' understanding about learner-centred approaches, its implementation and the factors that support and impede the implementation of learner-centred approaches in public secondary schools, Thailand. The current study addresses the need for a larger-scale exploratory study, involving a wide range of stakeholders and multiple data collection methods. This research contributes to international literature by providing important insights into participants' understanding of learner-centred approaches, how teachers implement this approach, and the barriers that prevent teachers from implementing this learner-centred pedagogy in their teaching practices in a non-western context.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

This chapter describes the research methodology adopted in this study. As highlighted in the literature review chapter, this study utilises a social constructivism perspective, which also informs the methodology of how the research is conducted. Different participants can have different and sometimes complex understandings of learner-centred approaches. Multiple methods of data collection are thus needed to delve deeper into these complex and differing understandings. In this chapter, the philosophical paradigm of social constructivism is introduced. This is followed by a discussion of the exploratory case study research design used in this study. The research participants and the sampling design are then described, before the multiple methods of data collection and data analysis are presented. Following this, the triangulation of data, the role of the researcher and ethical considerations of this study are examined. The chapter concludes with a chapter summary.

#### **3.2 Research paradigm**

Philosophical foundations concerning the *ontology* – the nature of reality and the *epistemology* – the nature of knowledge, are commonly drawn on to help understand the nature of the research (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The philosophical paradigm that this study draws on is social constructivism. The foundation of social constructivism is that learners construct their own knowledge through interactions with others. In constructivist paradigms, “reality is socially constructed” (Mertens, 2015, p. 16). Merriam and Tisdell (2016) state that constructivism, or interpretivism, assumes that knowledge is constructed through interpretations or multiple realities in a bounded context. According to the theory of social constructivism, social worlds develop out of individuals’ interactions with their culture and society. Hamilton and Corbett-Whittier (2013), and Creswell (2014), affirm this notion that social constructivists believe that individuals construct knowledge through their experiences of historical and social contexts. In brief, every conversation or encounter between two or more people presents an opportunity for knowledge to expand. The exchange of ideas that goes along with human interaction is at play here. Individuals attempt to understand the

situations they face within their settings, then build up multiple ‘subjective meanings’ of these experiences. Thus, research within a social constructivist paradigm focuses on understanding the complexity of participants’ views of situations; the meanings and knowledge of which are socially constructed through interaction with other persons (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

### **3.3 Research design**

A qualitative approach and case study design were adopted in this study. The justification for this design is discussed in more detail in the following section.

#### **3.3.1 Qualitative research**

Qualitative research aims to understand how participants interpret, construct and give meaning to their experiences (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Furthermore, it is an effective way for the researcher to investigate the relationships, activities, and situations within natural settings in order to understand complex human problems or behaviours in a specific social and cultural setting (Ary, Jacobs, Sorensen & Walker, 2019; Creswell & Creswell, 2018). To that end, smaller and in-depth samples are typically used. This means that qualitative research can be responsive to real-life situations, and captures the richness of people’s actual lived experiences, because it is more interested in depth, rather than the breadth that is characteristic of quantitative research (Punch, 2009). In qualitative research, data is typically words, images, and artefacts, which contribute to the thick descriptions and deep exploration of phenomenon or events in natural contexts (Drew, Hardman & Hosp, 2008). This study used a qualitative approach because its characteristics aligned with the study focus, i.e. the exploration of participants’ understanding of learner-centred approaches, the implementation and the factors that supported and impeded the implementation of learner-centred approaches.

#### **3.3.2 A case study approach**

Case study is a qualitative research approach that involves the study of an individual, group, or organization, to gain in-depth understanding of the phenomenon. Case studies aim to answer questions about contexts, relationships, processes and practices (Marshall &

Rossman, 2014; Robson, 2007). The case is a bounded system, delineated by topic, personnel, timing and location (Creswell, 1998). Its context may be historical, political or social. Furthermore, a case study may use multiple sources of data (Burns, 2000; Gravetter & Forzano, 2003; Punch & Oancea, 2014; Yin, 2014), such as observations, interviews, audio-visual material and documents.

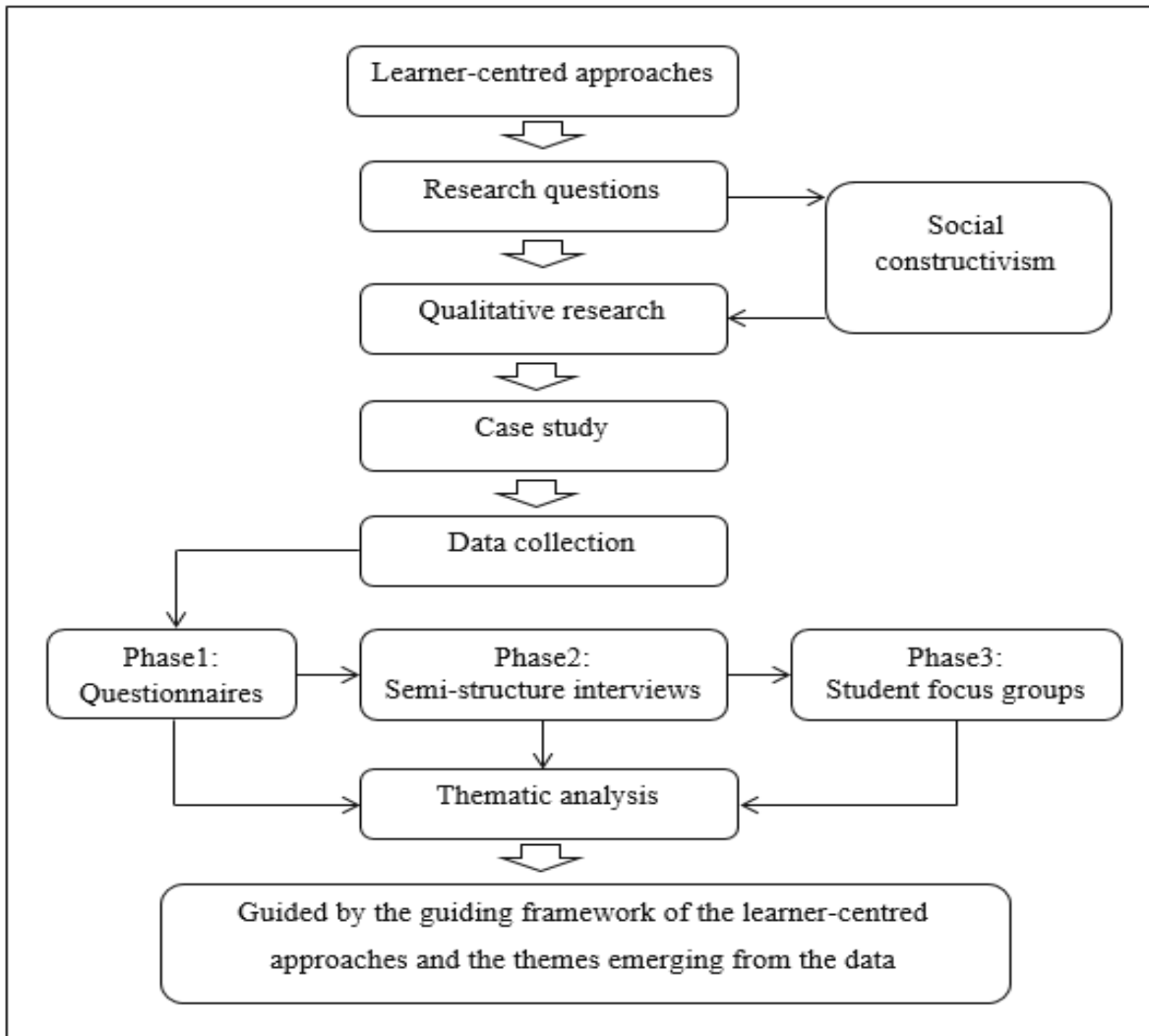
Stake (2008) differentiates three main case study types: the “intrinsic”, the “instrumental” and the “collective”. The intrinsic case study researches ‘within’ a particular situation for its own sake, due to its uniqueness or special interest in the individual participants, groups, or events of the case. The instrumental case study focuses on thorough understanding of a specific entity, issue, or theme, in order to understand or illustrate a more general phenomenon ‘outside’ of the case. The collective case study investigates different cases in a single study in order to provide greater generalisability for theory development or evaluative purposes.

Yin (2014) uses another framework. *Exploratory* case study aims to define questions or investigate the possibility of an in-depth-study where little is currently known about the particular phenomenon. *Descriptive* case study focuses on presenting a complete picture, or description, of the phenomenon whereas *explanatory* presents data to help explain a cause-effect relationship between phenomena or events, and to answer ‘how’ and ‘why’ questions. Finally, an *evaluative* case study investigates the worth or value of a case, and the extent to which it has met the goals or aims of a particular programme, project or intervention.

An exploratory case study approach was used in the present study as little was known about the implementation of learner-centred approaches in Thailand, and within Khon Kaen where this study was situated. In-depth information was sought from seven types of participants (detailed in Figure 3.2 below) associated with small and extra-large public secondary schools in the educational service area 25, Khon Kaen province, Thailand. In this study, the participants’ understanding of learner-centred approaches, the implementation of learner-centred approaches, and the factors that impact its implementation were explored.

However, a case study approach has limitations related to subjective bias, its time-consuming nature, issues associated with credibility, dependability, lack of rigor, and generalisation (Burns, 2000; Gravetter & Forzano, 2003; Merriam, 1998; Yin, 2014). To counter this, Ary et al. (2019) state that reflexivity or self-reflection can reduce researcher bias. Additionally, according to Punch and Oancea (2014), where the data are analysed at an adequate abstraction level of concepts, rather than description of the data, it is possible for findings from case study research to be generalised. Thus, the development of abstract concepts and propositions beyond the factual description can increase the possibility of generalising the findings. Furthermore as Burns (2000) states, the aim of a case study is to gain insight and to understand a particular event. In-depth investigations take time. Therefore, the researcher needs to allow enough time to focus on the central topics of the investigation so that the time consuming and in-depth nature of case study research can be seen as a strength rather than a weakness.

Burn (2000) states that a case study includes the collection of a range of data to deepen and broaden understanding of the study's entity. Bringing together data from multiple data sources helps improve the credibility, transferability and dependability of the study (Burns, 2000). Additionally, according to Creswell (2013), multiple data sources access a wider range of participants' information related to the issue(s) of the study. Figure 3.1 summarises the research process described in this methodology chapter. Questionnaires were designed to enable greater numbers of participants to be involved, and to provide assurances about the representative nature of the secondary school staff and student population who were subsequently interviewed. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with a smaller number of participants, but sought more in-depth information from participants. Semi-structured interviews enable similar questions to be asked of all participants (and hence seek consistent information), while also providing opportunities for the researcher to probe more deeply on aspects of particular relevance to the participant. From this, the research obtained breadth and depth of data. Finally, information was collected from student focus groups to capture learners' experiences and perceptions of learner-centred teaching and learning activities in the classrooms.

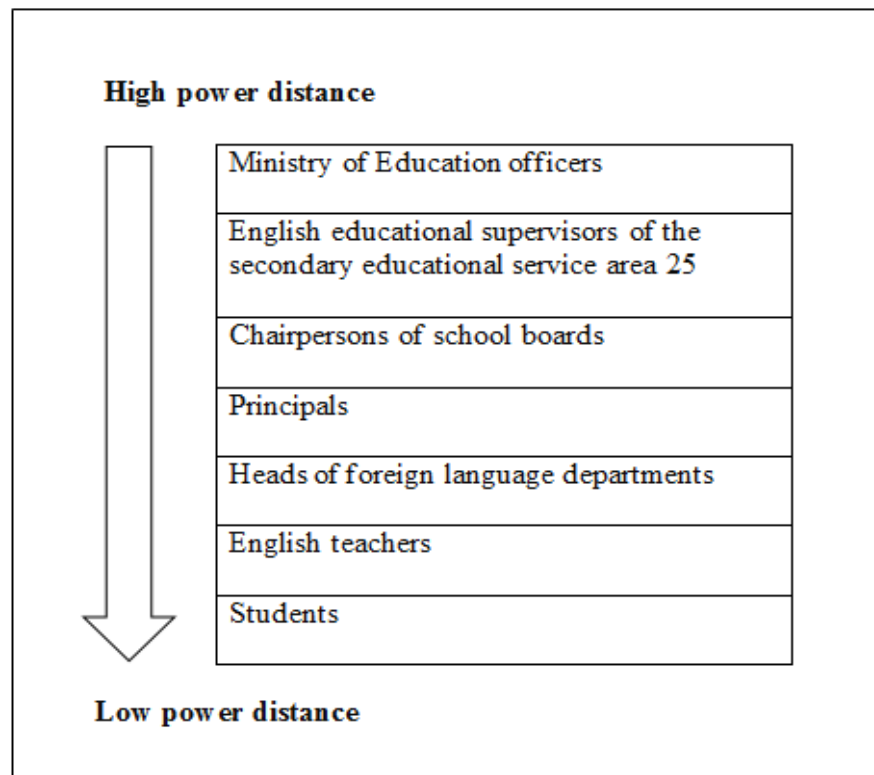


**Figure 3.1: Methodological overview**

As Yin (2014) states, following systematic procedures provides rigor in case study research. The researcher has to plan the direction of the study by determining the data sources (in relation to people and data methods) for the investigation before collecting and analysing the data (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998). This case study research had the specific procedures of questionnaires, interviews and focus groups, along with a range of participants, to produce sufficient breadth and depth of data evidence to support its findings and conclusions.

### 3.4 Research participants

A range of people were invited to participate in this study, from the policy maker level to the students in the classroom. Having a range of voices was considered important due to the different roles in terms of understanding, implementation and experiences of learner-centred approaches these participants have. The range of views includes perspectives related to the policy on implementing learner-centred approaches, pedagogical training support, supervision of teaching, teaching methods, teaching resources, teaching and learning activities in learner-centred classrooms, assessment, and factors that influence the implementation of learner-centred approaches. A hierarchical structure of the participants is presented in Figure 3.2 below, followed by details of the participants selected for the study.



**Figure 3.2:** The hierarchical structure of the participants

There were three phases of the study involving three different data sources including questionnaires, semi-structured interviews and student focus groups. Table 3.1 below shows how each phase related to the research questions.

**Table 3.1: Study phases and participants**

| Phases                       | Stakeholders   | Research questions  |
|------------------------------|--|---|
| Phase one:<br>Questionnaires | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Principals</li> <li>• Heads of foreign language departments</li> <li>• English teachers</li> </ul>  | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What understanding do stakeholders have about learner-centred approaches?</li> <li>2. How do practitioners implement learner-centred approaches?</li> <li>3. What are the factors that support and impede the implementation of learner-centred approaches?</li> </ol>  |
| Phase two:<br>Interviews     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ministry of Education officers</li> <li>• English educational supervisor of the secondary educational service area 25</li> <li>• Two case study schools: The chairpersons of the school boards, Principals, Heads of foreign language departments and English teachers</li> </ul> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What understanding do stakeholders have about learner-centred approaches?</li> <li>2. How do practitioners implement learner-centred approaches?<br/><i>(Heads of foreign language departments and English teachers only)</i></li> <li>3. What are the factors that support and impede the implementation of learner-centred approaches?</li> </ol> |
| Phase three:<br>Focus groups | Two case study schools:<br>Students  | 2. How do practitioners implement learner-centred approaches?   |

### 3.4.1 Ministry of Education officers

Ministry of Education officers are the key policy makers for the implementation of learner-centred approaches within Thailand. They initiate and drive learner-centred approaches in teaching and learning. Their role is to administer learning reforms within schools and to provide support for teachers to implement learner-centred approaches in their teaching

practices. One ministry of education officer who takes responsibility of English curriculum, and the other ministry of education officer who takes charge of the English language teaching and learning were chosen. They were selected as participants as they were able to provide information about policy, on the support they provide schools and teachers to implement learner-centred approaches in classrooms, and their perspective on the factors that influence their implementation.

### **3.4.2 The English educational supervisors of the secondary educational service area 25**

Two English educational supervisors of the secondary educational service area 25, Khon Kaen, support English language teachers in applying English teaching methods in their classrooms. They typically lead professional development meetings with school staff and supervise teachers' teaching in schools. They provide pedagogical training, lesson planning and assessment support for English language teachers during the school semester or the semester break. The provision of time for school teachers' professional development is generally a few times per year, with approximately 2-3 hours each time. Hence, English educational supervisors were selected as participants as they could discuss their understanding, the implementation, and the factors of implementing learner-centred approaches in English classes because of their experience in English classroom observations, supervision of English teachers' teaching, and teaching and learning discussions with other stakeholders such as the principals and heads of foreign language departments.

### **3.4.3 The chairpersons of school boards**

Each public secondary school has a school board. The school board is formed from parents, a community representative, a teacher, a local administration officer, alumni, a Buddhism representative, experts and the principal as the secretary. A chairperson of the school board is chosen from the board members. The main roles of the school board are to support the school operation on the basis of the policies of the Ministry of Education, the needs of local communities and all school projects. The school board provides suggestions on how to improve the quality of teaching and learning at school as well as seeking the support of local learning resources when needed. The school board also has the power to make decisions about school curriculum, budget and activities concerned with school administration. Thus,

the chairperson of the school board is a key person who can provide their perspective about how schools implement learner-centred approaches and the factors which impact their implementation.

#### **3.4.4 Principals**

Principals are expected to drive NEA 1999 learner-centred approaches in the schools. As the administrators, the principals are the key people who provide budget support for teaching and learning resources utilised in English language classes and additional English language projects to enhance students' English learning, along with support for teachers to participate in professional development. Hence, they are able to discuss the implementation of learner-centred approaches at their schools as well as the factors that support and impede the learner-centred approach implementation.

#### **3.4.5 Heads of foreign language departments**

The heads of foreign language departments are generally English teachers. They have years of teaching experience and the pedagogical content knowledge associated with English language teaching. They work closely with English teachers. They support teachers through providing coaching and mentoring about teaching, the provision of professional readings, and through support to participate in pedagogical training to apply in their teaching. Thus, as participants for this study, they can provide in-depth information about the understanding, the implementation and the factors influence the implementation of learner-centred approaches within their school.

#### **3.4.6 English teachers**

English teachers play the most important role, as practitioners, in following the educational policy from stakeholders higher up the hierarchy to implementation of learner-centred approaches in classes. Therefore, they can provide the most relevant detail about what their understanding about learner-centred approaches is, how they implement them, and the factors that support and impede their implementation of learner-centred approaches in their teaching practice.

### **3.4.7 Students**

Students participate in teaching and learning activities used in English classes; therefore, they are the key agents who can provide information about their experiences learning English in the classroom.

## **3.5 School sampling**

There are 42 secondary educational service areas across Thailand. They belong to the OBEC, Ministry of Education. The secondary educational service area 25 arranges education for public secondary schools in Khon Kaen province which are under the OBEC. This region was selected for this study because it is the region in which I work. There are networks between Faculty of Education, Khon Kaen University, where I work, and schools in the educational service area 25 for student teachers' internships.

Public secondary school sizes in Thailand are categorized into four types based on the number of students. First, a small public secondary school has up to 500 students. Second, a moderate public secondary school has from 501 to 1500 students. Third, a large public secondary school has from 1501 to 2500 students. Fourth, an extra-large public secondary school has more than 2500 students (The secondary service area office 2, 2018). There are 421 English teachers in total in the educational service area 25; 46 small public secondary schools with 90 English teachers, 26 moderate size public secondary schools with 126 English teachers, four large public secondary schools with 52 English teachers, and eight extra-large public secondary schools with 153 English teachers. All of these English teachers are Thai. In this study, the major focus was on small public secondary schools and extra-large public secondary schools. As mentioned above, small public secondary schools have a smaller number of students, as well as fewer teachers than those at extra-large public secondary schools. Small schools are typically rural and have access to fewer resources than extra-large schools, which are typically much better resourced. While class sizes tend to be small in small schools, large class sizes are common in extra-large schools. Therefore, I was interested in exploring the impact of these differences and whether there were contrasts or similarities in the understanding and implementation of learner-centred approaches across these two school types.

### 3.5.1 Small public secondary schools

There are 46 small public secondary schools in the secondary educational service area 25, of which 11 were chosen to participate in this study. All 40 English teachers in these 11 small public secondary schools were invited to participate in the questionnaires. The 11 small schools were chosen on basis of the number of English teachers in the schools, to protect their anonymity. For example, five small public secondary schools have no English teachers while 10 small public secondary schools have only one English teacher in each school. A further 20 small public secondary schools have two English teachers in each school. The remaining 11 small schools have between three to five teachers. My decision to focus on these 11 schools helped to protect the anonymity of participants and ensure that it would not be possible to identify participants in the research.

### 3.5.2 Extra-large public secondary schools

There are eight extra-large public secondary schools in the secondary educational service area 25. I invited all eight extra-large public secondary schools to complete the questionnaires. There are 153 English teachers in these eight extra-large public secondary schools, all of whom were invited to participate. The number of English teachers in each of these schools ranges from 12 to 36 English teachers.

## 3.6 Data collection methods

As mentioned in section 3.3.2, three types of data collection methods were used to collect data from a range of stakeholder participants. A summary is provided in Table 3.2 below of these data collection methods alongside the research questions they address.

**Table 3.2: A summary of stakeholders and data collection methods for each research Question**

| <b>Research questions</b>  | <b>Stakeholders</b>   | <b>Research instruments</b>   |
|--|---|---|
| 1. What understanding do stakeholders have about learner-centred approaches? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Principals</li><li>• Heads of foreign language departments</li><li>• English teachers</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Questionnaires</li><li>• Interviews</li></ul> |

| Research questions  | Stakeholders  | Research instruments   |
|---|---|--|
| 3. What are the factors that support and impede the implementation of learner-centred approaches? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ministry of Education officers</li> <li>• English educational supervisors of the secondary educational service area 25</li> <li>• The chairpersons of the school boards</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interviews</li> </ul>                           |
| 2. How do practitioners implement learner-centred approaches?                                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Heads of foreign language departments</li> <li>• English teachers</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Questionnaires</li> <li>• Interviews</li> </ul> |
|   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Focus groups</li> </ul>                         |

### 3.6.1 Preparation of the data collection instruments

To guide the development of the data collection tools, i.e. the questionnaire, interview and focus group questions, the wider literature on learner-centred approaches was drawn on together with the following documentation: The LCPs (APA Work Group of the Board of Educational Affairs (1997) and relevant Thailand Ministry of Education documents, e.g. Section 24 of the NEA 1999 (ONEC, 1999), and Learning reform (LR) (ONEC, 2000). As mentioned earlier in section 2.4, the LCPs were developed with the aim to reform the American educational system.

These documents are important because they provide a foundation for learner-centred principles and guidelines, which for the purposes of this study could be applied to understanding more about learner-centred approaches in the English language classroom in Thailand. From a careful review of these documents, the major concepts of learner-centred approaches were analysed and compared. From this process, the main concepts were arranged against the four key areas outlined in the LCPs, i.e. cognitive and metacognitive factors, motivational and affective factors, developmental and social factors, and individual difference factors. The results of this process are shown below in Table 3.3. This guiding framework was used to inform the development of the data collection tools.

**Table 3.3: A guiding framework of learner-centred approaches**

| <b>A guiding framework of learner-centred approaches</b>   |
|--|
| <b>Cognitive and metacognitive factors</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Prepare the content related to teaching methods.</li><li>2. Provide the environment to support learning.</li><li>3. Use a variety of learning sources related to learners’ real life learning to learn from authentic experience.</li><li>4. Use teaching materials to encourage learners to find the answers, solve problems and construct knowledge through interactions with other classmates.</li><li>5. Encourage learners to think independently, practice to find their own aptitudes and learning methods to improve their learning.</li></ol> |
| <b>Motivational and affective factors</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>6. Facilitate activities and situations based on learners’ interests and capabilities for them to express opinions and think critically and creatively.</li><li>7. Motivate and reinforce learners to learn.</li></ol>   |
| <b>Developmental and social factors</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>8. Encourage group activities for learners to exchange knowledge and experience mutually to achieve knowledge.</li></ol>   |
| <b>Individual difference factors</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>9. Facilitate and monitor learners’ learning individually to assist their learning.</li><li>10. Use authentic assessment to assess learners’ learning.</li></ol>  |

### **3.6.2 Questionnaires**

As Ary et al. (2013) state, questionnaires allow the researcher to collect data from a larger sample of participants quickly and inexpensively. Questionnaires invite people to answer the same set of questions in a pre-determined order (Gray, 2013). Open-ended qualitative questionnaires can gain authentic, rich, deep and honest responses from respondents (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007).

### 3.6.2.1 Questionnaire design

The research questions and the guiding framework in Table 3.3 (see Section 3.6.1) were used to inform the questionnaire questions. The research questions contain three main focuses, e.g. '*understanding*', '*implementation*' and '*factors*'. The guiding framework of the learner-centred approaches implementation and the related literature provided the key concepts of learner-centred approaches, such as teaching strategies, teaching resources, learning environment, learning activities, motivation and assessment, in order to help the researcher to formulate the questions.

The questionnaire (see Appendix E) contained two sections. Section one included both open-ended and closed questions to collect demographic information such as name, school name, contact number, email, major teaching subject, academic position, and attendance and completion of professional development seminars and training. This information was used to inform the selection of English teachers for the interviews.

Section two contained open-ended questions aimed at gathering respondents' informative views to answer the research question number 1, 2 and 3. As Gray (2014) states, the strengths of the open-ended questionnaire are that it has no restricted answers, which allows respondents to provide rich responses. There were separate sets of questions for the principals; heads of foreign language departments and English teachers which closely aligned to their roles in terms of understanding and implementation of learner-centred approaches. Each question was designed to allow questionnaire respondents to freely express their views. At the end of the questionnaire, respondents were invited to add further comments and suggestions about their understanding and implementation of learner-centred approaches. The questionnaires were in Thai to reduce misinterpretation because all respondents were Thai. As Wilkinson and Birmingham (2003) state, this helps to ensure that the respondents understand the questions and are able to more accurately and fully respond to the questions posed.

### **3.6.2.2 Piloting questionnaires**

Piloting a questionnaire is recommended to help remove misleading questions and to assess the effectiveness of the questionnaire in obtaining the data needed to respond to the research questions (Gray, 2013). To pilot the questionnaires, a letter was sent to the principal of a municipal school in Khon Kaen province to ask permission to try out questionnaires with the principal, the head of foreign language department and English teachers who were not subsequent participants in this study (see Appendix F). As a researcher, I was open and asked for their feedback about whether the questionnaire covered all relevant aspects, if there were any redundant questions and also whether any further refinement of the wording was needed. Following this process, there were no major revisions of the questionnaire questions. No questions were added or deleted. However, several minor wording changes were made in accordance with the feedback received. For example, the word '*evaluate*' was amended to '*assess*' to improve the clarity of the words used. In addition, some Thai phrases that used prepositions, such as '*about*' and '*by*', were also refined to ensure better flow of the language used in the questionnaire.

### **3.6.2.3 Data collection procedure for questionnaires**

Letters of invitation (see Appendix G), information sheets (see Appendix H), and consent forms (see Appendix I) were provided to the 11 principals of small schools and eight extra-large schools selected to participate in this study. They were informed about the research and invited to participate in it. Permission was sought to conduct the research project at their schools. There were two options in terms of participation in this research. First, they were asked if they would give permission for their schools to take part in phase one, the questionnaire data collection. Second, they were asked if they would also be willing to participate in phases two and three as a case study school. Additional details about this process and the student focus groups were provided. Potential participants were asked to return the consent forms to the researcher by post, using stamped address envelopes which were provided. The participants were also offered incentives to complete the questionnaires as in the Thai cultural norm; we offer a small token to show our appreciation for participants' time commitment and cooperation.

The questionnaires were administered to the principals, heads of foreign language departments and English teachers in both small and extra-large public secondary schools in the secondary educational service area 25 as they were embedded in the school contexts. The following Table 3.4 shows the participant numbers and response rates for the questionnaires. From the two school types, there were a total number of 19 public secondary schools. Questionnaires were administered to 231 participants including: 19 principals, 19 heads of foreign language departments, all 40 English teachers from the 11 small public secondary schools and all 153 English teachers from the eight extra-large public secondary schools. The response rate was just over 50% (117/231), which is in line with expected response rates for postal questionnaires according to the literature (Hoinville & Jowell, 1978; Kerlinger & Lee, 2000).

**Table 3.4: Overview of questionnaire participant numbers and response rates**

| Questionnaire respondents             | Number (n=117/231) |                     |                |
|---------------------------------------|--------------------|---------------------|----------------|
|                                       | Small schools      | Extra-large schools | Total          |
| Principals                            | 8/11               | 3/8                 | <b>11/19</b>   |
| Heads of foreign language departments | 10/11              | 8/8                 | <b>18/19</b>   |
| English teachers                      | 26/40              | 62/153              | <b>88/193</b>  |
| <b>Total</b>                          | <b>44/62</b>       | <b>73/169</b>       | <b>117/231</b> |

#### 3.6.2.4 Challenges with questionnaires

Questionnaires to schools were expected to be returned in two weeks. After two weeks, only a small number of consent forms and questionnaires were returned. Therefore the principals were called to check whether they received the letters of invitation and consent forms. Some replied that they received them, but others needed to check with their school secretaries. However, encouragingly the principals responded that they were willing to participate in the research, so they were asked to send the consent forms to the researcher. In addition to this, the researcher decided to make an appointment with principals and visit them at their schools. This also provided the researcher with the opportunity to talk to some heads of foreign

language departments and English teachers about the aims of the study. From these discussions I discovered that English teachers were busy with marking and grading because it was the end of the semester. Some schools had completed the questionnaires, but had not returned them to the researcher, while other schools had not received the questionnaires. Thus, the questionnaires were sent to them again. In this study, 117 complete questionnaires were returned from a total sample of 231 participants, which yielded a questionnaire response rate of 51 %. As mentioned in section 3.6.2.3, a response rate for postal questionnaire of 50 per cent is common.

### **3.6.3 Semi-structured interviews**

Interviewing is a dominant source of data collection in qualitative studies in education (Merriam, 1998). It is appropriate for case study research and the researcher is able to develop a main list of questions to elicit participants' views (Dörnyei, 2007; Merriam, 1998). Participants in the interviews were invited to express their views about the topic with open questions (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The strengths of interviews include that, they provide an important source of case study evidence, give historical data and provide insightful explanations with personal views such as interpretations, experiences, perceptions, attitudes and meanings (Creswell, 2014; Drew, Hardman & Hosp, 2008; Yin, 2014). McMillan (2012) further explains that the researcher can guide the conversation towards the topics under investigation. According to Ary et al. (2019) and Patton (2015), descriptive and open-ended questions in the interviews provide rich and different open-ended responses to understand the important situations in the context of study. The interviews were thus designed to allow the interviewees to express their understanding and experiences about learner-centred approaches, the implementation, and the factors that influence the implementation of the learner-centred approach in their own words and from their own experiences.

#### **3.6.3.1 Semi-structured interview design**

The interviews were utilised to gather further data about the stakeholders' understanding, the implementation and factors that influence the implementation of learner-centred approaches from participants. Two sets of the interview questions were created. The first set was used with Ministry of Education officers, English educational supervisors, chairpersons of school

boards and principals. This is because they are the people who drive the implementation of learner-centred approaches in public secondary schools, so they could provide insightful information about this from their perspective. The second set of interview questions was used with heads of foreign language departments who currently teach English and English teachers, as they are the ones responsible for using learner-centred approaches in their teaching practice.

The questionnaire response data (see Appendix E for an example), together with the guiding framework in Table 3.3, were used to inform the development of the interview questions. The questionnaire response data was read and reread to discern the main ideas to delve deeper into for the interviews. For example, in terms of their implementation of learner-centred approaches, the questionnaire respondents stated that they used the English curriculum to inform class preparation, and that they used a range different teaching materials in class (see questionnaire question 16 in Appendix E). From this data, interview questions were formed about how teachers used the English core curriculum to plan their lessons, and what teaching materials were most often utilised in English lessons (see for example interview question 3 in Appendix J). The questionnaire respondents also stated that they used group work for students to do activities (see questionnaire question 17 in Appendix E). This response helped inform the interview question about what kind of group work activities that teachers used in their class (see interview question 4 in Appendix J).

### **3.6.3.2 Piloting semi-structured interviews**

Piloting of the interview questions was conducted in order to improve the phrasing of questions to gain a richer response from participants. I asked my colleagues who were lecturers at Faculty of Education, Khon Kaen University, to provide feedback about the interview questions before piloting them. The semi-structured interview questions were then piloted with the secondary school English teachers at the two Demonstration schools at Khon Kaen University as these are similar school contexts to public secondary schools.

After piloting the semi-structured interview, some of the wording of questions was refined to enhance the clarity of the words used.

### 3.6.3.3 Semi-structured interview participants

There were 16 participants in the semi-structured interviews as illustrated in the Table 3.5 below.

**Table 3.5: The number of participants for semi-structured interviews**

| <b>Participants</b>   | <b>Number</b> |
|---|---------------|
| 1. Ministry of Education officers                                     | <b>2</b>      |
| 2. English educational supervisors                                    | <b>2</b>      |
| 3. The chairperson of a small school board                            | <b>1</b>      |
| 4. The principal at a small school                                    | <b>1</b>      |
| 5. The head of a foreign language department at a small school        | <b>1</b>      |
| 6. English teachers at a small school                                 | <b>3</b>      |
| 7. The chairperson of an extra-large school board                     | <b>1</b>      |
| 8. The principal at an extra-large school                             | <b>1</b>      |
| 9. The head of a foreign language department at an extra-large school | <b>1</b>      |
| 10. English teachers at an extra-large school                         | <b>3</b>      |
| <b>Total</b>  | <b>16</b>     |

The two invited Ministry of Education officers were the key policymakers involved in the education reforms with the authority to make policy decisions. There were only two English educational supervisors of the secondary educational service area 25 and so both of them were invited to participate. One small public secondary school and one extra-large public secondary school were selected to ensure representation of each of these school types. The criteria to choose the schools were based on the number of teachers within a school, and the willingness and agreement of the principal, and the head of the foreign language department, English teachers and students to participate.

After selecting these two schools, the chairpersons of school boards, principals and heads of foreign language departments were invited to participate in the interviews so in total there were two chairpersons of school boards, two principals, and two heads of foreign language

departments. Numerous teachers were willing to participate in interviews, beyond the scope of the study, so criteria were used to select a smaller, but representative, sample for interview. The following criteria were used: a range of levels of teaching experience (range 1 - from two to five years, range two - six to twenty years, and range three - more than twenty years), educational background and qualification, attendance at educational seminars and training experiences, and teaching awards. Three English language teachers within each of the two schools were subsequently interviewed.

#### **3.6.3.4 Data collection procedure for semi-structured interviews**

Appointments with the interviewees were arranged at a time that was convenient for them. A school meeting room was used for the interviews as this provided a more comfortable and quiet place for participants. Based on the advice of Liamputtong and Ezzy (2005), prior to each interview the participants were asked permission for the interview to be audio-recorded. Thai language was used in the semi-structured interviews for better understanding and to ensure that the interviewees could express their opinions and information freely and clearly (Esposito, 2001; Twinn, 1998; Yelland & Gifford, 1995). Each interview had a duration of approximately 90 minutes. This is in line with the literature where a single in-depth interview is likely to have duration of an hour and a half (Liamputtong & Ezzy, 2005). I started with some small talk to help each interviewee feel comfortable before starting on the interview protocol. Ary et al. (2019) recommend three strategies to draw out more depth in interviews: the use of follow-up questions, probing questions and pausing. These strategies were used for this study. Probes were used to encourage the interviewees to give examples and to explain more detail about the topic. Follow-up questions allowed the researcher to confirm, clarify and validate understanding of participant responses. Lastly, pausing was used to allow interviewees time to reflect upon, and respond to each question.

#### **3.6.4 Student focus groups**

Focus group interviews are used to obtain different viewpoints on a topic (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015). They are socially oriented as interviewees can discuss their opinions and experience through interaction in a group, in a natural and relaxed atmosphere (Marshall & Rossman, 2015; Ritchie, Lewis, McNaughton Nicholls & Ormston, 2014). Thus, focus group

interviews are suitable for exploratory studies which may elicit more views than an individual interview (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015). In this study, the purpose of the student focus group interviews was to provide an environment where students felt comfortable to share and discuss their experiences of learning English to obtain another perspective on whether learner-centred approaches were used in the case study classes.

#### **3.6.4.1 Student focus group design**

The student focus group questions (see Appendix K) were derived from the questionnaire questions (see questions 16 to 21 in Appendix E) and interview questions (see questions 3 to 8 in Appendix J) in relation to teachers' use of teaching and learning activities in class. For example, question 17 in the questionnaire, asked teachers to consider their typical English lesson in terms of teaching and learning activities, materials, individual, group and whole class activities as well as the proportion of English skills and interaction used in class. Parallel questions were asked in the student focus group such as the usual English teaching and learning activities that students experienced in English classes. Open-ended questions were used to allow students to discuss their experiences of learning English.

#### **3.6.4.2 Piloting student focus groups**

A letter seeking permission to pilot the student focus group questions was sent to the principal of a municipal school in Khon Kaen province (see Appendix F). After permission was granted, draft questions were piloted with a group of 10 secondary students who represented a mix of class grades and gender. I asked students to tell me if they did not understand the question. When I asked each question, I also observed how they reacted to the questions to check whether they understood the questions. After piloting the focus group questions, changes were made to refine some Thai words and phrases which did not alter the main meaning conveyed in the questions.

#### **3.6.4.3 Focus group interview participants**

Student focus groups were formed from students in the classes of the English teachers interviewed in the two case study schools. According to Stewart et al. (2007 cited in Liamputtong, 2009), six to ten students are a desirable number for focus group interviews,

because they contribute sufficient data to support initial sets of propositions (Yin, 2014). In addition, Duff (2008) states that having a higher number of participants reduces the possibility of gaining in-depth description and contextualization of participants' perceptions. In order to gain different points of views about teaching and learning organised by English teachers, 10 students were randomly selected from a class list provided by each of the two schools. Within each group, there was a mix of genders and grade levels. Having 10 students in each student focus group also helped to ensure that if any students withdrew from this study, there would still be a sufficient minimum number of students in each focus group. Since no students withdrew, 10 students in each student focus group participated in this study. The intention of the focus groups was to provide information on students' learning experiences in the English language classrooms, to provide a different lens on Research question 2 about how teachers implement learner-centred approaches in classes. There were three student focus groups for the small public secondary school and three student focus groups for the extra-large school; with a total of six student focus groups, as illustrated in Table 3.6 below.

**Table 3.6: The number of student focus groups**

| <b>Focus groups</b>                        | <b>Number of student focus groups</b> |
|--|---------------------------------------|
| 1. The small public secondary school       | 3                                     |
| 2. The extra-large public secondary school | 3                                     |
| <b>Total</b>                               | <b>6</b>                              |

#### **3.6.4.4 Data collection for student focus groups**

The student focus groups were conducted after I had interviewed all six English teachers within each of the two schools. A time after school was organised for the focus groups with the support of a school coordinator. A school meeting room was used to ensure that students had a quiet and comfortable place to share and express their views. As with the semi-structured interviews (see Section 3.6.3.3), the participants were asked permission for the focus groups to be audio-recorded and Thai was used to allow the participants to express their views clearly, accurately and freely. Each focus group took approximately 45 minutes.

According to Liamputtong and Ezzy (2005), each focus group should be conducted for a sufficient duration to obtain rich data, but not too long to cause fatigue or for participants to run out of ideas to discuss. As expected, the students in each focus group interview were initially quite shy to talk about their teaching and learning activities that they experienced in English classes. The researcher had to pause to allow time for them to think and to encourage them to share their point of view to gain the information about teaching and learning activities implemented in the classrooms. Students then started talking more openly and freely about the teaching and learning activities that they learnt in the classroom.

In summary, three data collection methods were used in this study: questionnaires, interviews and student focus groups. Questionnaires enabled data to be collected from a larger group of people, which provided the study with higher representation and data reliability; while interview data enabled more in-depth exploration of participants' understandings (validity), about learner-centred approaches to learning in one district of Thailand.

### **3.7 Data analysis**

Qualitative data may be analysed in a number of ways, guided by the research purpose, research questions, theoretical framework and data collecting methods used (Roberts, Dowell & Nie, 2019). In studies, such as the current one, when the main purpose is to make sense of the meaning that participants give to a phenomenon (learner-centred approaches), the three most commonly used approaches are: constant comparative analysis, content, and thematic analysis (Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2008). The three approaches provide researchers with systematic ways of organising data and identifying patterns amongst the data, and allow use of deductive and inductive processes in order to construct meaningful themes. All of the methods require researcher rigor and transparency, as indicators of data trustworthiness (validity), and potential replicability. However, the three approaches differ in the final stages of the analysis and use to which the data can be put. In order to select the most appropriate method(s), the three methods are briefly described and compared in the next paragraph, and the rationale provided for the selected method.

According to Roberts et al. (2019), in constant comparative analysis, three stages of data analysis are undertaken: data coding (chunking data into smaller units to assign descriptor codes), axial coding (grouping codes into similar categories), and selective coding (integrating and refining codes to develop an emerging theory). The approach is ideally suited to interview data. Content analysis is similar in the first two stages, but in the third stage a greater emphasis is placed on the frequency of use of each code in order to ascertain the theme's relative importance to participants. In other words, codes and emerging themes with higher frequency counts are deemed to have greater importance. With thematic analysis, the third stage varies in that the importance of the theme is determined by its representation of something salient in relation to the research questions (Castleberry & Nolen, 2018). Insights are gained about participants' contextual understandings of a phenomenon, which may help the researcher interpret how and why participants think and act the way they do. For these reasons thematic analysis was selected for this study, since the purpose of the study was to explore participants' understanding and implementation as individuals and groups, of student-centred approaches to learning (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Carey, 2012; Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007; Crano, Brewer & Lac, 2015; Savin-Baden & Major, 2013).

Although five main steps were used to analyse the data, the process was iterative to ensure accurate interpretation of the data. The five steps were: (1) assembled and organised the data for each data collection method used (questionnaires, interviews and focus groups), (2) reviewed questionnaire, interview and focus group texts, (3) repeated reading to code the texts, (4) developed basic themes, and (5) conducted deeper analysis to link the themes across the data types.

### **3.7.1 Assembled and organised each data collection method**

Interview and student focus group recordings were transcribed verbatim by independent transcribers, after they had signed the transcriber confidentiality agreement (see Appendix L). Dörnyei (2007) stated that transforming the recordings into written form is the first step in data analysis. Verbal and nonverbal aspects were noted from the interviews. The data from questionnaires, semi-structured interviews and student focus groups were typed into Microsoft word in Thai.

Copies of the interview transcripts were sent to the participants by post to verify the accuracy of the data as recommended by the literature (Ary et al., 2019; Creswell, 2014). From this process, a few minor corrections/adjustments were made. Summary copies of the main points of each focus group discussion were sent to the school coordinator by post to be distributed to the students for verification. The students were asked to check and correct, if necessary, any inconsistency they noticed. There were no changes made from this process.

### **3.7.2 Reviewed (initial reading of) the data texts**

After the data were assembled, the researcher read through the questionnaire responses, individual and focus group interview data, and the document analysis in order to gain an initial view across all the data sets, as recommended by Braun and Clarke (2006). These authors proposed a six-phase ‘reflexive and ‘recursive’ approach in the analysis process (cited in Braun, Clarke, Hayfield & Terry, 2019), which comprised the following sequence:

- *Familiarise yourself with your data*: Transcribe the data then read and re-read the data as well as note down the ideas.
- *Generate initial codes*: Label the key aspects of the data and collate data to each code.
- *Search for themes*: Collate codes to construct themes.
- *Review themes*: Check and revise themes relating to the data and concepts themes.
- *Define and name themes*: Refine each theme for clear definitions and names each theme.
- *Produce the report*: Verify how well themes align with the data, research questions and literature to write up the analysis report.

As Braun and Clarke (2006), Gray (2014), and Minichiello, Aroni and Hays (2008) suggest, to become familiar with the data I read, and reread the data from each data source, and for each participant and group of participants, wrote ideas and looked for a possible range of codes to identify meaningful categories. An illustrative example of the topic types used to label the text and derive descriptive codes is presented in Table 3.7.

**Table 3.7: An excerpt of the questionnaire data preliminary analysis on the understanding of learner-centred approaches**

| Questionnaire data   | Codes   |
|--|---|
| <b>SPQ5</b>  |   |
| <p><b>9. What are learner-centred approaches in your understanding?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students participate [in teaching and learning activities] based on their learning capabilities and learning interests.</li> </ul> <p><b>10. What understanding do you have about teaching using learner-centred approaches?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students participate in learning activities as well as take part in assessment and evaluation.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ = Students' participation</li> <li>■ = Learning capabilities</li> <li>■ = Students' interests</li> <li>■ = Planning with teachers</li> </ul> |
| <b>STQ5</b>  |   |
| <p><b>9. What are learner-centred approaches in your understanding?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Organising teaching and learning activities that focuses on students' constructing their own knowledge. Teachers are both knowledge transmitters and facilitators for students.</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ = Self-learning</li> <li>■ = The role of teachers</li> </ul>   |

Questionnaire responses were coded and combined into categories and subcategories about participants' understanding of learner-centred approaches and their implementation. The proportion of the participants who talked about each category and subcategory were tabulated, detailing the number of questionnaire respondents and interviewees. As Ary et al. (2019) state, frequency counts of codes provide some understanding of the categories that are meaningful for participants. This approach is more usually associated with content analysis than thematic analysis. However, embedding content analysis into the study was deemed to strengthen the analysis by providing insights into codes most frequently mentioned by participants, and provided the potential to supplement analysis with descriptive statistics. Descriptive statistics, in the form of frequencies and percentages, enabled the different data sets (namely questionnaire and interview data) to be compared and combined, as the reader will see in the Findings chapter (see Section 4.1). Where there were low frequency counts or percentages for a particular category or subcategory, this indicated that only a small proportion of participants discussed that particular aspect. As will be discussed in the findings chapter, participants provided very brief responses in discussion of their understanding of learner-centred approaches. For example, when the participants mentioned

about the role of teachers, they provided brief responses stating simply that teachers were facilitators or guide who assisted students to learn.

In both the questionnaires and interviews participants were asked to rank the top five factors that support and impede the implementation of learner-centred approaches to respond to research question 3. For example, in the questionnaire, question 12 (see Appendix E) and semi-structured interview questions 4 (see Appendix M) and semi-structured interview questions 9 (see Appendix J), participants were asked to rank the top five factors that impede the implementation of learner-centred approaches in English classes. Also in semi-structured interview question 5 (see Appendix M) and semi-structured interview question 10 (see Appendix J), they were asked to rank the top five factors that support the implementation of this approach. A scoring system was developed and used by the researcher to analyse and summarise this data. Five points were assigned to the most important factor as assigned by each participant, and one to the least. The sum of the scores of each rank was then tallied. Therefore the final total showed the combined total number of points from all participants. From this approach, it was then possible to see which factors were viewed as the most supportive or impedimentary to implementing learner-centred approaches across all participants. This process was necessary and made the ranking more robust because not all participants ranked five impeding factors in questionnaires. For example, thirteen questionnaire respondents ranked only the top four factors, ten ranked the top three and five ranked the top two. Therefore, the scoring system adopted was able to accurately represent the rankings in cases where the data was incomplete.

### **3.7.3 Repeated reading**

The data obtained from the student focus groups was examined and repeatedly read and compared to the semi-structured interview and questionnaire data from teachers about the implementation of learner-centred approaches in the classroom. Codes were interpreted, checked and modified to refine them against the questionnaire, interview and document analysis data, in order to identify emerging themes about the understanding of learner-centred approaches, the implementation, as well as the factors that both support and impede the

implementation of learner-centred approaches. As recommended by Creswell and Creswell (2018), the data were repeatedly checked for evidence to support emerging themes.

#### **3.7.4 Developed basic themes**

Initial descriptive codes were developed manually in this study, and subsequently imported into the analysis software programme *Nvivo*. In qualitative analysis, the use of computer software allows for a more rigorous approach than working manually. The *Nvivo* software programme helped to categorise, and to efficiently manage the data. *Nvivo* also assists with the visualisation of data, the categorising and connecting of data, and the reporting of findings in ways that are linked to answering the research questions (Bazeley & Jackson, 2013). Following the manual and *Nvivo* process, themes were reviewed, defined and named.

Consistent with the advice of cross-language researchers (e.g. Esfehiani & Walters, 2018), data were kept in the Thai language until step 4, the development of basic themes. Keeping the data in the Thai language until this stage ensured that participants could verify the original data, the initial themes were derived within the original language, and the process facilitated iterative checking and re-checking of coding between stages 1-3; deepening the credibility of emerging themes.

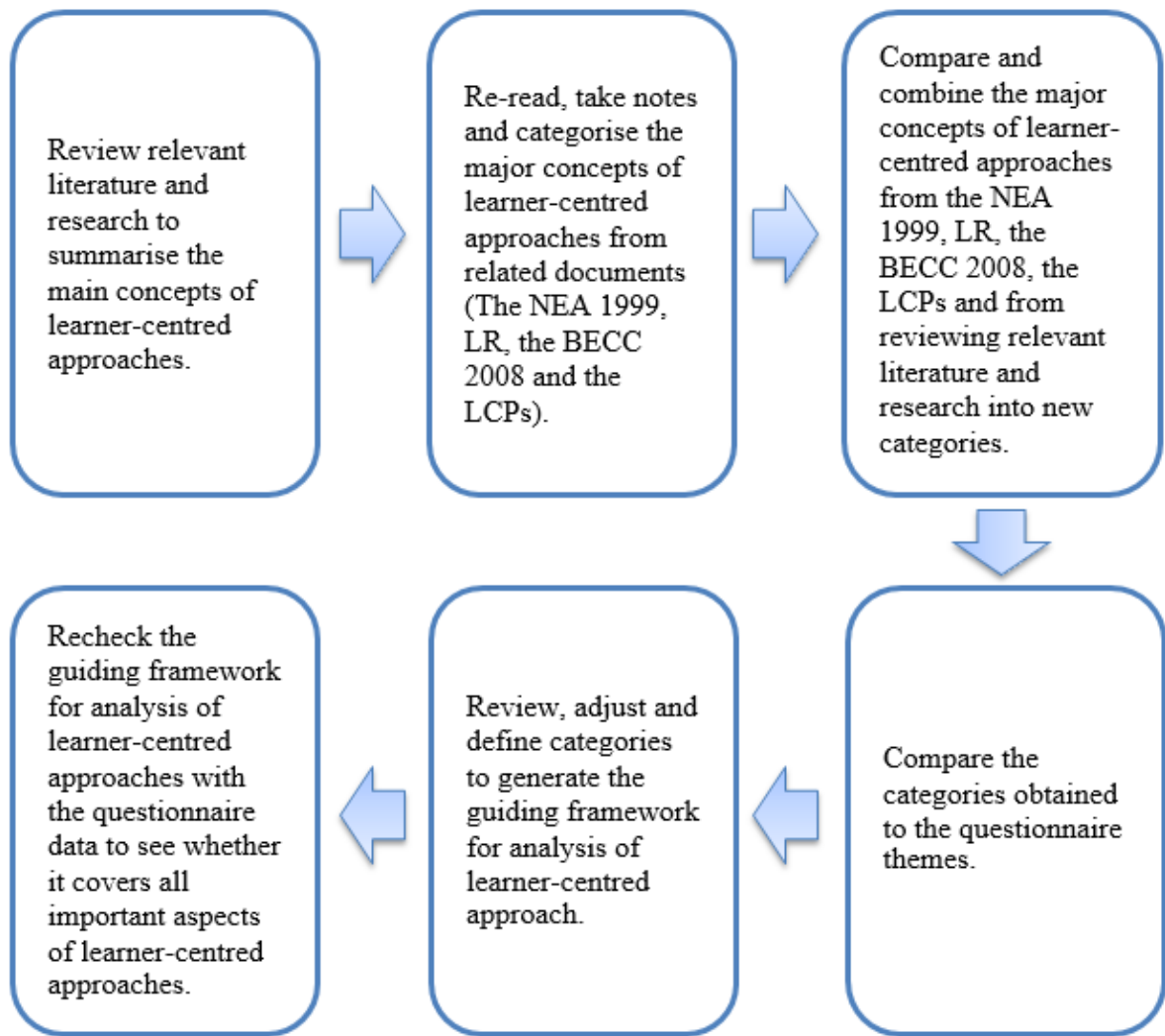
#### **3.7.5 Conducted deeper analysis to link themes**

After inductive themes were developed and refined from the *Nvivo software*, the themes were checked against the deductive categories of the guiding framework (see Section 3.6.1). An inductive approach, according to Braun and Clarke (2006), refers to themes that emerge from the data, while deductive analysis enables data to be examined in relation to literature themes to illuminate potential theoretical relationships (Patton, 2015). This study combined approaches since thematic analysis is strengthened from the combination of inductive and deductive analysis – together they validate the emergence of conceptual or theoretical perspectives (Ary et al., 2019; Creswell & Creswell, 2018). In summary, thematic analysis was employed to inductively analyse the data from questionnaires, interviews and student focus groups, which were subsequently deductively analysed in relation to the guiding framework.

Analysed data obtained from questionnaires, interviews and student focus groups about participants' understanding and the implementation of the learner-centred approaches is located in Appendices N, O, P and Q.

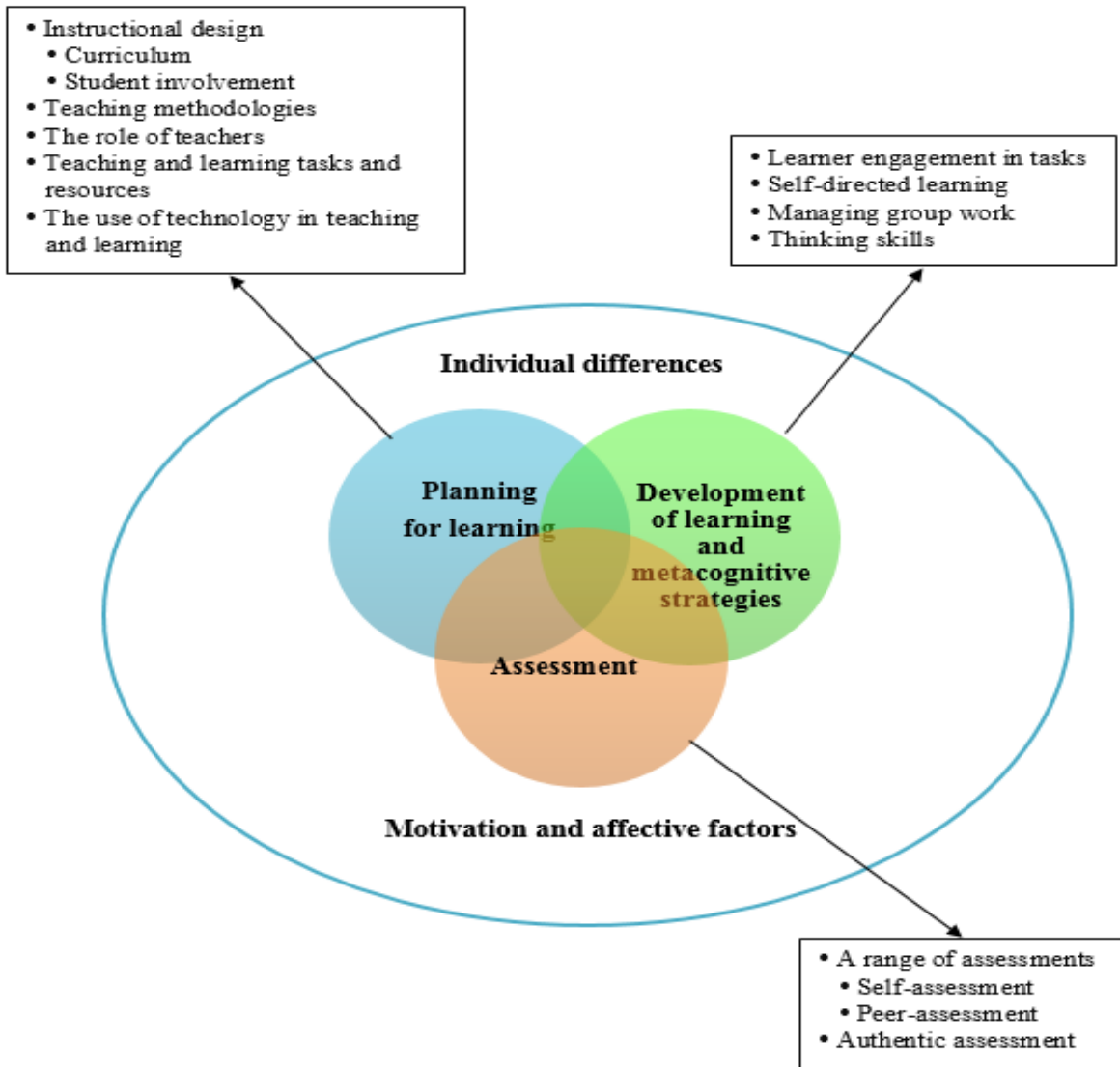
### **3.7.6 Application of the guiding framework for data analysis of learner-centred approaches**

As mentioned in section 3.6.1, prior to data collection, the BECC 2008 (MoE, Thailand, 2008) as well as the international literature and research related to learner-centred approaches were critically reviewed to develop a guiding framework of learner-centred approaches presented in Table 3.5. This guiding framework was subsequently re-examined in relation to analyse questionnaire data to see whether it covered all of the important aspects of learner-centred approaches referred to by participants. Figure 3.3 illustrates the process of generating and refining the guiding framework for analysis of learner-centred approaches. The deductive categories of the guiding framework were incorporated into the emerging inductive questionnaire themes (see Appendix R). In this way, as described in section 3.7, the study followed both deductive and inductive approaches to data analysis.



**Figure 3.3: Process of generating and refining the guiding framework for data analysis of learner-centred approaches**

After following the process described above, five major categories of the guiding framework were derived. These included: planning for learning, development of learning and metacognitive strategies, assessment, motivation and affective factors, and individual differences. These categories are closely related to one another, rather than acting as discrete and mutually exclusive categories. In particular, the categories of individual differences and motivation and affective factors impact on the three other categories of planning for learning, development of learning and metacognitive strategies, and assessment as presented in Figure 3.4 below.



**Figure 3.4:** The refined guiding framework for analysis of learner-centred approaches

### 3.7.7 Explanation of the refined guiding framework for analysis of learner-centred approach categories

This section provides a brief explanation of the five categories and sub-categories of the guiding framework illustrated in Figure 3.4.

#### 3.7.7.1 Planning for learning

Planning for learning refers to teachers as facilitators who design instruction in relation to the curriculum and involve students in planning the teaching approaches, tasks, resources

and technology. Planning for learning comprises five subcategories. These are described below and include instructional design, teaching methodologies, the role of teachers, teaching and learning tasks and resources, and the use of technology in teaching and learning.

### **1) Instructional design**

Instructional design refers to a dynamic process where teachers and students together plan lessons related to learning goals and a range of content to suit students' learning capabilities, needs and interests for improving learning. Instructional design includes two subcategories which are curriculum, and student involvement, which are presented as follows.

#### **1.1) Curriculum**

Curriculum refers to the Ministry of Education English curriculum. The curriculum provides the learning goals and content as a frame for teachers to design lesson plans to use in their teaching. It also details guidance on teaching methods and choosing relevant content to organize teaching and learning activities for students' learning to achieve the learning outcomes (Chantarasorn et al., 2003; ONEC, 1999, 2000; Thamraksa, 2003).

#### **1.2) Student involvement**

Student involvement refers to students planning what to learn and how to learn with their teachers in order to maximise their learning. Students are involved in selecting appropriate teaching methods, teaching and learning tasks and resources, and assessment tasks that relate to their needs, interests and their learning capabilities (Dörnyei, 2001; Huba & Freed, 2000; Kaplowitz, 2012; McCombs, 2004; Weimer, 2013).

### **2) Teaching methodologies**

Teaching methodologies refer to a range of teaching methods utilised by teachers in the classrooms to motivate and support students to construct their knowledge and apply their knowledge in the real world. This includes cooperative learning, communicative language teaching and task-based language teaching (Kimhachandra, 2010; Nunan, 1989, 2013; ONEC, 1999, 2000).

### **3) The role of teachers**

The role of teachers refers to teachers as facilitators to assist students in actively seeking to improve their understanding and knowledge. This may mean using technology to support students' learning, a range of teaching and learning activities appropriate to students' learning capabilities, and facilitating student interactions and peer relationships (APA Work Group of the Board of Educational Affairs, 1997; Cheewakaroon, 2011; Handa, 2009; McCombs & Vakili, 2005; Nunan, 1988, 1992, 2013). Teachers facilitate students to learn and they may also learn together with the students (Ramsey & Fitzgibbons, 2005).

### **4) Teaching and learning tasks and resources**

Teaching and learning tasks and resources refer to a wide range of practical and authentic tasks and resources related to students' own experiences. These different teaching and learning tasks and resources provide students' choices and encourage students to develop their own strategies for problem solving (Kimhachandra, 2010; Kumaravadivelu, 2006; Nunan, 1988; ONEC, 1999, 2000; Tudor, 1996). Tasks and resources relate to the real world contexts outside school to assist and motivate students to do activities that relate to real situations (APA Work Group of the Board of Educational Affairs, 1997; Nunan, 1988). For example, through their use, students are provided with practical activities to practice English, interaction with peers, exchange ideas, encourage thinking skills, seek and construct their own knowledge. These activities help students to develop responsibility for their own learning.

### **5) The use of technology in teaching and learning**

The use of technology in teaching and learning refers to utilising technology in teaching and learning activities to connect with students' learning experiences, to make learning interesting to engage students to learn, and to enhance their learning autonomy in seeking information related to what they learn (APA Work Group of the Board of Educational Affairs, 1997; Chantarasorn et al., 2003; Thamsaksa, 2003).

#### **3.7.7.2 Development of learning and metacognitive strategies**

Development of learning and metacognitive strategies refers to planning to use different

learning strategies to monitor and evaluate learning via classroom activities related to real world contexts and skills, e.g., problem solving, summarising text or paragraphs, and comparing and contrasting information. This category includes learner engagement in tasks, self-directed learning, managing group work and thinking skills as described below.

### **1) Learner engagement in tasks**

Learner engagement in tasks refers to students' engagement in behavioural, affective and cognitive aspects. The learning engagement primarily focuses on students cognitively engaging in learning tasks such as questioning, note-taking, concept mapping, asking and answering questions, discussing, reflecting and self-explaining (Chi & Wylie, 2014; Cornelius-White & Harbaugh, 2010; Gibbs & Poskitt, 2010; Ramsey & Fitzgibbons, 2005; Tinio (2009 cited in Killen, 2016).

Tinio (2009 cited in Killen, 2016) explains there are three dimensions to engagement: cognitive, behavioural and affective. The cognitive aspect involves students' self-motivation and efforts made in their learning. The behavioural aspect includes concentration, attention, persistence and contribution to discussions. The affective aspect comprises the relationship between students and teachers as well as classmates, and a range of learning and school concerns. Gibbs and Poskitt (2010) suggest that the aspects of enthusiasm and volitional learning or learning by choice demonstrate students' learning engagement. Teachers can assist learners to learn about their learning by concentrating on what they are studying, and directly engaging them to generate their own examples, ask questions, solve problems, and summarise content with their classmates (Weimer, 2013).

### **2) Self-directed learning**

Self-directed learning refers to individual students thinking, planning, monitoring and adjusting their learning progress and learning strategies on the basis of feedback sought or received to achieve learning goals (Cornelius-White & Harbaugh, 2010; Eggen & Kauchak, 2012; Paris & Paris, 2001). Through self-directed learning, students learn to actively seek and construct knowledge and understanding (Handa, 2009; Hardman et al., 2008; Hitotuzi, 2005; Nunan, 1992; ONEC, 2000).

### **3) Managing group work**

Managing group work refers to students exchanging ideas and collaborating with their peers in pairs or groups through tasks that need students to work together to achieve the learning goals (APA Work Group of the Board of Educational Affairs, 1997; Kimhachandra, 2010; McCombs, 2004; O'Neill, 1991; Schunk, 2012).

### **4) Thinking skills**

Thinking skills refer to the process of students critically reflecting on their thinking through classroom learning activities to plan, solve problems, and create new ideas (APA Work Group of the Board of Educational Affairs, 1997; Cornelius-White & Harbaugh, 2010; Howie, 2011; ONEC, 1999, 2000; Vavrus, 2009).

#### **3.7.7.3 Assessment**

Assessment refers to assessing students' learning performance in the classroom to provide feedback and information on students' learning progress. This includes two main subcategories which are a range of assessments and authentic assessment as presented below.

##### **1) A range of assessments**

A range of assessment refers to the use of a variety of assessment tools or methods to assess students' learning progress and achievement; for example, observation, interview, worksheets, conversations, projects, presentations, portfolios, and tests, etc. (APA Work Group of the Board of Educational Affairs, 1997; Cooper, 1997; Kimhachandra, 2010; ONEC, 1999).

##### **1.1) Self-assessment**

Self-assessment refers to students assessing their own learning to check their learning progress, both their learning strengths and weaknesses, so that they are able to use the feedback to adjust their learning strategies to improve their learning. Self-assessment also helps students to increase their motivation, to set their learning goals and to develop their metacognitive skills (APA Work Group of the Board of Educational Affairs, 1997; Chappuis & Stiggins, 2002; Cooper, 1997; Darasawang, 2007; Nunan, 1988, 2013).

## 1.2) Peer assessment

Peer assessment refers to the students assessing their peers' learning performances through learning activities in the classroom so as to gain and share knowledge from one another to improve their learning (MoE, Thailand, 2008; Naicker & Bayat, 2012). Students can increase their understanding through assessing their peers' learning, such as reviewing, summarising, clarifying and giving feedback (Van Lehn, Chi, Baggett & Murray, 1995 cited in Topping, 1998).

## 2) Authentic assessment

Authentic assessment refers to the assessment of students' learning performance in the classroom in applying their knowledge and skills to real world tasks. It supports students to know and improve their learning capabilities to attain learning targets (APA Work Group of the Board of Educational Affairs, 1997; McMillan, 2007; Nitko & Brookhart, 2011; ONEC, 1999, 2000).

### 3.7.7.4 Motivation and affective factors

Motivation and affective factors refer to students' emotions and interest in learning, and their motivation to accomplish learning goals. Motivation and affective factors are closely related to one another. Students' affective factors, such as the relevance of topics to their interest can influence their motivation to learn. Students' motivation to learn is encouraged through tasks that suit their learning capabilities to achieve them (APA Work Group of the Board of Educational Affairs, 1997; Bansberg, 2003; Cheewakaroon, 2011; Dörnyei, 2001; Kimhachandra, 2010).

### 3.7.7.5 Individual differences

Individual differences refer to the differences of individual students' strategies, methods, capabilities and needs in learning. Individual students have different learning paces and performance levels. Students' strategies and methods used in their learning are related to their learning capabilities. Learning activities that match students' learning needs can support their learning. Taking individual differences into account when organising teaching and learning activities can enhance individual student learning (APA Work Group of the Board of

Educational Affairs, 1997; Cheewakaroon, 2011; Kimhachandra, 2010; McCombs & Miller, 2007). Additionally, planning achievable learning goals for students to control and take responsibility for their learning, and providing support and constructive feedback, can promote student learning (Jordan et al., 2008).

### 3.8 Data triangulation

Lincoln and Guba (1985, cited in Marshall & Rossman, 2014) introduce the notion of trustworthiness for qualitative research. Trustworthiness shows the rigor of the study and refers to credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability (Ary et al., 2019). Triangulation refers to multiple data sources, different research methods, a variety of researchers and multiple theories (Berg, 2009; Burns, 2000; Liamputtong & Ezzy, 2005). The current study used a combination of the data triangulation and research methods triangulation. Data from different sources, e.g. questionnaires, semi-structure interviews and student focus groups were obtained from a wide range of participants (see Section 3.6). Using different sources of evidence in this way is considered to be the main strength of case study data collection (Yin, 2014) as it deepens the credibility and dependability of the findings (Creswell, 2014).

**Table 3.8: The use of data triangulation**

| Type of data              | Data triangulated with                                |   |
|---------------------------|---|---|
|                           | Research methods                                      | Participant types   |
| Questionnaires            | Semi-structure interview and student focus group data | Ministry officials, English educational supervisors, chairpersons, principals, heads of foreign language departments, teachers and students |
| Semi-structure interviews | Questionnaire and student focus group data            | Principals, heads of foreign language departments, teachers and students  |
| Student focus groups      | Questionnaire and semi-structure interview data       | Heads of foreign language departments and teachers  |

According to Patton’s (1999) recommendation, this study used multiple research methods and data sources, as well as deductive and inductive approaches for triangulation. The

triangulation of the data sources mentioned in the Table 3.8 helped the researcher to confirm and validate the findings. Evidence shows that using multiple approaches deepens the credibility and dependability of the findings (Creswell, 2014). Three main approaches used were pilot study, transcript verification and peer questioning. Another strategy is peer questioning which has been implemented to verify the accuracy of the Thai-English translation.

### **3.9 Role of the researcher**

The researcher is aware of his dual roles in undertaking the current study. While in the current study his main role is that of researcher, he is mindful also of his role as a university lecturer in the Thai context. Given the power distance in Thai society, the role and the status the researcher has in his university role within the Thai education context may impact the data collection process. Regarding the hierarchical structure in Thai society and the educational system, the researcher might have had some advantages from being a university lecturer. For example, the educational stakeholders sought as participants in this study may have been more willing to participate because they wanted to pay respect to the researcher's status as a university lecturer. While there were some benefits in gaining access, the researcher had no direct relationship with any of the participants in this study or any authority over them. The researcher was very mindful to ensure the participants were very clear that the researcher was undertaking this study in his role as a researcher not as a university lecturer.

Stakeholders, particularly teachers, may have been concerned that the researcher would evaluate their teaching. Consequently, they might say what they think that the researcher would like to hear or deliberately avoid saying something that might impact negatively on their current position. To minimize this, as stated in section 3.10 on ethical considerations, the researcher explicitly informed the participants about the purposes of this study and that he was not there to evaluate or make judgments about them. He informed the participants that he was there to openly listen and learn about their perspectives to improve future teaching and learning in English language classrooms in Thailand.

Before undertaking his current role as a university lecturer, the researcher worked as a secondary school English teacher. The researcher was able to draw on this teaching experience to treat English teachers at secondary school in this study as colleagues. In relation to the student focus groups, the researcher facilitated the interviews like a teacher and students rather than as a university lecturer and students. This helped to ensure that students felt comfortable to share their learning experiences with the researcher.

As this qualitative study relies on a self-report, there is the potential for researcher biases, such as personal attitudes and preferences for data interpretation (Ary et al., 2013). Reflexivity is a crucial process for the researcher to be aware of the data interpretation and to avoid the subjectivity to provide the rigor of the findings and credibility of the research (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). Drawing on a range of different data collection methods to corroborate the research findings, and self-reflection by thinking and taking notes about personal opinions through the data analysis process helped the researcher to reflect on and minimise the impact of their own perspectives or biases (Ary et al., 2013; McMillan & Schumacher, 2010; Yin, 2014).

### **3.10 Ethical considerations**

This study was conducted after gaining the approval of the Human Ethics Committee of Massey University. It was evaluated and judged by peer review to be low risk. The researcher of this study was responsible for the ethical conduct of this research (see Appendix S).

According to Burn (2000), the ethical principles, rules and conventions are very important in case study. Five principles from the Code of ethical practice for research, teaching and evaluations involving human participants of Massey University were relevant for this study.

#### **1) The principle of respect for persons**

The researcher paid respect to the participants. Interviews were arranged at a convenient time for them without disturbing their class teaching. As Creswell and Creswell (2018) state, the researcher does not disturb the context nor put pressure on the participants to sign consent forms.

## **2) Minimisation of harm to participants**

The purpose of the research was explained to participants. The researcher provided participants with Information Sheets to read, Consent Forms to sign and interview transcripts to edit. They had the right to decline to participate or withdraw from the research at any time during the data collection process without any effect. As Gray (2014) states, the interviews could be cancelled if the participants felt nervous during the interview, although this situation did not eventuate in this study. Participants were free to decline to answer any particular question and terminate the interviews if they wanted to, although again this situation did not eventuate. It was made clear to the principals, heads of foreign language departments and English teachers that the researcher was not evaluating them. English teachers were told that the purpose of the student focus groups was to seek the students' opinions on their learning in English classes. They could ask any questions about the research at any time during participation.

For students in focus groups, the researcher ensured that they were comfortable to participate. They were informed that their information was kept confidential and it was used for the purpose of this research only.

Furthermore, the data obtained in this study were accessed only by the researcher and analysed at group level so that individuals were not be able to be identified. If necessary, data were reported in summary or aggregated form.

## **3) Informed and voluntary consent**

According to Ary et al. (2019), it is necessary to obtain the informed consent from potential participants. They must be informed to understand the purpose of the study and their obligations to the study. Information sheets informed them about the purposes of the study. The researcher invited the participants to participate in the research, but they were under no obligation to participate. Rather, it was on the basis of informed, voluntary consent. The researcher explained to the Ministry of Education officers of Thailand, English educational supervisors of the educational service area 25, the chairpersons of school boards, principals, heads of foreign language departments, English teachers, students and parents of the students

whose age were below 16 years old for focus groups what the research was about in Thai language, to ensure that they were informed and understood the purposes of the research. It was explained to potential participants that it was their choice whether they participated in the project or not. It was also made clear that they were able to withdraw from the research at any time during the data collection process without any negative effect and that they could ask for the summary of results from the study. Written information sheets (see Appendix T) and consent forms (see Appendix U) were provided. The written Information Sheets and Consent Forms were stored securely in the lockable cabinet in the researcher's private office. No one was allowed to see them except the researcher and the data will be disposed of after seven years in accordance with Massey University policy.

#### **4) Respect for privacy and confidentiality**

The researcher protected the privacy and confidentiality of the participants by using pseudonyms in the research to protect their anonymity. The researcher knew the participants and their contexts; however, the researcher assured their confidentiality by not sharing their information with other people (Ary et al., 2019). The researcher also kept the identification codes separate from the data and the signed consent was kept securely. The researcher ensured that no individual was able to be identified in the reporting of the data. If necessary, data were reported in summary or aggregated form.

#### **5) Truthfulness of the research**

Honesty is one aspect to consider in dealing with participants' responses and data. Fabrication should not have a place in truthfulness. In this present study, a researcher serves as a research tool, meaning, the researcher is mindful of his role in terms of reflexivity to avoid bias. The researcher reported the findings solely based on participants' responses, not from his own interpretations.

### **3.11 Chapter summary**

As discussed in this chapter, this study adopted a qualitative design drawing on principles of social constructivism as a research paradigm. An exploratory case study was employed with the intention to explore the understanding of the stakeholders, the implementation, and the

factors that influence the implementation of learner-centred approaches. To assure the rigor of the research, multiple sources of data and a range of data collection methods were used. A wide variety of research participants were involved: 117 questionnaire respondents, 16 adult interviewees and six student focus groups. Multiple research instruments were utilised for data collection: questionnaires, semi-structured interviews and student focus groups. The deductive and inductive approaches that were used to analyse the data and to generate the guiding framework for analysis of learner-centred approaches were explained. Triangulation of different data sources and multiple research methods was conducted for the trustworthiness of the study. Ethical considerations for this study were also clarified. The next chapter presents the findings of this study.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **FINDINGS**

#### **4.1 Introduction**

This chapter presents the findings from the questionnaires and interviews regarding participants' understanding and implementation of learner-centred approaches, as well as the factors that support and impede teachers in implementing learner-centred approaches. As mentioned in section 3.5, the findings include data obtained from 117 questionnaire respondents, 16 interviewees and six student focus groups. The participants were asked a variety of open-ended questions to explore their understanding about learner-centred approaches and implementation (see Appendix E).

The framework outlined in section 3.7.6, is used to organise the findings. The findings for research questions one and two combine the data from all data sources and are presented in turn through the categories and sub-categories of the framework. In presenting the findings, the frequency and proportion of questionnaire respondents and interviewees who mentioned aspects related to each category and sub-category of the framework are shown. Displaying these details provides the reader with a sense of the significance of the findings. Many of the responses to the open questions in relation to participants' understanding of learner-centred approaches were very brief and broad. For example, one teacher simply said that learner-centred approaches related to individual differences, while a head of a foreign language department said only that a range of teaching methods should be used in a learner-centred approach. As will be illustrated throughout this chapter, the brevity and nature of responses indicates participants' limited understanding of learner-centred approaches. Thus, where low percentages are reported, this indicates that only a small proportion of participants mentioned aspects relating to that category. For example, in the category of motivation and affective factors, 19% of questionnaire respondents and 31% of interviewees made comments relating to these aspects when discussing their understanding of learner-centred approaches. Other participants did not mention anything related to motivation and affective factors when discussing their understanding of learner-centred approaches. This does not mean that these participants disagree that these aspects are important, simply that they did not mention them.

In contrast to their responses on their understanding of learner-centred approaches, participants provided more detailed comments on their implementation. However, as will be shown in section 4.3, much of what was discussed in relation to implementation was about teachers' daily practice and did not actually reflect learner-centred approaches.

In section 3.7.7 (see the Methodology chapter), the refined guiding framework for analysis of learner-centred approach categories is explained. Table 4.1 shows a summary of participants' understanding and implementation of learner-centred approaches in relation to the five main categories of this framework: 1) planning for learning, 2) development of learning and metacognitive strategies, 3) assessment, 4) individual differences, and 5) motivation and affective factors. The sub-categories within each of these five categories are ordered according to the frequency that they were mentioned by participants.

The low percentages in Table 4.1 below show that when discussing their understanding of learner-centred approaches, there was limited consensus from participants, and they did not have a shared or common understanding about learner-centred approaches. The aspects which were talked about the most were learner engagement in tasks, the role of the teachers, authentic assessment, self-directed learning, individual differences, teaching methodologies and a range of assessments. The table also highlights some apparent contradictions between participants' understanding of learner-centred approaches and their implementation. In terms of the implementation of learner-centred approaches, participants put more emphasis on teaching and learning tasks and resources, motivation and affective factors, managing group work and the role of teachers. For example, while 38 questionnaire respondents (33%) and seven interviewees (44%) perceived that teaching and learning tasks and resources was an important aspect of learner-centred approaches, 106 questionnaire respondents (100%) and three interviewees (38%) put the most emphasis on this aspect in their implementation.

**Table 4.1: An overview of participants' understanding and implementation of learner-centred approaches**

| No       | Categories  | Participants' understanding of learner-centred approaches |                     | Participants' implementation of learner-centred approaches |                    |
|----------|---|---|---------------------|--|--------------------|
|          |   | Respondents (n=117)                                       | Interviewees (n=16) | Respondents (n=106)  | Interviewees (n=8) |
| <b>1</b> | <b>Planning for learning</b>                                |   |                     |  |                    |
|          | 1.1 The role of teachers                                    | 53 (45%)  | 10 (63%)            | 100 (94%)  | 8 (100%)           |
|          | 1.2 Teaching methodologies                                  | 43 (37%)  | 12 (75%)            | 42 (40%)   | 8 (100%)           |
|          | 1.3 Teaching and learning tasks and resources               | 38 (33%)  | 7 (44%)             | 106 (100%)   | 3 (38%)            |
|          | 1.4 Instructional design                                    |   |                     |  |                    |
|          | 1.4.1 Student involvement                                   | 27 (23%)  | 3 (19%)             | 8 (8%)   | -                  |
|          | 1.4.2 Curriculum  | 3 (3%)  | 3 (19%)             | 81 (76%)   | 8 (100%)           |
|          | 1.5 The use of technology in teaching and learning          | 5 (4%)  | 2 (13%)             | 83 (78%)   | 8 (100%)           |
| <b>2</b> | <b>Development of learning and metacognitive strategies</b> |   |                     |  |                    |
|          | 2.1 Learner engagement in tasks                             | 68 (58%)  | 5 (31%)             | 37 (35%)   | 4 (50%)            |
|          | 2.2 Self-directed learning                                  | 47 (40%)  | 5 (31%)             | 16 (15%)   | 1 (13%)            |
|          | 2.3 Thinking skills   | 26 (22%)  | 6 (38%)             | 78 (74%)   | 3 (38%)            |
|          | 2.4 Managing group work                                     | 9 (8%)  | 6 (38%)             | 101 (95%)  | 8 (100%)           |
| <b>3</b> | <b>Assessment</b>   |   |                     |  |                    |
|          | 3.1 Authentic assessment                                    | 48 (41%)  | 1 (6%)              | 32 (21%)   | 6 (75%)            |
|          | 3.2 A range of assessments                                  | 43 (37%)  | 5 (31%)             | 90 (85%)   | 8 (100%)           |
|          | 3.2.1 Self-assessment                                       | 21 (18%)  | 1 (6%)              | 4 (4%)   | 2 (25%)            |
|          | 3.2.2 Peer assessment                                       | 3 (3%)  | -                   | 1 (1%)   | -                  |
| <b>4</b> | <b>Individual differences</b>                               | 45 (39%)  | 11 (69%)            | 49 (46%)   | 4 (50%)            |
| <b>5</b> | <b>Motivation and affective factors</b>                     | 22 (19%)  | 5 (31%)             | 102 (96%)  | 7 (88%)            |

Findings for research question 1 are presented first, followed by findings for research question 2 where comparisons across participants' understanding and implementation are

also made. Within each of these two sections, the data from questionnaires, interviews and focus groups are provided. The third substantive section of this chapter focuses on research question 3 which concerns the factors that support and impede the implementation of learner-centred approaches. A summary of the findings is provided at the end of each of the three key sections and an overall summary is provided at the end of the chapter.

Participant quotes have been selected to further illustrate the categories and points being made. Where relevant comparisons between small schools and extra-large schools are presented as are any differences between stakeholders. The following codes have been used with the participant quotes: *SPQ*, *SHQ*, *STQ*, *EPQ*, *EHQ*, *ETQ*, *MOI*, *ESI*, *SCI*, *SPI*, *SHI*, *STI*, *ECI*, *EPI*, *EHI*, *ETI*, *SSF* and *ESF*. For example, *SPQ1* refers to Small school principal 1 responded to a questionnaire, and *MOI2* refers to Ministry of Education officer 2 in the interview. Table 4.2 below presents the explanation of each code.

**Table 4.2: Code explanation used with participant quotes**

| <b>Codes</b> | <b>Refer to</b>                       |
|--------------|---------------------------------------|
| <i>S</i>     | small school                          |
| <i>E</i>     | extra-large school                    |
| <i>MO</i>    | Ministry of Education officer         |
| <i>ES</i>    | English educational supervisor        |
| <i>C</i>     | chairperson                           |
| <i>P</i>     | principal                             |
| <i>H</i>     | head of a foreign language department |
| <i>T</i>     | teacher                               |
| <i>Q</i>     | questionnaire                         |
| <i>I</i>     | interview                             |
| <i>SF</i>    | student focus group                   |

## 4.2 Findings related to Research Question 1

This section presents the findings from questionnaires and interviews regarding participants' understanding of learner-centred approaches, i.e. research question 1. Table 4.3 provides an overview of the participant data drawn on to respond to this question.

**Table 4.3: Participants for questionnaire and interview data for Research Question 1**

| <b>Data</b>        | <b>Participants and numbers</b>  |
|--------------------|--|
| Questionnaire data | <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Principals (11)</li><li>2. Heads of foreign language departments (18)</li><li>3. English teachers (88)</li></ol>  |
| Interview data     | <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Ministry officials (2)</li><li>2. English educational supervisors (2)</li><li>3. Chairpersons at school boards (2)</li><li>4. Principals (2)</li><li>5. Heads of foreign language departments (2)</li><li>6. English teachers (6)</li></ol> |

Participants' understanding of learner-centred approaches is outlined according to the order of the framework and sub-categories starting from planning for learning, followed by development of learning and metacognitive strategies, assessment, individual differences, and motivation and affective factors.

### 4.2.1 Planning for learning

This section presents participants' views on the importance of planning for learning as part of their understanding of learner-centred approaches, and includes the sub-categories of the role of teachers, teaching methodologies, teaching and learning tasks and resources, instructional design, the use of technology in teaching and learning, as described below.

#### **4.2.1.1 The role of teachers**

Ten of the 16 interviewees (63%) stated that within a learner-centred approach, teachers are facilitators who assist, guide and support students' learning. This point was also mentioned by just under half of the questionnaire respondents (53, 45%). More teachers at small schools (62%) spoke about this than teachers at extra-large schools (44%). It is possible that the relatively lower number of students per class within small schools accounts for this difference, as smaller class sizes may allow teachers more opportunity to act as facilitators of students' learning. This point will be looked at in section 4.4 where the factors that support and impede the implementation of learner-centred approaches are discussed in further detail.

Comments that illustrate an understanding and awareness of the differences in the role of teachers in learner and teacher-centred approaches are detailed below:

*“English teachers decrease their role of a teacher-talk in the classroom and become guides or advisors.” (STQ18)*

*“English teachers guide, assist and facilitate students' learning. It is not a one-way communication or just a teacher talks.” (SHQ8)*

Although participants did not expand on these views, the above quotes illustrate an understanding by some participants that within a learner-centred approach, teacher talk does not dominate the classroom and that the role of a teacher is to act as a facilitator to support student learning and communication.

In contrast to these views, four questionnaire respondents (one teacher at a small school and three teachers at extra-large schools) talked more about teacher-centred approaches. For example, one teacher at a small school stated that teachers were responsible for designing and imparting knowledge to students:

*“English teachers prepare teaching and learning activities and give a lecture to students.” (STQ22)*

Additionally, while a number of participants did mention that acting as a facilitator is important within a learner-centred approach, just under half of the questionnaire respondents did not mention this aspect. Implicit here is that a large proportion of teachers may not be aware of the need for teachers to take on a facilitative role to support students to learn in the learner-centred approach. This view is supported by the fact that some teachers still talked about using a more traditional role. Similarly in the comments above that reflect an understanding that teachers take on a facilitative role in learner-centred teaching, this understanding was demonstrated by making a clear contrast to teacher-centred approaches. Even where there is an understanding of the need for teachers to take on a facilitative role, teacher-centred approaches are still in the minds of teachers.

This view also comes through in the interview with one of the English educational supervisors who emphasised the need for teachers to change their role within a learner-centred approach:

*“When we use learner-centred approaches, the role of English teachers must also be changed.” (ES11)*

Alongside the understanding of approximately half of the participants that teachers act as facilitators within a learner-centred approach, there are still a large number of teachers who do not view this as an important part of what they understand learner-centred approaches to be. A sense of a need for teachers to change their role was also evident in the data, though curtailed by their concurrent understanding that was more reflective of teacher-centred teaching.

#### **4.2.1.2 Teaching methodologies**

In talking about their understanding of learner-centred approaches, the majority of interviewees (12, 75%) spoke of the importance of utilising a range of teaching methodologies, such as task-based learning, project-based learning and collaborative learning. By contrast, just under half of the questionnaire respondents (43, 37%) commented

on the importance of using a wide variety of teaching methodologies. Other questionnaire respondents did not mention anything about teaching methodologies.

In the interviews, *one Ministry official stated that students had different learning abilities and that a wide variety of teaching methods could enhance individual students to improve their learning if the learning is adjusted in pace, level and type of instruction to suit their learning abilities (ES11).*

One principal at a small school expressed a similar view commenting that appropriate teaching techniques and methods could enhance students' learning:

*“English teachers facilitate students’ learning by using appropriate teaching techniques and methods for students to be able to apply knowledge in their daily life.” (SPQ4)*

Another principal at an extra-large school also mentioned the importance of applying teaching methodologies to encourage students to build up knowledge on their own so that they could become more independent learners:

*“Teaching techniques that support students to construct knowledge on their own should be used.” (EPQ3)*

However, despite expressing these views, participants did not elaborate and say which teaching techniques should be used to encourage students to construct their own knowledge. Only two interviewees commented that mind mapping was a useful task within learner-centred approaches and that this could help students to summarise the main ideas from what they read and promote thinking skills. Similarly, only five questionnaire respondents (4%) provided examples of teaching approaches, such as cooperative learning, peer teaching and project-based learning with one stating:

*“English teachers should use various teaching methods, such as cooperative learning and project based learning.” (ETQ30)*

These brief responses suggest that the participants may have a superficial understanding of appropriate learner-centred teaching methodologies. This view is supported by data from interviews with the two Ministry officials who both commented on the need for teachers to adapt their teaching methodologies to teach in a learner-centred way, with one stating:

*“English teachers need to change their ways of teaching. ... There are many ways to teach English using learner-centred approaches, such as task based learning and project work.” (MO11)*

Questionnaire participants were asked to rank listening, speaking, interaction, reading and writing skills in terms of what they considered to be the most important for learning English within a learner-centred approach. This question was asked to get a stronger sense of the alignment between views on teaching methods and skills focused on. Listening, a passive receptive skill, was ranked by more participants as the most important skill followed by speaking, interaction, reading and writing skills. A breakdown of respondent numbers is shown below.

**Table 4.4: Important skills for learners**

| Skills      | Number of respondents (n=106) |                            |       |
|-------------|-------------------------------|----------------------------|-------|
|             | Small schools (n=36)          | Extra-large schools (n=70) | Total |
| Listening   | 8                             | 23                         | 31    |
| Speaking    | 12                            | 17                         | 29    |
| All skills  | 6                             | 11                         | 17    |
| Interaction | 6                             | 10                         | 16    |
| Reading     | 3                             | 8                          | 11    |
| Writing     | 2                             | 5                          | 7     |

Thirty-one respondents (29%) believed that listening was the most important skill for students to learn English. One teacher at an extra-large school said that listening was the most important skill for communication and commenting:

*... If we do not understand what other people say, it is sometimes the barrier of conversation. So I think listening skill is the most important. I focus students on listening for comprehension. It is the beginning of using language for communication ... (ETQ43)*

Twenty-nine respondents (27%) thought that speaking was the most important skill because, as one head of a foreign language department at a small school expressed, speaking skills were used to communicate with other people in all situations (SHQ7).

For some respondents (one head of a foreign language department at a small school, one teacher at a small school and two teachers at an extra-large school), practicing speaking skills through conversational activities using prepared dialogues was seen as important within learner-centred approaches. However, some participants perceived that students lacked confidence in speaking English, or were restricted by cultural norms. These points are evident in the open-ended comments by a range of participants, as follows:

- *One teacher at a small school stated that teaching and learning activities in Western countries emphasised students' participation; therefore, students in those contexts were confident to express their opinions (STI3).*
- *Another teacher at a small school stated that Thai students were shy and lacked confidence to speak English or pronounce English words (STI1).*
- *An English educational supervisor stated that Thai students were different from Western students in the aspect of paying high respect to teachers (ESII) through compliant listening.*
- *One head of a foreign language department at an extra-large school stated that teachers would like students to be confident in using English for communication, but students were afraid that they would make mistakes (EHI).*

- *Two heads of a foreign language department at an extra-large, and a small school stated that one aspect of Thai culture was saving face (EHI; SHI).*

These findings suggest that some teachers perceive learner-centred approaches to be in tension with Thai culture, particularly the hierarchical system that exists within Thai society and classrooms, and the cultural aspect of saving face. These aspects may impact classroom practice for both teachers and learners and account for some of the differences observed in the ranking of skills between understanding and implementation of learner-centred approaches as will be described further in section 4.3.1.5.

#### **4.2.1.3 Teaching and learning tasks and resources**

Seven interviewees (44%) believed that within a learner-centred approach, teachers used a range of teaching and learning tasks for students. The questionnaire data showed that only 38 questionnaire respondents (33%) talked about the need for a range of teaching and learning tasks. Of the participants who did talk about this, they stated that interesting teaching and learning resources could encourage students to think, express their opinions, and practise tasks related to their learning abilities to improve English skills, with one commenting:

*“To emphasise a learner-centred approach, teaching and learning tasks and resources have to be interesting for students to practise based on teaching and learning steps to benefit students’ learning.” (SHQ4)*

Very few participants provided more specific details about the teaching and learning resources that could be used within a learner-centred approach. However, 12 questionnaire respondents (10%), and four interviewees (25%) provided the following examples of resources:

**Table 4.5: Examples of teaching and learning tasks and resources as part of participants understanding of learner-centred approaches**

| <b>Teaching and learning resources</b> |   |
|--|---|
| <b>Types</b>                           | <b>Examples</b>   |
| Tasks                                  | role-plays, games, conversations, mind mapping, projects, and presentations |
| Printed matter                         | worksheets, textbooks and supplementary sheets                              |
| Audio-visuals                          | CDs, videos clips and songs   |
| Images                                 | flashcards, pictures and posters  |
| Everyday life objects and materials    | books and dictionaries  |

Despite giving examples of teaching and learning tasks and resources, the participants did not go into any further detail about them. For example, when the participants talked about authentic resources, they simply said that materials should be authentic without further explanation.

#### **4.2.1.4 Instructional design**

When the questionnaire respondents were asked about their understanding of learner-centred approaches, some questionnaire respondents (27, 23%) stated that student involvement in planning teaching and learning activities as well as in selecting content was integral. Alongside this, three interviewees (19%) stated that students should have the opportunity to take part in planning teaching and learning activities. For example, one English educational supervisor stated that teachers and students should plan together and commented:

*“It is not only the English teachers but the students also who should design teaching and learning activities in English classes such as learning tasks and projects together with English teachers.” (ES11)*

One teacher at a small school also talked about the importance of student involvement in selecting course content:

*“It is important to give students the opportunity to choose content and decide what is useful for them to learn.” (STQ16)*

The relatively low number of participants that mentioned involving students to plan teaching and learning activities with teachers suggests that the participants may not see the importance of involving students in planning stage or that they may not understand how to involve students to plan what to learn with teachers.

#### **4.2.1.5 The use of technology in teaching and learning**

A small number of questionnaire respondents (5, 4%) believed that it was necessary to have technology in English classes within learner-centred approaches. Similarly, only two interviewees (13%) commented on technology. The two heads of foreign language departments from a small school and an extra-large school believed that classrooms equipped with technology devices were necessary to facilitate students’ learning, with one commenting:

*“The internet and projectors should be installed in classes to support teaching and learning activities.” (EHI)*

That only a small number of the participants talked about the use of technology in teaching and learning in their understanding of learner-centred approaches might indicate that the participants do not utilise technology to support their teaching, or that they did not see this as an important part of learner-centred approaches.

#### **4.2.1.6 A summary of planning for learning**

Analysis of the questionnaire and interview data suggests that the areas of the most consensus or shared understanding of learner-centred approaches relate to the role of teachers as facilitators, the use of a wide range of teaching methodologies and teaching and learning

tasks and resources, involving students to plan teaching and learning activities with teachers, and the use of technology to support teaching and learning. Another key theme that came through across all participant types, but particularly from Ministry officials and educational supervisors, was the need for teachers to change their role and practice. A difference was also observed between teachers in small and extra-large schools, with teachers at small schools more likely to see their role as facilitators. Overall, the findings demonstrate a lack of consensus across teachers as to what learner-centred approaches comprise. The responses also reflect a somewhat limited understanding of learner-centred-approaches. This was seen in the low number of participants who discussed aspects related to planning for learning. It was also seen in the very brief responses that were given. For example, despite emphasising the need to use of a wide range of teaching methods, and teaching and learning tasks and resources, very few participants provided any further details about what these were or how they might go about this. A further point that comes through in these findings is the tension some participants felt between learner-centred approaches and Thai cultural aspects of the hierarchical system in society and saving face.

#### **4.2.2 Development of learning and metacognitive strategies**

This section presents participants' views on developing learning and metacognitive strategies as part of their understanding of learner-centred approaches. This category comprises learner engagement in tasks, self-directed learning, managing group work and thinking skills.

##### **4.2.2.1 Learner engagement in tasks**

Sixty-eight questionnaire respondents (58%) stated that in learner-centred approaches, active participation from students while completing learning tasks was necessary. A smaller proportion of interviewees (5, 31%) also commented on the importance of students participating and engaging in teaching and learning tasks in classes within a learner-centred approach. However, participants gave short responses and predominantly focused on students' participation in learning activities. Aspects such as cognitive engagement were not mentioned by them.

For example, reflecting the role of teachers as facilitators (see Section 4.2.1.1), one teacher at a small school said that it was important to engage students in doing tasks, and commented:

*“... Students themselves are engaged in teaching and learning tasks rather than only receiving knowledge from teachers.” (ST13)*

One teacher at an extra-large school also stated that technology played an important role to engage students’ learning, commenting:

*“It is important to organise use technology such as projectors and visualizers to facilitate learning. They help draw students’ attention. Without these, teaching might not be as effective as it as it should be.” (ETQ43)*

The relatively high number of participants, who mentioned student participation in learning activities, suggests that there is some consensus around the importance of student participation in learning activities within learner-centred approaches. However, comments tended to reflect a focus on behavioural participation rather than cognitive participation. Thus, it is possible that participants do not have much understanding of how to cognitively engage students, to learn in learner-centred approaches.

#### **4.2.2.2 Self-directed learning**

Re-enforcing the findings about the need for teachers to be facilitators (see Section 4.2.1.1), forty-seven questionnaire respondents (40%) stated that students constructing knowledge by themselves was an integral part of learner-centred approaches. They also thought that it was important for students to take responsibility for their own learning. Teachers at small schools (50%) seemed to put more focus on self-directed learning than teachers at extra-large schools (39%). As stated in section 4.2.1.1, small schools have a lower number of students than those at extra-large schools. It may be that within small classes teachers are better able to support teachers to facilitate students’ learning to seek and build up knowledge on their own. Five interviewees (31%) also commented on this aspect.

Similar to the section of learner engagement in tasks, participants provided only very brief responses about self-directed learning. They did not discuss aspects such as planning and adjusting learning or how to teach students to be self-directive. Also, they did not mention the aspect of students' controlling their own learning rather than passively receiving knowledge from teachers. For example, the Ministry official stated:

*“We have to give students opportunities to learn on their own.” (MO11)*

Similarly, one teacher of an extra-large school commented:

*“Students have to be given the role to take responsibility in their own learning.” (ET11)*

This suggests that there was some consensus from participants around the importance of students seeking and building up knowledge through their own learning within a learner-centred approach. However, the data do not reflect much understanding about how to organise teaching and learning activities to facilitate learner autonomy.

#### **4.2.2.3 Thinking skills**

Six interviewees (38%) and twenty-six questionnaire respondents (22%) believed that students should have opportunities to develop thinking skills such as problem analysis, synthesis of ideas, and organising and expressing opinions in the classroom. One teacher at a small school stated in the interview that students should be encouraged to think independently through learner-centred teaching and stated:

*“Learner-centred approaches emphasise students thinking and analysing things on their own.” (ST11)*

*One principal at a small school stated that teachers should facilitate students' learning and develop students' critical thinking (SPQ4).* Another principal at an extra-large school also emphasised the importance of developing the range of students' thinking skills:

*“English teachers should encourage students to use reasons, think, analyse, synthesise, assess and create things without memorisation.” (EPQ3)*

The small number of participants who talked about their understanding of the learner-centred approach on thinking skills indicates, in general, participants do not see this as an important part of learner-centred approaches. It is also possible that they lack understanding of how to develop students’ thinking skills.

#### **4.2.2.4 Managing group work**

Six interviewees (38%) believed that as part of learner-centred approaches, students work in pairs and small groups to exchange ideas and learn collaboratively while only a smaller number of questionnaire respondents (9, 8%) commented on this aspect.

Two heads of a foreign language department at a small school and an extra-large school and one English educational supervisor discussed this and focused on the importance of the social aspects of interaction in the classroom to extend students’ learning with their classmates to complete and present tasks, e.g.:

*“They have the opportunity to interact and critique learning tasks with their peers in pairs and groups then present their tasks.” (ESI2)*

In terms of how to group students within a learner-centred approach, six of these teachers expressed that each group should contain students with a range of proficiency levels. From their perspective in each group, the higher English proficiency students had a role in supporting the lower English proficiency students’ learning:

*English teachers ask students to divide into a group of five. Each group has one high English proficiency student, two moderate English proficiency students and two low English proficiency students. They work together as a team. The high English proficiency student also helps teach English the low English proficiency students. (ETQ75)*

The low number of participants who discussed managing group work shows that this was not considered a very important aspect of these participants' understanding of learner-centred approaches. This may reflect a limited understanding of learner-centred approaches, as well as a lack of understanding about how to support students to work collaboratively within learner-centred approaches.

#### **4.2.2.5 A summary of development of learning and metacognitive strategies**

The two areas of developing learning and metacognitive strategies most talked about by participants were learner engagement in tasks and self-directed learning. The findings show although more than half of the questionnaire respondents viewed engaging students in learning as necessary within learner-centred approaches, they tended to see this as a behavioural rather than a cognitive aspect. Similarly, despite comments about the importance of self-directed learning within learner-centred approaches, there was no evidence to suggest that participants understood how this might be achieved, and how teachers could guide students to be self-directive learners who take responsibility for, and construct, their own learning and knowledge. Additionally, few participants talked about thinking skills and managing group work which suggests that they do not see these as particularly important components of learner-centred approaches or that they have a limited or superficial understanding of learner-centred approaches.

#### **4.2.3 Assessment**

This section presents the assessment aspects discussed by participants as part of their understanding of learner-centred approaches. Assessment comprises authentic assessment and a range of assessments, including self-assessment and peer assessment.

##### **4.2.3.1 Authentic assessment**

According to the questionnaire findings, 48 questionnaire respondents (41%) stated that it was useful to use authentic assessment throughout the teaching and learning process. This aspect was only mentioned by one of the interviewees (6%). Many of the respondents who mentioned this point simply stated that authentic assessment should be used, without any

further explanation or provision of examples. Ten respondents (9%) who did go into further detail stated that it was important to assess learners based on what they do in class, e.g.:

*“English teachers should assess students’ learning from activities that they actually do in classes.” (STQ19)*

The fact that despite mentioning the need to assess students’ English skills related to a real world situation, few participants expanded on this aspect may suggest that the participants know authentic assessment is important within learner-centred approaches, but do not have an in-depth understanding of authentic assessment practices.

#### **4.2.3.2 A range of assessments**

Only forty-three questionnaire respondents (37%) commented that a wide range of assessments should be used to assess learner progress and achievement. Similarly, only five interviewees (31%) considered the importance of using of a range of assessments. Below is a typical response from the questionnaire respondents who did mention this point:

*“It is necessary to emphasise students’ learning performance by using different methods to grade students’ learning outcome such as learning behaviour observation, interviews or tests.” (SHQ2)*

During an interview, a Ministry official commented that tests alone should not be used to assess students’ learning and that individual teachers should take responsibility for the design, range and proportion of summative and formative assessments used in their classroom, e.g.:

*It depends on school contexts. English teachers can freely design the proportion of the score of 100 per cent for grading students. They could divide the proportion into 70 per cent formative assessments and 30 per cent summative assessments. Some may have the proportion of 60 per cent formative assessments and 40 per cent tests. (MO11)*

This advice contrasts with the data from other participants where tests were most commonly mentioned, followed by informal teacher observation. As will be explored further in section 4.3.3.1 on implementation, three interviewees (19%), despite agreeing that a range of assessments should be used, stated that tests were most frequent. Eleven questionnaire respondents (9%) also commented on using tests to assess student learning. For example, one teacher from a small school talked about the range of tests that were typically used:

*“Pre-tests, vocabulary tests, reading tests, writing tests and asking questions can be used to analyse students’ existing abilities.” (STI2)*

Nine questionnaire respondents (8%) stated that informal observation should be used. This could include informal observation of student participation and performance in classes when asking or answering questions, taking part in activities, etc., e.g.:

*“We should assess students’ learning from observing their learning performance in classes.” (STQ26)*

This limited response indicates that only a small number of teachers are aware of the importance of using informal teacher observation to assess learning within a learner-centred approach.

#### **4.2.3.3 Self-assessment**

Only a small number of participants talked about self-assessment as part of their understanding of learner-centred approaches. Twenty-one respondents (18%) and two interviewees (13 %) commented that students should be involved in assessing their learning so that they were able to recognise their strengths and weaknesses and improve their learning. One principal at an extra-large school commented that within a learner-centred approach, it is important for students to assess their own learning:

*“Regarding learner-centred approaches, it focuses on self-assessment. Students have a chance to assess their own learning continuously to know their strengths and weaknesses clearly and improve their own learning.” (EPQ3)*

This data suggests that few participants see self-assessment as an important part of their understanding of learner-centred approaches. It may also reflect a lack of understanding and knowledge on how to involve students in assessing their own learning within a learner-centred approach.

#### **4.2.3.4 Peer assessment**

None of the interviewees mentioned peer assessment and only three questionnaire respondents, 3% (one head of a foreign language department and two teachers at extra-large schools) mentioned that peer assessment could be used to help students learn more about their strengths and weakness with one stating:

*“English teachers should allow students to assess their classmates’ learning to see others’ learning strengths and weaknesses to apply them to improve their own learning.” (ETQ55)*

These responses indicate that the participants do not see the importance of peer assessment as part of their understanding of learner-centred approaches. It is also possible that they do not have much understanding about peer assessment.

#### **4.2.3.5 A summary of assessment**

Fewer than half of the participants discussed authentic assessment and a range of assessments to assess students’ learning as part of their understanding of learner-centred approaches. Additionally, very few participants talked about self-assessment and peer-assessment. This indicates that the participants may have a limited understanding of effective assessment practices within a learner-centred approach.

#### 4.2.4 Individual differences

This section presents the aspects of individual differences discussed by participants as part of their understanding of learner-centred approaches. Eleven interviewees (69%) commented on the importance of recognising individual differences, such as students' capabilities and needs when using learner-centred approaches, while forty-five questionnaire respondents (39%) believed that it was necessary to organise appropriate teaching and learning activities which took account of individual student differences. Within this category, students' learning capabilities were most frequently mentioned, followed by students' needs.

The participants who spoke about student learning capabilities included 31 questionnaire respondents (27%). They stated that teachers should take students' learning capabilities into account as part of learner-centred approaches. One English educational supervisor interviewee also stated that teachers should analyse students' capabilities to enhance their learning:

*“English teachers have to analyse individual student’s strengths and weaknesses to help improve their learning abilities.” (ES11)*

This view was shared by the teachers, who spoke about this point, e.g.:

*“It is important to know students’ differences to provide appropriate teaching and learning activities to their capabilities.” (EHQ5)*

This finding was supported by 17 questionnaire respondents (15%) and 8 interviewees (50%) who stated that students' needs should be taken into consideration. During an interview, *one Ministry official stated that when we put the emphasis on learner-centred approaches, we must focus on individual student's learning (MO11)*. This point was also reiterated by the few teachers who talked about students' needs. For example:

*“Organising teaching and learning activities based on learner-centred approaches should have the emphasis on students’ needs.” (STQ20)*

The findings show that for the participants who spoke about individual differences, there was a shared understanding that it is important to take students' learning abilities and needs into consideration as they influence learning. However, as the data above illustrates, over half of the questionnaire respondents did not mention anything about these aspects, which suggests that they do not see these as important parts of learner-centred approaches, and potentially also that they do not have much understanding of these aspects and how to take them into account in their teaching practice.

#### **4.2.5 Motivation and affective factors**

This section presents the aspects of motivation and affective factors discussed by participants as part of their understanding of learner-centred approaches. Twenty-two questionnaire respondents (19%) commented that students were able to learn well if teaching and learning activities were related to their interests as part of their understanding of learner-centred approaches although participants did not further expand how this could be done. Five interviewees (31%) also stated that to make teaching and learning activities interesting and effective in learner-centred approaches, teachers could focus on students' interests to increase their motivation. For example, one educational supervisor commented:

*“English teachers have to enhance students' motivation to learn.” (ESII)*

Another head of a foreign language department at an extra-large school talked in more detail about the importance of ensuring student interests were incorporated into teaching:

*“Sometimes we assign activities without students' interest. It makes teaching not interesting. So we need to attend to students' interests to bring what they interest to classes.” (EHI)*

As outlined above, only a small number of participants discussed motivation and affective factors which suggests that the participants do not see this as an important as part of their understanding of learner-centred approaches. Additionally, the participants who did mention

this did not comment on how to increase student motivation to learn and therefore this may reflect a limited understanding or knowledge on how to do this in practice.

#### **4.2.6 A summary of findings related to Research Question 1**

As outlined throughout this section, participants provided only very brief responses on their understanding of learner-centred approaches, and the points mentioned were rather general with few participants expanding on their views to demonstrate a more in-depth understanding. It was also found that participant views were quite varied and there was a lack of consensus as to what constituted learner-centred approaches. This was seen in both the brief responses and also in the limited range of aspects discussed. It can be seen from Table 4.1 that many of the categories and sub-categories were mentioned by only a small number of participants. The only aspect mentioned by over half of the questionnaire participants was learner engagement in tasks which was mentioned by 68 (58%) people, illustrating that there was some consensus over this point. However, while learner engagement was mentioned by the largest number of participants, as discussed in section 4.2.2.1, understanding was limited and reflected learner participation from a behavioural perspective rather than engagement from a cognitive or emotional perspective.

A comparison of these findings with Thai policy documents related to learner-centred approaches, such as the NEA 1999 and the BECC 2008 reveals many similarities between the broad concepts mentioned by participants and the policies. While this could be interpreted as evidence of understanding of learner-centred approaches in line with the policies, the very brief responses which typically focused only on one or two key broad ideas indicates that these participants lack a deep understanding of learner-centred approaches, and what they mean in relation to their teaching practice. It appears more likely that participants are familiar with several of the broad concepts and terms related to learner-centred approaches but lack a more nuanced understanding of them. Another key finding was that it appears that some teachers perceive a tension between learner-centred approaches and Thai cultural aspects, such as the hierarchical social system and saving face. This tension may reflect that some teachers may maintain their role as knowledge imparters rather than facilitators in their teaching practice; a tension that will be explored in further detail throughout this thesis.

### 4.3 Findings related to Research Question 2

This section brings together the findings from the questionnaires, interviews and student focus groups related to how teachers implement learner-centred approaches, i.e. research question two. The findings obtained from 106 questionnaire respondents, eight interviewees and six student focus groups. The data were from participants who are directly involved in implementing the learner-centred approach in classrooms, or those who experience it. This includes the heads of foreign language departments, English teachers and students from both a small school and an extra-large school. Table 4.6 provides an overview of the participant data drawn on to respond to this question.

**Table 4.6: Participants for questionnaire and interview data for Research Question 2**

| <b>Data</b>        | <b>Participants and numbers</b>  |
|--------------------|--|
| Questionnaire data | 1. Heads of foreign language departments (18)<br>2. English teachers (88)                              |
| Interview data     | 1. Heads of foreign language departments (2)<br>2. English teachers (6)<br>3. Student focus groups (6) |

The findings are presented using the categories and sub-categories outlined in the framework of learner-centred approach implementation presented in Table 4.1. Findings are presented by category in the same order as the findings for research question 1. However, within each category, the findings are presented from most to least mentioned sub-category. As can be seen from the frequency and percentages displayed in Table 4.1, participants gave more detailed responses which covered several aspects of the framework when discussing their implementation of learner-centred approaches than they gave when discussing their understanding. This aspect and any differences between participants' understanding and implementation of learner-centred approaches are looked at throughout the chapter. A summary of the findings is provided at the end of each of the main categories, and then at the conclusion of the data for research question two, a summary pulling the key findings together is presented.

### **4.3.1 Planning for learning**

This section presents the analysis of teachers' implementation of learner-centred approaches on teaching and learning tasks and resources, the role of teachers, the use of technology in teaching and learning, instructional design and teaching methodologies.

#### **4.3.1.1 Implementation of varied teaching and learning tasks and resources**

The findings on participants' implementation of teaching and learning tasks and resources as part of learner-centred approaches include teaching and learning tasks and resources, and student preferences for learning are presented as follows.

##### **1. Teaching and learning tasks and resources**

In relation to the implementation of learner-centred approaches, all 106 questionnaire respondents (100%) mentioned using a variety of teaching and learning tasks and resources. In order of frequency from most to least used were worksheets, textbooks and reading passages. These results reveal a difference between participants' understanding and implementation in terms of teaching and learning tasks and resources. As stated in section 4.2.1.3, less than half of the questionnaire respondents (38, 33%) commented on teaching and learning tasks and resources as part of their understanding within a learner-centred approach. This percentage contrasts with their implementation where all questionnaire respondents stated that they use a variety of teaching and learning tasks and resources. This contradiction may have come about because participants reflected on and discussed their classroom teaching practice more generally rather than only in relation to learner-centred approaches. Not all participants expanded further on the variety of tasks or resources that they used, but for those who did the examples mentioned can be seen in Table 4.7 below. As will be discussed, not all tasks and resources are indicative of a learning-centred approach.

**Table 4.7: Examples of teaching and learning tasks and resources as part of the learner-centred approach implementation**

| Teaching and learning tasks and resources |  |
|---|--|
| Types                                     | Examples   |
| Tasks                                     | worksheets, pronunciation, conversations, presentations, role plays and mind mapping |
| Printed matter                            | worksheets, textbooks, supplementary sheets and newspapers                           |
| Audio-visuals                             | CDs, videos and PowerPoint   |
| Images                                    | pictures and posters   |
| Everyday life objects and materials       | dictionaries, books, chairs and tables   |
| Rooms                                     | library, computer room and English laboratory room                                   |

1) Worksheets

More than half of the respondents (55, 52%) and all interviewees (8, 100%) stated that they used worksheets containing closed response questions for students to practise English skills and check understanding of what they learn. One teacher at a small school said that students were assigned to do worksheets in classes, stating that:

*“... Worksheets are used for students to complete then a teacher and students check the correct answers together ...” (STQ6)*

2) Textbooks

Forty-five respondents (43%) and eight interviewees (100%) stated that textbooks were mainly used by teachers to teach students in classes. In addition to textbooks, thirty-six respondents (34%) and four interviewees (50%) stated that supplementary sheets, which supplement the learning content in the textbooks for students to learn more, were provided as teaching and learning resources related to lessons. One head of a foreign language department at an extra-large school stated that teachers depended on textbooks in teaching and ended up their lessons with worksheets:

*“At present, each teacher teaches differently. However, most teachers stick to textbooks because there are not many teaching and learning tasks and resources utilised in English classes apart from worksheets provided in textbooks.” (EHI)*

All six student focus groups also stated that in typical English classes, they used textbooks, listened to teachers’ explanations and completed worksheets individually. One focus group at an extra-large school said that they used textbooks while learning and that they completed worksheets as learning tasks, commenting:

*Teachers explain the content in textbooks to us, give some examples on the blackboard and assign us to do worksheets. We do them individually. When finished, we sent them to teachers. Teachers check answers or we check answers together with teachers in classes. (ESF1)*

The above findings do not appear to exemplify learner-centred approaches. Students’ working individually on worksheets suggests that group work was infrequent. Relying on textbooks to teach also seems to contradict the findings reported in sections 4.2.4 and 4.2.5 where students’ needs and interests were deemed as important to take into consideration in learner-centred teaching, and also with the role of teachers as facilitators.

### 3) Reading passages

Sixteen respondents (15%) and five interviewees (63%) mentioned that they used passages for students to read and answer questions. As with the use of worksheets, when working through passages to worksheets, students respond to questions from a closed set of options. These kinds of learning tasks and resources tend not to support students to be active learners capable of directing their learning and constructing knowledge on their own. Furthermore, all student focus groups stated that they frequently learned to read and answer questions from passages. Students were in general agreement that they read out loud after teachers, then looked up the meaning of new words in order to translate paragraphs and subsequently answered questions from the reading passages.

*“We practise reading by reading out loud. Teachers ask us to repeat after them before we read the passage out loud on our own. Then we translate the reading passage before answering questions. Teachers sometimes translate it for us.”*  
(ESF2)

Despite teachers talking about the importance of using a range of resources (see Section 4.2.1.3), and feeling that they do use a variety of resources in their implementation of learner-centred teaching (see Section 4.3.1.1), the data reveal that a more limited range of resources were used in reality, and that there was a reliance on tests and worksheets. For example, as one participant noted:

*“Teachers have not yet utilised many teaching and learning tasks and resources in English classes.”* (EHI)

According to all student focus groups, students agreed that there were not many teaching and learning tasks and resources utilised in classes, with one student sharing the following:

*“We commonly study the content from textbooks and do worksheets in class.”*  
(ESF3)

This contrast between what teachers feel they are doing, and what they are actually doing may reflect that teachers have a limited understanding of the range of tasks and resources that are possible to use in implementing learner-centred approaches.

## **2. Student preferences for learning**

Questionnaire respondents stated that they gleaned students’ three preferences in learning within learner-centred approaches. These three include group activities, whole class activities, and individual activities subsequently. The breakdown of respondent numbers was as follows.

**Table 4.8: Student preferences in learning**

| Student preferences<br>in learning | Number of respondents (n=106) |                            |           |
|------------------------------------|-------------------------------|----------------------------|-----------|
|                                    | Small schools (n=36)          | Extra-large schools (n=70) | Total     |
| Group activities                   | 22                            | 39                         | <b>61</b> |
| Whole class activities             | 7                             | 8                          | <b>15</b> |
| Individual activities              | 2                             | 7                          | <b>9</b>  |

More than half of the questionnaire respondents (61, 58%) felt that students preferred to work in groups as *they could help one another to brainstorm and to complete tasks (ETQ80)*. Fifteen respondents (14%) mentioned that students preferred to learn through whole class activities. Only nine (9%) thought that students preferred to learn through individual activities, with one commenting:

*“... From my observation, some students like individual tasks and they can do them better than group and whole class activities.” (ETQ42)*

Three student focus groups (50%) affirmed teachers’ perceptions that they preferred to learn in groups with one stating:

*“We prefer to learn through using group activities because we can assist one another to learn. This helps us understand the learning content better.” (ESF1)*

The other three student focus groups (50%) had varying ideas on their learning preference. Some students preferred to learn by individual activities and some preferred to learn through group activities. For example, *one student focus group stated that they preferred to learn by using individual activities because some group members did not participate in doing group work. It was also convenient for them to work individually (SSF1)*.

Although teachers stated that students preferred to learn through group activities, they did not appear to take this into account in their application of learner-centred approaches. As

mentioned earlier in section 4.3.1.1, worksheets and textbooks were frequently used for students to work on individually within whole class settings. It may be that teachers find this easier as students are familiar with these approaches. It is also possible that teachers do not know how to effectively organise group work and to support and facilitate students to work in an interactive and collaborative way.

#### **4.3.1.2 The role of teachers**

According to the vast majority of questionnaire respondents (100, 94%) and all eight interviewees (100%), teachers facilitated, guided and assisted students' learning as part of implementing learner-centred approaches. One teacher at an extra-large school said that teachers facilitated students' learning, stating:

*“Teachers advise students to use their thinking to produce their own tasks.”*  
(ETQ49)

There was a difference between participants' understanding and implementation of learner-centred approaches. While only approximately half of the questionnaire respondents (53, 45%) discussed the importance of teachers as facilitators within a learner-centred approach, nearly all participants stated that they facilitated students to learn. However, in discussing their practice, participants gave very brief responses and did not discuss what strategies they used to facilitate students' learning. Aspects such as expert demonstrations, and sustained periods of supportive coaching and feedback were not mentioned by participants. These findings may also reflect a lack of understanding as to what it means to be a facilitator of student learning within learner-centred approaches. For example, it may be that teachers see administering learning tasks such as worksheets (see Section 4.3.1.1) in their daily practice is part of the role of a facilitator.

Thus, while teachers talked about their role as facilitators, there was evidence that teacher-centred practices still exist. Part of the reason for this may be cultural. For example, it was found that in parents' views, Thai teachers are thought of as knowledge transmitters. As *one teacher at an extra-large school stated, parents viewed that the role of teachers was to give*

*a lecture in class (ETQ32). Another teacher at an extra-large school also stated that parents felt that teachers did not teach when teachers asked students to search for knowledge and do group work (ETQ28).* These perceptions may impact on the way teachers approach their teaching and lead them to take on the role of knowledge transmitters rather than facilitators who organise learning tasks to support and guide students in seeking and constructing knowledge.

#### **4.3.1.3 The use of technology in teaching and learning**

More than half of respondents (83, 78%) stated that they utilised a room equipped with technology devices, such as computers, internet, projectors, televisions and visualizers. This seems to contrast with the student focus group data where four focus group students stated that they studied in classrooms without the use of technology. From the perspective of teachers, they might think that they make use of technology to present the learning content to students. However, the students may think that they do not have an opportunity to use technology to support their learning.

All eight interviewees (100%) realised the importance of the use of technology in teaching and learning to facilitate students' learning. However, as the data below illustrates, not all classrooms are equipped with the desired technology. One head of a foreign language department at an extra-large school stated in the interview that technology devices to support teaching were inadequate:

*“Only some classrooms are equipped with technology like computers and projectors. Therefore, teachers are not convenient to use PowerPoint in teaching.” (EHI)*

Furthermore, four student focus groups (50%) stated that they typically studied in classrooms without technology support, with one stating:

*“We mainly study in the common classrooms without computers, televisions nor projectors. There are no English laboratory rooms.” (ESF2)*

However, one student focus group from an extra-large school stated that some classrooms were equipped with technology, but teachers did not use it, e.g.:

*“The devices, such as projectors and speakers are provided in the classrooms. What teachers need to do is to connect the laptop with those devices. However, English teachers rarely use them.” (ESF1)*

One teacher at an extra-large school stated that the internet was useful for students to seek more knowledge:

*“Students can use the internet to look for meaning of words and the explanation of the content they learn.” (ETQ71)*

Two student focus groups (33%) also mentioned using the internet. However, one group at an extra-large school stated that they could not access the internet and stated:

*“The internet signal is weak. Moreover, it does not cover all areas, particularly English classrooms.” (ESF1)*

As outlined above, a large number of participants placed importance on the use of technology in their teaching and learning. This contrasts with the much lower number of participants who discussed technology in relation their understanding of learner-centred approaches. It is possible that the participants did not think about the use the technology to support their teaching when talking about their understanding of learner-centred approaches. However, when they were asked about their practice, it is possible that they reflected on using a computer and a visualizer to present the learning content by PowerPoint to students rather than using technology and tasks that more actively engage students.

#### **4.3.1.4 Instructional design**

This section presents the analysis of teachers’ implementation of learner-centred approaches in relation to instructional design and includes curriculum and student involvement. In

section 4.2.1.4, where the findings on understanding were presented, the curriculum was mentioned by only three participants. However, when discussing their practice, the curriculum was mentioned by a much higher proportion of participants.

### 1) Curriculum

Eighty-one questionnaire respondents (76%) and all eight interviewees (100%) stated that they considered the English curriculum, lesson plans and students' learning capabilities to guide their teaching and implementation of learner-centred approaches. Forty-three (41%) questionnaire respondents reported the Thai English Curriculum was seen as the key guiding document when designing course content.

*“The priority for teaching is studying the curriculum because it indicates the aims of teaching. Therefore, we have to study what learning strands and grade level indicators and key stage indicators in the curriculum are.” (ETQ68)*

*One Ministry official stated that the English curriculum aligned well with learner-centred approaches. However, it depended on how teachers understood this approach and implemented them in the classroom (MOI2). Similarly, one principal at an extra-large school expressed his view that the English curriculum was in line with the implementation of learner-centred approaches. Teachers could adjust them in their teaching practice (EPI).*

In addition, it was found from the data that the O-NET influenced teachers' planning of teaching and learning activities for students. Teachers were also under pressure to teach students to pass the exams. While only four questionnaire respondents (4%) stated that the O-NET directed their teaching and learning, this was something mentioned by all eight interviewees (100%).

One head of a foreign language department at an extra-large school said that teachers prepared the content to the O-NET and stated:

*“Teachers have to analyse learning objectives related to O-NET.” (EHQ7)*

It is possible that O-NET was not mentioned by many participants as they felt that it did not align with learner-centred approaches.

This conflict was clearly articulated by one teacher at an extra-large school:

*Teaching English using learner-centred approaches have to relate to students' interests, but in contrast teachers have to teach the content specified in the curriculum to cover all aspects of the O-NET. They do not align well. ... It is not related to teaching and learning in classes. School has to manage a particular tutorial to prepare students for the O-NET. (ET11)*

The interviewees further stated that teachers had to focus on getting students to pass the O-NET which was used as criteria for measuring student achievement. As part of this expectation there are O-NET tutorials for students before the exams. The pressure and tension teachers felt in preparing students to pass this test came through clearly in the interviews, as did the inherent mismatch in the prescriptive testing approach and learner-centred teaching approaches.

## 2) Student involvement

As described earlier in section 4.2.1.4, 27 questionnaire respondents (23%) and three interviewees (19%), as part of their understanding of learner-centred approaches, stated that it was important to involve students in planning teaching and learning activities with teachers. However, only eight questionnaire respondents (8%) discussed this aspect as part of their implementation of learner-centred approaches. This shows that in reality, it is very rare for teachers to involve students in their planning of teaching and learning activities. Exceptions to this include *one teacher at an extra-large school who stated that they involved students in choosing content for their learning (ETQ80)*, and *one head of a foreign language department at an extra-large school who briefly stated that teachers and students planned [teaching and learning activities] together (EHQ5)*.

#### 4.3.1.5 Teaching methodologies

This section presents findings on the teaching methodologies participants discussed in relation to their implementation of learner-centred approaches. Forty-two respondents (40%) and all eight interviewees (100%) talked about teaching methodologies in their implementation of learner-centred approaches. However, these were only discussed in very general terms. Of the few participants (16 questionnaire respondents, 15%) who did expand on the type of teaching methods used, group work approaches, CLT and teacher-centred approaches were the most frequently mentioned.

##### 1) Group work approaches

While few questionnaire respondents referred to cooperative learning as a learner-centred teaching method (see Section 4.2.1.2), ninety-five questionnaire respondents (90%) and all eight interviews (100%) stated that they used small group activities for students to share ideas and learn together. *One teacher at a small school (STQ4) said that students learned with one another.* One teacher at extra-large schools exemplified this point and commented:

*“I use group activities in classes because students have the opportunity to share their opinions and help one another.” (ETQ35)*

From a pedagogical point of view, only six respondents (6%) stated that they did not use group activities in classes due to the large number of students with approximately 40-50 students per class, e.g.:

*“I do not use group activities in classes because there are almost 50 students per class.” (ETQ49)*

According to 40 questionnaire respondents (38%) and 4 interviewees (50%) peer teaching was used as part of group learning. One teacher at extra-large school illustrated this by commenting:

*“We use group activities. Each group has mixed English proficiency levels. The high English proficiency students help explain content to the low English proficiency students. Students feel more comfortable to ask their classmates than teachers.” (ETQ81)*

Teachers may think that simply having students to work in groups to complete learning tasks is a learner-centred teaching. However, within a learner-centred approach all group members need to interact and collaboratively work together to accomplish tasks. Individual working within a group on their own tasks without understanding other group members’ roles and work, and being assisted by higher proficiency learners does not fully exemplify learner-centred practices.

## 2) Communicative language teaching (CLT)

Eleven questionnaire respondents (10%) and all eight interviewees (100%) said that they focused on teaching English for communication. *One head of a foreign language department at an extra-large school said that the communicative approach was emphasised (EHQ8).* However, in reality, their approach is not truly communicative. For example, all eight interviewees stated that they normally presented the content and ended their lessons by asking students to complete worksheets due to the low English proficiency of students and limited time in a teaching period. While teachers talked about using a CLT approach, they did not appear to understand what this means as they did not provide communicative tasks for students to apply what they learn. This indicates that students lacked the opportunities to apply their knowledge through communicative tasks.

Despite considering speaking one of the important skills as part of participants’ understanding of learner-centred approaches (see Section 4.2.1.2), a much lower number of participants (11 questionnaire respondents (10%) and six interviewees (75%)) mentioned that they used speaking tasks in classes.

One teacher at an extra-large school stated that teachers themselves were the models of using conversations and illustrated a teacher-centred rather than communicative approach to

teaching conversation:

*I read the conversation out loud and students repeat them after me. I ask students to practise a conversation by rows. I assign two rows of students are Speaker A, and the other two rows are Speaker B to take turn practising a dialogue. Then students practise it in pairs. After that, teachers ask some pairs of students to practise speaking in class. (ET11)*

The student focus group data supports the teacher's comment above, e.g.

*"Teachers read the dialogue first and we repeat after them. Then teachers ask us to take turn practising it by numbers or by rows. After that we practise it with our pairs in class." (ESF3)*

### 3) Teacher-centred approaches

Eleven questionnaire respondents (10%) stated that many teachers still used teacher-centred approaches in teaching. While this number is relatively low, it is revealing as participants were not directly asked about teacher-centred approaches. This point was raised in relation to participants discussing learner-centred approaches. Both English educational supervisors agreed that teachers tended to use teacher-centred approaches in their classes. They also stated that teachers directed learners' learning and emphasised the GTM in their teaching. A teacher at an extra-large school stated that teachers were expected to convey knowledge to students:

*It is not quite clear how teachers implement learner-centred approaches because mostly teachers are the centre of teaching. Students are not involved in teaching and learning activities. Particularly, those who have many years of teaching experiences still emphasise on themselves (one way communication). This makes students tend not to ask questions nor answer in classes because they are afraid of teachers. (ETQ47)*

This point was also emphasised by a teacher at an extra-large school that they rarely used many learner-centred approaches in classes, stating:

*What I mention about using learner-centred approaches in teaching is just based on theories, but in reality, we rarely do this. Other school activities also affect our teaching, such as teacher meeting, student campaign attendance and guidance. These cause us have less time in teaching. (ET11)*

One head of a foreign language department at a small school expanded on the reasons for using teacher-centred approaches by saying the following:

*They can freely choose what teaching strategies to teach. Even me, I can choose my own convenient ways of teaching. I know good teaching strategies, but I do not like complicated teaching steps. So I prefer easy ways of teaching. ... From my experience, many teachers still use ... teacher-centred approaches. (SHI)*

As mentioned in section 4.2.1.2, listening and speaking skills were viewed as the most important skills by respondents when reflecting on their understanding of learner-centred approaches. However, when respondents considered their actual practice, listening and speaking received relatively less attention. Reading and writing received relatively more attention with a number of teachers also considering that all skills were important. This was a more common finding in extra-large schools. The breakdown of respondent numbers is displayed in Table 4.9.

**Table 4.9: Important skills used in teaching**

| Skills      | Number of respondents (n=106) |                            |           |
|-------------|-------------------------------|----------------------------|-----------|
|             | Small schools (n=36)          | Extra-large schools (n=70) | Total     |
| Reading     | 5                             | 15                         | <b>20</b> |
| All skills  | 5                             | 12                         | <b>17</b> |
| Writing     | 4                             | 11                         | <b>15</b> |
| Listening   | 3                             | 6                          | <b>9</b>  |
| Speaking    | 1                             | 8                          | <b>9</b>  |
| Interaction | 2                             | 6                          | <b>8</b>  |

One head of a foreign language department at an extra-large school stated that reading and writing skills were more beneficial than speaking and listening skills:

*“I think the most important skills for students to learn English are reading and writing skills because students are able to apply them more than speaking and listening skills” (SHQ2)*

One teacher at an extra-large school also illustrated this point by stating that reading was the most useful skill for students in taking the exams:

*“Reading skill is the most important skill as the students need to use their reading skill for doing the university entrance exams.” (ETQ28)*

This finding shows that teachers feel pressure to prepare students for assessment, typically the O-NET. Therefore, teachers put more focus on teaching students reading and writing skills than listening and speaking skills. As a teacher at an extra-large school stated, teachers were under pressure from the school policy that required teachers to teach students to pass exams, the O-NET and entrance examination (ETQ79). It could also be seen from one principal of an extra-large school that he was pleased with the good scores obtained in students' O-NET results.

Extra-large schools normally have a large number of students per class and thus it is possible that teachers in these schools may find it challenging to teach and assess listening and speaking skills in large classes. The impact of this is that there are fewer opportunities for students to practice and gain communicative skills, as would be expected within a learner-centred environment.

In addition to the above findings, it was also evident that Thai was commonly used in English language classes. All six student focus groups confirmed common use of the Thai language as a medium of communication in teaching English in class. *One student focus group at small schools exemplified this point by simply stating that teachers used the Thai language in their teaching (SSF2).* The data from the focus groups indicate that teachers use English only for some common classroom expressions and in leading students to read a passage. Additionally, *one teacher at a small school stated in the interview that Thai was normally used in class because students were silent and unconfident to respond back in English when teachers used English in class (STII).* This again highlights the perception that the Thai culture impacts on the implementation of learner-centred approaches.

#### **4.3.1.6 A summary of planning for learning**

Teaching and learning tasks and resources were the most commonly discussed category by participants, followed by the role of teachers, and the use of technology in teaching and learning. However, while teachers felt that they were using a range of teaching and learning tasks and resources, in reality these tended to be limited to worksheets and textbooks. Findings also revealed that teachers did not always have access to appropriate technology and when they did, full use of this was not always made. Teachers commonly adopted a more teacher-centred role with students learning passively by completing provided worksheets. Speaking and listening tasks were less commonly used than reading and writing tasks and teachers felt pressure to ensure they adequately covered the curriculum and content to prepare students for the O-NET. This pressure and the mismatch between the expectation that teachers prepare and push their students to achieve high grades with the policy expectation to implement learner-centred approaches came through in the data.

### **4.3.2 Development of learning and metacognitive strategies**

This section presents the findings of participants' implementation of learner-centred approaches in relation to the development of learning and metacognitive strategies. These include managing group work, thinking skills, learner engagement in tasks and self-directed learning. Despite metacognitive strategies being the most commonly talked about category in terms of understanding, participants did not talk much about them in their implementation of learner-centred approaches.

#### **4.3.2.1 Managing group work**

This section details how teachers manage group activities for students to work together to complete learning tasks. While only a minority of the participants talked about the use of managing group work to support students' learning as part of their understanding of learner-centred approaches (see Section 4.2.2.4), the majority of questionnaire respondents (101, 95%) used group learning in classes for students to brainstorm ideas and interact with one another to do assigned tasks. All eight interviewees (100%) also stated that they used pair work and group activities for students to work together to complete learning tasks.

In forming groups, twenty-two respondents (21%) and four interviewees (50%) divided students based on ensuring a mix of different levels of English language proficiency. Within each group there was a mix of high, moderate and low proficiency students. Students with high English proficiency were expected to help and support those with lower English proficiency. One teacher at a small school said that mixing students with different capabilities like this aimed to facilitate students supporting one another with their learning:

*“I divide students into groups by mixing their English proficiency. Each group has high, moderate and low English proficiency. The ideal is to get the students who have high English proficiency to help the low proficiency students ...”*  
(STQ4)

Another teacher at an extra-large school stated in the interview that students' levels of English proficiency were analysed to organise appropriate learning tasks for students:

*“I analyse students by using pre-tests, previous grades and asking students some questions in classes. By doing these, I could group them based on their learning abilities.” (ETI2)*

In terms of the student focus groups, five of the six groups (83%) stated that they sometimes learned through group activities such as reading and answering passages, reports and presentations. One group exemplified this by stating:

*“We work in groups to do a report related to an assigned topic. All of us had a chance to present them in classes.” (SSF3)*

As mentioned above, teachers grouped students by having a mix of different English language proficiency levels so that students could support one another in learning. As described earlier in section 4.3.1.1 on student preferences for learning, teachers perceived that students preferred to learn through group activities.

#### **4.3.2.2 Thinking skills**

While a small number of questionnaire respondents (26, 22%) and six interviewees (38%) talked about thinking skills in relation to their understanding of learner-centred approaches, seventy-eight respondents (74%) and three interviewees (38%) stated that they encouraged students to think to develop their thinking skills. However, the participants in discussing their implementation did not extend much on this concept or discuss how they did this. Two main aspects mentioned were asking questions and answering questions from reading texts and tasks.

##### **1) Asking questions**

Thirty-five respondents (33%) implemented learner-centred approaches by asking students questions from situations or issues to encourage them to answer and express their opinions or solve problems. The following comment of one teacher at small school illustrated this point.

*“Critical thinking skill is emphasised by using a problem for students to think how to solve it and summarise the best solution.” (STQ15)*

Another teacher at a small school also stated that setting questions were used to encourage students to think for problem solving with saying:

*“I set questions from the situations or issues for students to think of the reasons and solve problems.” (STQ1)*

While on the surface, this appears to be in line with learner-centred approaches, participants gave only very brief and broad information, and it was difficult to assess the extent to which their practices were really reflective of learner-centred approaches.

## 2) Answering questions from reading

Eleven respondents (10%) stated that they used a variety of reading tasks to enhance students' thinking skills. One teacher at an extra-large school said that students were asked to connect what they read to their real life:

*“I select passages that have more than one answer. After students get the answers from what they read, they are asked to think of other possible answers related to their real life.” (ETQ81)*

One head of a foreign language department at an extra-large school stated in the interview that students were encouraged to think by using brainstorming and said:

*“For thinking skills, students brainstorm and analyse sentence structures together in classes.” (EHI)*

The above mentioned learning activities appear to reflect learner-centred approaches. However, this practice was not widespread and participants did not provide specific details or examples of supporting the development and enhancement of thinking skills.

#### **4.3.2.3 Learner engagement in tasks**

Thirty-seven respondents (35%) and four interviewees (50%) talked about the importance of learners being engaged in tasks when they discussed their implementation of learner-centred approaches. Here, a difference was observed between participants' understanding of learner-centred approaches and their implementation. As stated in section 4.2.2.1, learners engagement was the most frequently discussed category when learners discussed their understanding of learner centred-approaches. However, in reality what they talked about was participation in teaching and learning activities rather than the concepts of learner engagement and active learning. Thus, it was concluded that participants may have only a limited understanding of learner engagement, particularly in relation to cognitive engagement. Comments in terms of implementation also reflected a focus on participation rather than true learner engagement. For example, one head of a foreign language department at a small school said that students engaged in their learning and commented:

*“Students participate in teaching and learning activities enthusiastically.”*  
(SHQ10)

These findings reinforce the view that participants have a relatively superficial understanding of learner engagement. They appear to interpret it purely in terms of learner participation in tasks. Learner engagement was mentioned by over half of the participants as part of their understanding of learner-centred approaches, but only a third when talking about their actual practice. This low proportion and lack of elaboration suggests that participants are familiar with the term, perhaps from policy documents or professional development, but lack understanding of what the term means, and how it can be used to support teaching and learning.

#### **4.3.2.4 Self-directed learning**

While forty-seven questionnaire respondents (40%) and five interviewees (31%) commented on self-directed learning as part of their understanding of learner-centred approaches, when discussing their actual practice only sixteen questionnaire respondents (15%) stated that they focused on developing the ability for students to seek knowledge in their learning, e.g.:

*“I organise teaching and learning activities for students to seek additional knowledge to improve their own learning.” (ETQ71)*

From the interviews, only one teacher at a small school said that students were asked to search for information and simply said:

*“Students are assigned to seek knowledge and summarise it.” (STI2)*

The difference observed between the participants’ understanding of self-directed learning and their implementation suggests that the participants have only a broad understanding of the concept. This view is supported by the fact that participants spoke very briefly about self-directed learning and did not expand on their comments to discuss more concretely what they understood self-directed learning to be or how it could be implemented within the classroom. Aspects such as developing independent learners and adjustment of learning according to the needs and abilities of learners were not mentioned. A limited understanding of learner-of self-directed learning may explain the low number of the participants who referred to this aspect when discussing classroom implementation.

#### **4.3.2.5 A summary of development of learning and metacognitive strategies**

The findings show that aspects of this category were discussed much more when participants talked about their understanding of learner-centred approaches than they did when they talked about their implementation. For example, while learner engagement was the most talked about sub-category when participants discussed their understanding of learner-centred approaches, it was only mentioned by approximately one-third of questionnaire respondents when they discussed their actual practice. Comments made in relation to both participants’ understanding and implementation, reflect a focus on learner participation and do not demonstrate a more advanced understanding of learner cognitive engagement in tasks. Participants emphasised that they make use of group work and activities in the classroom. However, there appeared to be a lack of interaction among group members to collaboratively work together to achieve a learning goal or task. The findings here indicate that participants

have a somewhat superficial understanding of how to implement learner-centred approaches in their daily teaching.

### **4.3.3 Assessment**

This section presents the findings of participants' implementation of learner-centred approaches in relation to assessment. These include a range of assessments, authentic assessment, self-assessment and peer assessment.

#### **4.3.3.1 A range of assessments**

The participants talked about the range of assessment strategies they used to assess students' learning. They tended to focus on summative assessment, such as tests, midterm, final exams and the O-NET rather than formative assessment strategies such as peer- or self-assessment. All eight interviewees (100%) also mentioned the influence that the O-NET has on teachers' teaching. The six focus groups support this view with little information provided on the sub-categories of authentic assessment, self-assessment nor peer assessment. As detailed below the main assessment methods used by participants were limited to tests and informal teacher observation.

##### 1) Tests

Seventy-two respondents (68%) and eight interviewees (100%) stated that they used tests to assess students' learning. For some teachers tests were part of their daily practice. For example, *one teacher at a small school stated that tests were used to assess students' learning at the end of each lesson (STI3).*

All six student focus groups agreed that tests were commonly used to assess their learning. One group at the extra-large school stated that:

*“Besides midterm and final exams, we normally have tests after each learning unit.” (ESF2)*

It was also suggested the high use of tests may be related to the class sizes, particularly within extra-large schools where large class sizes are common. Teachers may agree that it is good to use a variety of assessments to assess students' learning, but in reality, they may feel pressured to use tests due to the large number of students per class, e.g.:

*“We are not able to use a range of assessments to assess students' learning due to a large class size, so we have to use tests.” (ETQ32)*

## 2) Informal teacher observation

Forty-nine respondents (46%) and five interviewees (63%) stated that they assessed students' learning in the classrooms by using an informal observation. For example, one teacher at an extra-large school said:

*“I observe and assess students' learning behaviours in classes both individuals and groups.” (ETQ55)*

Similarly, one head of a foreign language department at an extra-large school said:

*“Sometimes, we observe and assess students' sharing ideas and participation in group activities.” (EHI)*

Teachers' use of informal observation to assess students' learning in the classroom tends to be in line with learner-centred approaches. This kind of formative assessment could enhance students' learning in the classroom.

### **4.3.3.2 Authentic assessment**

Twenty-two respondents (21%) and six interviewees (75%) mentioned that they applied authentic assessment to assess students' learning. As with the data on understanding, the participants simply said that authentic assessment was used without expanding further on what this is or how they went about this. For example:

*“I use authentic assessment. I assess students’ learning during teaching and learning activities in classes.” (ETQ62)*

Thus, it is not clear what teachers understand by the term authentic assessment and whether the assessment practices used were truly authentic.

#### **4.3.3.3 Participants’ implementation on self-assessment and peer assessment**

Self-assessment and peer assessment were infrequently used by participants. Only four respondents (4%) and two interviewees (25%) asked students to assess their own learning. *One teacher at an extra-large school said that students assessed their own learning to see their learning progress continuously (ETQ29).*

Regarding peer assessment, only one teacher at an extra-large school utilised peer assessment to assess students’ learning, simply saying:

*“I assess students’ learning and students also assess their classmates’ learning.” (ETQ47)*

#### **4.3.3.4 A summary of assessment**

The findings indicate that while participants talk about using a range of assessments, tests dominate their practice. This tendency may be due to the pressure that teachers face in preparing students for the O-NET, and large class sizes for teachers in extra-large schools. In addition, the participants tended not to use authentic assessment practices or self-assessment and peer assessment. While there was evidence that some teachers do make use of informal observation to assess learners, overall the findings suggest that teachers have a limited understanding of how to implement learner-centred assessment approaches.

#### **4.3.4 Individual differences**

This section presents the analysis of participants’ implementation of learner-centred approaches on individual differences. The data show that the category of individual differences is closely related to the sub-categories of planning for learning, and managing

group work. Forty-nine questionnaire respondents (46%) and four interviewees (50%) stated that students' learning capabilities and needs were taken into account when they implemented learner-centred approaches.

To exemplify this, one teacher at an extra-large school said the following:

*“Teachers analysed levels of students’ learning abilities to carry out their teaching strategies to suit students’ learning.” (ETQ35)*

While participants stated that teachers took students' needs into account to facilitate their learning, they did not expand on this or explain how they went about this.

The findings presented above show that fewer than half of the participants placed importance on individual differences. Furthermore, they did not explain further how to involve students' learning capabilities and needs in the implementation. This suggests that they may not have a deep understanding of how to enhance individual students' learning in the learner-centred implementation or that they may not see it as part of learner-centred approaches.

#### **4.3.5 Motivation and affective factors**

This section presents the findings in relation to motivation and affective factors. The data show that the category of motivation and affective factors is closely relevant to the sub-category of teaching and learning tasks and resources. As described in section 4.2.5 twenty-two questionnaire respondents (19%) and five interviewees (31%) stated, as part of their understanding of learner-centred approaches, that interesting teaching learning activities increased students' motivation. In line with this, 102 questionnaire respondents (96%) said that they utilised strategies to motivate students to learn. Seven interviewees (88%) mentioned that they needed to use strategies to keep students interested as many found English difficult to learn. For example, one teacher at a small school stated in the interview that students' interest was an important factor to their learning, and commented:

*Students' interest is the most important factor. It is related to how interesting of teaching strategies that teachers use. I try to find what interests students. When I ask students questions in classes, low English proficiency students are silent. They do not answer questions if those questions are not of their interests. (STI2)*

The participants who expanded on their practice exemplified two main strategies in relation to motivation and affective factors. These include giving students points and rewards to encourage students in their learning.

For example as one head of a foreign language department at a small school said students were given points when they correctly answered questions in classes:

*“Bonus points help increase students' motivation. Students are eager to raise their hands to answer questions in classes.” (SHI)*

One teacher at a small school encouraged students to learn by providing them with some rewards when answering questions correctly, and said:

*“I provide interesting rewards for students to explain or answer questions.” (STQ19)*

Some respondents talked about giving rewards such as pens, notebooks and dictionaries to enhance students' interests and motivation to learn. Despite a large number of participants discussing using motivation and affective factors in their teaching practice, the strategies they used to motivate students in their learning appear to be limited to giving points and giving rewards. These tend to be linked to extrinsic motivation rather than intrinsic motivation to engage and enhance students' interests in learning. There was little evidence to suggest that the practices teachers employed were actually learner-centred. This indicates that teachers may not be aware of the full range of strategies that they could be using to engage learners intrinsically, and how to use these in their teaching practice.

#### **4.3.6 A summary for findings related to Research Question 2**

While participants provided much more information about their implementation of learner-centred approaches than they did when discussing their understanding, it was found that they tended to talk about their practice quite broadly. They did not appear to be able to identify specific aspects of their practice that were learner-centred and much of what was discussed was in fact more in line with teacher-centred approaches. Practices around learner engagement were really about learner participation in tasks. Despite feeling that they use a variety of tasks and resources, a reliance on textbooks and worksheets was reported. Although group work was used, interaction among group members to work collaboratively together to achieve the overall aim of the task was not mentioned by any participants. While teachers commented that listening and speaking skills were the most important when they reported on their understanding of learner-centred approaches, in reality reading and writing dominated classroom practice. Several reasons for this were given. First, teachers commented that Thai students are shy, particularly in speaking English, and are not as used to interactive activities as Western students. Second, there was a sense that parental expectations of effective teaching and learning in Thailand are teacher-centred rather than learner-centred. Third, teachers felt pressure to prepare students to achieve well on tests, particularly the O-NET.

In terms of assessments, participants commented that they used a range of strategies. However, while there was some evidence that informal observation was used, it was clear that tests were the most common type of assessment used by teachers. As indicated above, part of the reason for this relates to the pressure teachers feel to ensure students are adequately prepared for the high stakes O-NET. In addition, many teachers at extra-large schools, where there tend to be large class sizes, felt that there was no real alternative to using tests. The above findings suggest that participants lack an in-depth understanding of what learner-centred approaches are and how to implement them. The findings also indicate that there is a range of cultural factors that lead teachers to using more teacher-dominated than learner-centred approaches within their classes.

## 4.4 Findings related to Research Question 3

This section brings together the findings from the questionnaires and interviews regarding participant views on the factors that impede and support the implementation of learner-centred approaches, i.e. research question 3. Table 4.10 provides an overview of the participant data drawn on to respond to this question.

**Table 4.10: Participants for questionnaire and interview data for Research Question 3**

| <b>Data</b>        | <b>Participants and numbers</b>  |
|--------------------|--|
| Questionnaire data | <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Principals (11)</li><li>2. Heads of foreign language departments (18)</li><li>3. English teachers (88)</li></ol>  |
| Interview data     | <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Ministry officials (2)</li><li>2. English educational supervisors (2)</li><li>3. Chairpersons at school boards (2)</li><li>4. Principals (2)</li><li>5. Heads of foreign language departments (2)</li><li>6. English teachers (6)</li></ol> |

Details on the factors that impede the implementation of learner-centred approaches are presented first, followed by those that support the implementation.

### 4.4.1 Factors that impede the implementation of learner-centred approaches

As described in section 3.7.2 in the Methodology chapter, the questionnaire respondents and interviewees were asked to rank the top five factors that impede the implementation of the learner-centred approach. The data of small schools and extra-large schools as well as participant types were presented separately to see if there were contrasts or similar perspectives.

#### 4.4.1.1 Small schools

Table 4.11 below presents the ranking results of factors that impede the implementation of learner-centred approaches in English classes at small schools from the most important to the least important factors. The highlighting is used to present the main impeding factors ranked by different questionnaire respondent types.

**Table 4.11: The ranking results of factors that impede learner-centred approach implementation of small schools: Questionnaire respondents and interviewees**

| Principals   | Heads of foreign language departments                                      | English teachers   |
|--|--|--|
| 1. A limited understanding of the principles of learner centred approaches | 1. Inadequate teaching and learning resources                              | 1. Other school duties and responsibilities                                |
| 2. Other school duties and responsibilities                                | 2. A limited understanding of the principles of learner-centred approaches | 2. Inadequate teaching and learning resources                              |
| 3. Inadequate teaching and learning resources                              | 3. Other school duties and responsibilities                                | 3. The use of traditional approaches                                       |
| 4. The use of traditional approaches                                       | 4. The use of traditional approaches                                       | 4. Heavy teaching loads  |
| 5. Heavy teaching loads  | 5. Limited time in a teaching period                                       | 5. A limited understanding of the principles of learner-centred approaches |
| 6. Limited time in a teaching period                                       | 6. Heavy teaching loads  | 6. Limited time in a teaching period                                       |
|  | 6. Students' levels of English proficiency                                 |  |
|  | 6. Large class sizes   |  |
| 7. English teacher's English proficiency                                   | 7. School context  | 7. Students' levels of English proficiency                                 |
| 7. Large class sizes   |  |  |
| 8. Students' levels of English proficiency                                 | 8. Seniority system  | 8. School context  |

Table 4.11 shows the range of views on the impeding factors of three types of participants. The three most important impeding factors in relation to the points ranked by these three

types of participants include a limited understanding of the principles of learner-centred approaches, inadequate teaching and learning resources, and other school duties and responsibilities subsequently. The table shows some differences in the rankings for participant types. For example, questionnaire respondents and interviewees at small schools ranked a limited understanding of the principles of learner-centred approaches as a significant impeding factor. It is interesting to note that principals and heads of foreign language teachers ranked this factor as a more significant impediment than teachers did. This may reflect that teachers were more focused on factors controlled by others, e.g. issues around their workload and other duties. However, overall it can be seen that participants perceive a lack of understanding of the principles of learner-centred approaches as a significant impeding factor in teachers' ability to implement learner-centred approaches in the classroom. It can also be seen that in the view of all participants traditional approaches dominate. Additional training may be needed to support teachers in developing a more in-depth understanding of learner-centred approaches and how these can be implemented in the classroom.

One teacher at a small school illustrated this point by stating that teachers did not know how to implement learner-centred approaches, and commented:

*Teachers have the important role in learner-centred approaches to facilitate students' learning. However, they are confused how to implement this approach due to their limited understanding of learner-centred principles. They do not know how to use teaching methods to encourage students to learn. (STI3)*

Two English educational supervisors also stated that teachers did not understand the principles of learner-centred approaches. Therefore, their implementation reflected teacher-centred teaching, with one commenting:

*"Teachers are still the centre of learning as it is teacher talks in the classroom. It is not active learning." (ETI2)*

Insufficient teaching and learning resources to support the implementation of learner-centred approaches was also considered a significant impediment for all participant types in small schools. One teacher at a small school commented on the importance of having an adequate range of interesting resources:

*“Interesting teaching and learning resources are able to encourage students to learn. Without interesting and adequate teaching and learning resources, students lack their interests in learning.” (STI2)*

Other school duties and responsibilities were ranked first by English teachers and within the top three factors for both principals and heads of foreign language departments. Participants felt that the range of responsibilities they had affected the time they had for thinking about and planning their teaching and lessons (e.g. *STI2*). Other factors such as large class sizes and the seniority system, which is where someone of lower status pays respect to someone of higher status in a hierarchical structure in Thai society, did not seem to be considered significant factors in small schools.

#### **4.4.1.2 Extra-large schools**

This section presents the results of the factors that impede learner-centred approach implementation in English classes at extra-large schools from the most important factor to the least important factor (see Table 4.12). The highlighting is used to present the main impeding factors ranked by different questionnaire respondent types.

**Table 4.12: The ranking results of factors that impede learner-centred approach implementation of extra-large schools: Questionnaire respondents and interviewees**

| <b>Principals</b>  | <b>Heads of foreign language departments</b>                               | <b>English teachers</b>  |
|--|--|--|
| 1. Heavy teaching loads  | 1. Large class sizes   | 1. Large class sizes   |
| 2. A limited understanding of the principles of learner-centred approaches | 2. A limited understanding of the principles of learner-centred approaches | 2. Other school duties and responsibilities                                |
| 3. Other school duties and responsibilities                                | 3. Other school duties and responsibilities                                | 3. A limited understanding of the principles of learner-centred approaches |
| 3. Inadequate teaching and learning resources                              |  |  |
| 4. Large class sizes   | 4. Heavy teaching loads  | 4. The use of traditional approaches                                       |
| 4. English teacher's English proficiency                                   |  |  |
| 5. Limited time in a teaching period                                       | 5. The use of traditional approaches                                       | 5. Heavy teaching loads  |
| 6. The use of traditional approaches                                       | 6. Inadequate teaching and learning resources                              | 6. Limited time in a teaching period                                       |
|  | 6. Curriculum  |  |
| 7. Students' levels of English proficiency                                 | 7. Limited time in a teaching period                                       | 7. Inadequate teaching and learning resources                              |
| 8. Seniority system  | 8. Seniority system  | 8. Seniority system  |

As can be seen in Table 4.12, the three participant types have similar views on the impeding factors of implementation of learner-centred approaches in extra-large schools. The three most important impeding factors for all three types were large class sizes, other school duties and responsibilities, and a limited understanding of the principles of learner-centred approaches.

Large class sizes were seen as the most significant impeding factor for those who are responsible for implementing learner-centred approaches in the classroom, i.e. heads of foreign language departments and teachers at extra-large schools in the Thai context tend to

have a large number of students per class, approximately 40-50 students per class. *One teacher at an extra-large school stated that a large number of students per class affected teaching and learning in the classroom as teachers had to spend considerable time to giving feedback on assignments. Also, it took almost the whole teaching period for speaking test in pairs (ETI3).*

As found in small schools, other school duties and responsibilities were also viewed as an important impeding factor. *One teacher at an extra-large school illustrated this point by stating that teachers had to take charge of other school duties and responsibilities, such as an academic division and personnel management, when they were free from teaching (ETI2).* A limited understanding of learner-centred approaches was also seen as a significant impeding factor to implementing learner-centred approaches. One teacher of an extra-large school stated in the interview that teachers' limited understanding of learner-centred approaches led them to use more teacher-centred practices where they impart knowledge to students:

*Teachers lack understanding of learner-centred approaches. They know teaching steps, but they do not involve students much in teaching and learning activities. It also takes much time in a learner-centred approach. Thus teachers choose to give a lecture or summarise a lesson rather than teaching using learner-centred approaches. (ETI3)*

One principal at an extra-large school also stated that teachers tended to still use teacher-centred approaches, commenting:

*Teachers still lack the understanding of learner-centred approach principles. Some teachers still use teacher-centred approaches by teaching students only to listen and repeat what they say and do what they instruct. They do not attempt to organise teaching and learning activities for students to think or express their opinions. (EPI)*

More detail also came out through the interviews in relation to this factor. For example, it was felt that while Ministry officials focus on policies that push the implementation of learner-centred approaches, policies change regularly.

*“... Policies are often changed. This affects how teachers organise teaching and learning activities in classes.” (ETII)*

This concern may impact the extent to which some teachers have engaged with the theory of learner-centred approaches.

Ministry officials and English educational supervisors also commented that a lack of continuous teaching supervision system was a factor that impeded teachers using learner-centred approaches. As described in section 3.4.2, English educational supervisors generally visit English teachers at schools to monitor English teachers’ teaching and provide suggestions in teaching English. It was felt that additional supervision support would provide further support for teachers. One English educational supervisor stated the importance of this point:

*“Supervising English teachers continually is very important as it reflects and supports teachers’ teaching. Teachers will have the opportunity to work with English education supervisors to improve their teaching.” (ESII)*

#### **4.4.1.3 A summary of the impeding factors of learner-centred approach implementation**

There was general agreement across participant types and school types that a limited understanding of learner-centred approaches and other school duties and responsibilities impacted the implementation of learner-centred approaches. A difference was seen between the two school types, with participants at small schools more concerned about a lack of resources, and those at extra-large schools more concerned with large class sizes. The seniority system was not seen as a significant impeding factor by participants at either school type. This aspect will be discussed further in section 5.4.4 in the discussion chapter.

#### 4.4.2 The factors that support the implementation of learner-centred approaches

This section presents the results on what participants perceive to be the factors which support the implementation of learner-centred approaches. The data from small schools and extra-large schools are presented separately to see if there are differences or similarities across school types. A comparison across participant types is also provided.

##### 4.4.2.1 Small schools

The section presents the results of factors that support the implementation of learner-centred approaches in English classes at small schools from the most important to the least important factors. Table 4.13 presents the range of views on the supporting factors of three types of questionnaire respondents and interviewees at small schools. Highlighting is used to present the main supporting factors ranked by different participant types.

**Table 4.13: The ranking results of factors that support learner-centred approach implementation of small schools: Questionnaire respondents and interviewees**

| Principals                                   | Heads of foreign language departments  | English teachers  |
|--|--|---|
| 1. English teacher's English proficiency     | 1. Adequate teaching and learning resources<br>1. Students' opportunity to use English | 1. Adequate teaching and learning resources                         |
| 2. Students' opportunity to use English      | 2. English teacher's English proficiency   | 2. Students' opportunity to use English                             |
| 2. The use of technology                     |  |   |
| 3. Adequate teaching and learning resources  | 3. Teaching pedagogy training  | 3. English teacher's English proficiency                            |
| 3. Students' attitudes towards using English |  |   |
| 4. Teaching methods                          | 4. Students' learning abilities and responsibilities                                   | 4. Students' learning abilities and responsibilities                |
| 4. Teaching pedagogy training                | 4. Teaching methods  | 4. An understanding of the principles of learner-centred approaches |

| <b>Principals</b>  | <b>Heads of foreign language departments</b> | <b>English teachers</b>                      |
|--|--|--|
| 5. The understanding of the principles of learner-centred approaches |  | 5. Teaching methods                          |
|  |  | 6. Teaching pedagogy training                |
|  |  | 6. Students' attitudes towards using English |
|  |  | 6. The use of technology                     |

The three participant types had similar views on the factors which support the implementation of learner-centred approaches. These were adequate teaching and learning resources, students' opportunity to use English, and teacher's English proficiency.

From the participants' perspectives, particularly heads of foreign language departments and teachers at small schools, adequate teaching and learning resources were considered the most significant supporting factor. This aligns with the findings of the factors which impede the implementation of learner-centred approaches where teachers commented that there was a lack of adequate teaching and learning resources. *One teacher at a small school expanded on this in the interview stating that having a range of adequate teaching and learning resources could motivate students to learn (STI2).*

Participants agreed that increasing students' opportunity to use English was a significant factor which would support the implementation of learner-centred approaches. While this did not come through as a factor which impeded teachers in implementing learner-centred approaches, they saw it is a factor which could support students in their learning of English. The principal at a small school exemplified this by stating:

*“If students have opportunities to use English, they will benefit from using it by interacting with foreigners.” (SPI)*

A head of a foreign language department at a small school also said that students' opportunity to use English is important for students to improve their English skills and commenting:

*“When students have the opportunity to frequently practise their English skills, especially, speaking, they will be more efficient in using English.” (SH1)*

This factor is more relevant for small schools as small schools tend to be situated in remote areas. Therefore students attending small schools tend to have few opportunities to use English outside of school and the English language classroom.

Improving the level of the English language proficiency of teachers was seen as another significant factor which would support the implementation of learner-centred approaches. While teachers ranked this aspect as the third most significant factor, this was ranked by principals as the most important factor, and by heads of foreign language departments as the second most important factor. This aspect was also discussed by the chairperson of the school board at a small school. One of the interviewees at a small school stated that teachers’ English proficiency influenced students’ learning, stating:

*“When teachers have good English proficiency, they are able to organise learning activities to improve students’ learning abilities.” (ST13)*

#### **4.4.2.2 Extra-large schools**

This section presents the results of factors that support the implementation of learner-centred approaches in English classrooms at extra-large schools from the most important factor to the least important factor. Table 4.14 shows a variety of views on the supporting factors of the implementation of learner-centred approaches of three participant types at extra-large schools. Highlighting is used to present the main supporting factors ranked by questionnaire respondent and interviewees.

**Table 4.14: The ranking results of factors that support learner-centred approach implementation of extra-large schools: Questionnaire respondents and interviewees**

| <b>Principals</b>   | <b>Heads of foreign language departments</b>                        | <b>English teachers</b>   |
|---|---|---|
| 1. Adequate teaching and learning resources                         | 1. English teacher's English proficiency                            | 1. Adequate teaching and learning resources                         |
| 1. Teaching pedagogy training                                       |   |   |
| 2. The concrete English teachers' teaching supervision system       | 2. Adequate teaching and learning resources                         | 2. English teacher's English proficiency                            |
| 3. Small class sizes  | 3. Students' opportunity to use English                             | 3. Small class sizes  |
| 3. Time in a teaching period  |   |   |
| 4. An understanding of the principles of learner-centred approaches | 4. Teaching pedagogy training                                       | 4. The use of technology  |
| 4. Teaching methods   | 4. Teaching methods   |   |
|   | 4. Small class sizes  |   |
|   | 5. An understanding of the principles of learner-centred approaches | 5. Students' learning abilities and responsibilities                |
|   | 5. Students' learning abilities and responsibilities                |   |
|   | 5. The use of technology  |   |
|   |   | 6. Teaching pedagogy training                                       |
|   |   | 7. Teaching methods   |
|   |   | 8. An understanding of the principles of learner-centred approaches |
|   |   | 8. Students' attitudes towards using English                        |

The three participant types put the focus on adequate teaching and learning resources, the level of English language proficiency of teachers and smaller class sizes.

Similar to the findings for small schools, adequate teaching and learning resources was viewed as the most significant factor which would support teachers in implementing learner-centred approaches across all three participant types at extra-large schools. The chairperson of an extra-large school board stated the following when interviewed:

*“Adequate teaching and learning resources are the significant factor in teaching and learning English. All students should access all resources. They could encourage students to learn better.” (ECI)*

This suggests a gap and that improving the teaching and learning resources available to teachers would support the implementation of learner-centred approaches across different school types.

As found for small schools, improving the level of teachers’ English language proficiency was seen as a significant factor which would support the implementation of learner-centred approaches by both heads of foreign language departments and teachers. It is not clear why this was not mentioned by principals although there were fewer principals in the sample. One head of a foreign language department at an extra-large school stated that it was important for English teachers to use their abilities to facilitate students’ learning, commenting:

*“English teachers have to always learn and find new things for students to learn by using English knowledge as the base to apply it in all situations to assist students build up their knowledge.” (EHQ3)*

The principals at extra-large schools, as well as an English educational supervisor, emphasised pedagogical training, stating that more professional development and training would better support teachers in implementing learner-centred approaches. *One teacher at an extra-large school agreed with this view stating that to effectively implement learner-centre approaches, teachers should be trained first (ETQ87)*. Another teacher at an extra-large school stated that when teachers understood learner-centred approach principles, they could be able to apply them in classes and commenting:

*“English teachers have to understand learner-centred approach principles. When they know how to teach, they are able to facilitate students’ learning to obtain knowledge and use it in their life.” (ETQ42)*

However, one head of a foreign language department at an extra-large school was critical about the training that currently existed, stating that teachers felt that the pedagogical support did not work well as copies of training information were simply distributed to other teachers rather than teachers having the opportunity to participate and engage in discussions about learner-centred approaches (EHI).

In line with the factors that impede teachers at extra-large schools implementing learner-centred approaches, it was felt that smaller class sizes would better support teachers in their implementation. One teacher expanded on this stating that class sizes affected teachers’ teaching and students’ learning as teachers might teach more effectively with small class sizes (ETQ68). Another teacher at an extra-large school commented on the number of the students per classes, saying:

*“The number of students should not exceed 25 students per class. Teachers need the small number of students per class; not 50-60 students per class.” (ETQ49)*

#### **4.4.2.3 A summary of the supporting factors of learner-centred approach implementation**

Both small schools and extra-large schools felt that the provision of more adequate teaching and learning resources would better support teachers in implementing learner-centred approaches. They also agreed that improving the level of teachers’ English language proficiency would facilitate teachers in implementing learner-centred approaches. Several differences across school types were also observed. For example, for extra-large schools, in line with the data on impeding factors, it was found that smaller class sizes would better support teachers. In small schools, additional opportunities for students to use English outside of school were seen as something that would support students in improving their oral language skills and allow teachers to use more learner-centred approaches in their teaching.

Additional professional development for teachers, particularly in pedagogical approaches was seen as something that would benefit teachers although some participants were critical of the models used to cascade what was learnt in professional development sessions.

#### **4.5 Chapter summary**

The evidence in the findings suggests that the participants tend to have a superficial understanding of the learner-centred approaches. When discussing their understanding of learner-centred approaches, they provided brief responses and the key ideas mentioned were similar to the concepts in the Thai documents related to learner-centred approaches. This was particularly apparent when discussing learner engagement. Furthermore, the participants mentioned few of the key concepts of learner-centred approaches contained in each category and subcategory, and they did not expand on how to implement them. There was little consensus across participants as to what learner-centred approaches constitute. While teachers talked much more about implementation than they did about their understanding of learner-centred approaches, much of what was discussed was more indicative of traditional teacher-centred approaches. For example, while teachers commented that a wide range of teaching and learning tasks and resources were used, in reality worksheets, and textbooks appeared to dominate. Group work was commonly used but the data show that while participants felt that listening and speaking were the most important skills in learner-centred approaches, in practice there was more weighting given to reading and writing, showing that much of the group work was not particularly interactive or focused on developing communicative skills. In terms of assessment, tests were the most frequently used tool with pressures expressed around preparing students for exams and managing large-class sizes. Positively, informal observations appeared to be widely used although little detail was provided on how these were used to feedback into teaching and learning.

The ranking data support the above findings with a limited understanding of the principles of learner-centred approaches rated as a significant impeding factor for teachers in implementing learner-centred approaches. Other factors which were seen as impediments include: inadequate teaching and learning resources, the use of traditional approaches, and large class sizes within the extra-large schools. In relation to the supporting factors, both

small schools and extra-large schools perceived adequate teaching and learning resources as the most important factor which would support teachers in implementing learner-centred approaches in the classroom, followed by improving the level of teachers' English language proficiency, and pedagogical training for teachers. The findings from this study indicate that teachers need further English language support and additional pedagogical training to facilitate students in their learning. The findings also suggest tension between the implementation of learner-centred approaches and Thai cultural aspects, such as the hierarchical structure in Thai society and the focus on high achievement in exams such as the O-NET.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **DISCUSSION**

#### **5.1 Introduction**

This chapter presents the discussion of two major themes from the findings presented in the previous chapter. These themes are: 1) how practice is generally reflective of teacher, rather than learner-centred approaches and 2) aspects of the Thai cultural context which impact on the implementation of learner-centred approaches. The chapter is divided into three sections. In the first section, practices that are more reflective of teacher-centred approaches are discussed. Following this in section two, key aspects impacting teachers' implementation of learner-centred approaches are presented: 1) misconceptions of learner-centred approaches, and 2) lack of professional development and learning. To conclude the second section, there is a brief discussion of the implications of teachers having a limited understanding about learner-centred approaches and how to implement them. The third substantive section of this chapter discusses the second major theme, the Thai cultural context. A summary of the discussion is provided at the end of the main sections, and also at the end of the chapter.

#### **5.2 Implementation reflects teacher-centred approaches**

This section discusses the data from this study that illustrates how teachers use approaches more reflective of teacher-centred than learner-centred approaches. Evidence from the data, and a discussion of this in relation to the wider literature is provided against the following themes: passive learning, the role of teachers, students' low level of English language proficiency, the role of learners, use of learning tasks and resources, engaging students to learn, group learning, lack of student interaction, and use of assessment results.

##### **5.2.1 Passive learning**

Ministry officials and English educational supervisors who were interviewed, believed that teachers need to adapt their teaching to more learner-centred approaches. From their perspective, teachers continue to use traditional teaching approaches. For example, both Ministry officials in this research stated that teachers continued to impart knowledge to learners, with learners taking on a passive role. Both heads of foreign language departments

in the interviews supported this view and commented that practice was often teacher-dominated. Similarly, both English educational supervisors agreed that teachers tend to use teacher-centred approaches in their classes, claiming that teachers direct learners' learning and emphasise the GTM. While only a small number of the participants talked explicitly about using teacher-centred approaches themselves, they stated that a number of other teachers still used teacher-centred approaches. In terms of the participants who did talk explicitly about using teacher-centred approaches, they viewed teachers as knowledge sources to transmit knowledge to learners, plan, monitor and give the right answers. From their perspective, students did not take responsibility in their learning. They still learned passively and complied with teachers as they expected teachers to impart knowledge to them. The data from all student focus groups also presented a strong picture of teacher-centred practices. For example, the data revealed that many teachers asked students to drill a prepared dialogue. Students were also asked to read a passage out loud after teachers, and then looked up the meaning of words to translate paragraphs before answering questions from the passage. Sometimes, teachers translated the passage for students.

While many teachers did not explicitly state that they used teacher-centred approaches, they also did not exemplify use of learner-centred practices. For example, the overwhelming majority of questionnaire respondents did not mention the CLT, which is considered to be a learner-centred approach within language teaching.

As presented in section 4.5, all participant types at small and extra-large schools ranked a limited understanding of the principles of learner centred approaches as a significant impeding factor in their implementation. In addition to this, the participants at small schools and extra-large schools ranked the use of traditional approaches like teacher-centred approaches within the top five impeding factors to the implementation of learner-centred approaches in the classroom. The lack of understanding of the principles underlying learner-centred approaches may hinder teachers from using them in their teaching practice. For this reason, it appears teachers still control classroom activities and that students passively learn by complying with teachers' instructions.

As described in sections 4.2.1.2 and 4.3.1.5, the participants viewed that a wide range of teaching methodologies should be utilised to facilitate students' learning. However, this contradicts what participants discussed when they talked about their practice where little evidence of variety in teaching methods was seen. This finding aligns with past research that teacher-centred approaches still dominate in non-western countries which have relatively recently introduced policies to promote learner-centred approaches (Abahussain, 2016; Aliusta, 2014; Aliusta & Özer, 2017; Mokoginta, 2013; Vanichakorn, 2003). For example, Vanichakorn (2003) investigated four Thai teachers who were trained to use constructivist-based skills and strategies in their classes. In Vanichakorn's (2003) study, despite receiving training, the teaching of three out of four teachers seemed to reflect a more traditional approach. One of the teachers relied on the textbook, controlled the class, decided what learners read and led the discussions. Aliusta (2014) studied 309 teachers teaching practice in 11 high schools across North Cyprus and found that even though a learner-centred approach has been adopted in high schools since 2005, traditional approaches still dominate. Abahussain (2016) also examined the implementation of the CLT in Saudi Arabia with 21 interviewees (12 English language state school teachers, five educational supervisors and four university lecturers), and 45 questionnaire respondents (English language state school teachers). He reported that traditional teaching methods were prevalent.

### **5.2.2 The role of teachers**

Contradictions were evident between the participants' understanding and their implementation of learner-centred approaches. The data showed that while a high proportion of questionnaire respondents and all interviewees viewed that they were facilitators, when they talked about the implementation of learner-centred approaches, only approximately half of the questionnaire respondents talked about teachers being facilitators. However, these participants did not expand on their responses and offered little evidence to suggest that they understood what this really means within learner-centred approaches. Expanding on the comments expressed above, as stated in section 5.2.1, both Ministry officials and educational supervisors viewed that teachers were still using teacher-centred approaches, and emphasised the need for teachers to adapt their role in line with expectations of learner-centred approaches. From the perception of officials, teachers did not know how to facilitate learning

in accordance with learner-centred pedagogy. This point was also acknowledged by some teachers who stated that to adapt from a teacher-centred approach to a learner-centred approach, teachers need to become guides or advisors to assist students' learning. As outlined in the NEA 1999, teachers are required to change, from their traditional roles of imparting knowledge, to facilitating the learning process.

Within a learner-centred approach, teachers are facilitators or guides to encourage and support learners' learning rather than knowledge transmitters (Brown, 2008; Jony, 2016; Larasati, 2018; McCombs & Vakili, 2005; Nunan, 2013). For example, Larasati (2018) stated that teachers are facilitators and that individual learners are the centre of learning. Jony (2016) also stated that the teacher's role is to support learners in their learning and to encourage individual learning. With the support of their teachers, learners develop autonomy and can find answers on their own (Brown, 2008). However, the participants in the current study did not explain further how they facilitated students' learning in the classroom. Teachers simply said that they supported students in learning by giving students advice and assisting them in solving problems in their learning. This suggests that they may have limited understanding of learner-centred approaches, which prevents them from undertaking a more facilitative role in their teaching practice.

### **5.2.3 Students' levels of English language proficiency**

Several teachers expressed concerns over students' levels of English language proficiency and the impact of this on their ability to take charge of their own learning. The current study found students' low levels of English proficiency as a significant factor impeding teachers' implementation of learner-centred approaches. For example, one teacher reasoned that, if learners had a low level of English proficiency, the teacher could not take on the role of facilitator, as they needed to have a more dominant role in teaching. The teachers believed students needed teachers to transmit knowledge to them. Yet it appears that some teachers changed from a more didactic approach to take on the role of guide with higher proficiency learners.

This perspective has been seen in other studies which have commented that not all learners are ready to control their own learning in a learner-centred pedagogy, or that students' low English proficiency prevented teachers from implementing learner-centred approaches (e.g., Aliusta & Özer, 2017; Ghaicha & Mezouari, 2018; Prapaisit de Segovia & Hardison, 2008; Soysal & Radmard, 2017; Zohrabi et al., 2012). For example, teachers found that working in pairs and group works were ineffective for student interaction and collaboration, due to students' poor English proficiency (Aliusta & Özer, 2017; Ghaicha & Mezouari, 2018). Ghaicha and Mezouari (2018) further explained that teachers found students' low English proficiency made a learner-centred approach impractical because students needed to have a good level of English proficiency to share their ideas while working together in groups. Teachers thus imparted content, structure and vocabulary to students as they believed that teacher-centred teaching could better enhance students' English proficiency.

The reported low level of English proficiency that students have may relate to other factors. For example, in the factors that support teachers in implementing learner-centred approaches, the English proficiency of teachers was ranked as an important factor both within small and extra-large schools. Related to this, participants in both small and extra-large schools considered that increased opportunities for students to use English would support the implementation of learner-centred approaches. This aspect was commented on by both Ministry officials who emphasised the importance of opportunities for students to use English. However, the interview findings of this study show that Thai is commonly used in English language classes, something confirmed by all six student focus groups who commented that teachers typically used Thai language as a medium of instruction in teaching English in class. The focus group data further indicates that teachers use English only for some common classroom expressions and in leading students to read a passage. This view from student participants aligns with previous research which found that Thai was the main language used in English classes (Khamkhien, 2010; Naruemon, 2013; Nonkukhetkhong et al., 2006; Noom-ura, 2013). In learner-centred approaches, students are required to actively engage in tasks, discuss and share ideas with their peers to complete tasks, build up their own knowledge and improve their English proficiency. The use of Thai in the classroom thus limits the opportunities for students to use English. This can become a negative spiral with

students lacking the confidence to use English due to the limited opportunities they have; resulting in a lack of, or slow, improvement in their level of English proficiency.

#### **5.2.4 The role of learners**

The questionnaire data indicated that a small number of respondents perceived that learners should take responsibility for their own learning by having teachers support their learning, as part of their understanding of learner-centred approaches. Similarly, in terms of implementing learner-centred approaches, very few participants stated that learners actively learned to seek knowledge, and teachers gave advice to support learners to learn. Thus, only a small number of participants in this study commented that students actively learned to seek knowledge on their own by having teachers to supervise and scaffold their learning. This perception, held by a minority of participants, aligns with other studies that learners should take charge and responsibility of their own learning within a learner-centred approach (Al-Zu'be, 2013; Jacobs & Farrell, 2001; Loh & Teo, 2017; Schiller, 2009; Wohlfarth et al., 2008). Research suggests that teachers should gradually give students choices and control to scaffold them to allow them to make decisions about their learning (Bansberg, 2003; Dörnyei, 2001; Nunan, 2013; Thamraksa, 2003). The reason behind this thinking is that when students have opportunities to decide what to learn, they will feel that they are an active part of the learning process and they can develop towards becoming independent learners. It is also seen as important that learners are aware of their role to construct their own knowledge (Thamraksa, 2003; Van Dang, 2006). Thus, they have to put effort into seeking knowledge (Barman, 2013). Brown (2008) expands on this point, stating that learners also need to take on the additional role of learning designers and knowledge producers in a learner-centred approach. To do this, teachers share classroom control with students by giving them more choices to decide about what, how and when to learn.

Only a very small numbers of teachers discussed learner autonomy as part of their understanding of learner-centred approaches, and an even smaller number actually incorporated this into their teaching. The student focus group data further supports this finding as students did not talk about sharing responsibility with teachers and taking charge in their own learning. The data from all student focus groups revealed that students complied

with teachers' instructions and simply followed what teachers taught from the textbooks. This demonstrates that students have limited awareness and experience of autonomous learning within these classes. Teachers in the Jacobs and Farrell (2001) study felt that it was difficult for students to make their own choices to learn on their own, and thus tended to take on a more traditional role where they transmit knowledge to students. It is likely that as well as having a limited understanding of learner-centred approaches, teachers also lack the knowledge of how to implement them in their teaching practice.

### **5.2.5 Use of learning tasks and resources**

Although the data showed that all questionnaire respondents claimed that they utilised a variety of teaching and learning tasks and resources, only a few teaching and learning tasks and resources were actually utilised in the implementation of learner-centred approaches. There are two aspects to be considered here; provision, and use of resources.

With regard to provision of resources, the data indicated that small schools faced difficulties in obtaining resources to support classroom instruction to motivate students to learn. These findings are consistent with previous research in this context which reported that limited resources at schools impact on the implementation of learner-centred approaches (Cheewakaroon, 2011; Ghaicha & Mezouari, 2017; Manqele, 2017; Nonkukhetkhong et al., 2006; O'Sullivan, 2004), because where teachers have limited resources, they rely more heavily on textbooks to support their teaching practice (Diniah, 2013; Noom-ura, 2013; Padermprach, 2017; Vanichakorn, 2003).

In terms of use of resources, not all of the teaching and learning tasks and resources discussed by the participants in this study were well-suited to learner-centred teaching. According to questionnaire data, the most common source of tasks and learning resources were textbooks and worksheets. The prevalent use of these strategies is more indicative of teacher-centred rather than learner-centred approaches.

The student focus group data supported the questionnaire findings, where all six focus groups stated that the range of tasks and resources was restricted to textbooks and worksheets,

reading passages, and dialogues. Students just followed the content in the textbooks while teachers were teaching. Some awareness of this was shown in the interviews with most teachers stating that they relied on textbooks due to having a limited range of teaching and learning tasks and resources.

Similarly, an inadequate range of teaching and learning resources was considered a significant impediment to the implementation of learner-centred approaches in small schools, while having an adequate range of teaching and learning resources was seen as the most, or second most, important factor which would support teachers in implementing learner-centred approaches across both small and extra-large schools.

While limited provision of resources may be one factor, the reliance on textbooks could suggest another issue - that teachers may have limited knowledge and skills about how to use resources in implementing learner-centred approaches. The data revealed that very few questionnaire respondents and less than half of the interviewees discussed adapting learning tasks and materials from textbooks. Additionally, no teachers talked about creating their own textbooks to use in their teaching. Insufficient depth of content or pedagogical content knowledge may be one reason why teachers continue to rely on these published textbooks, despite some acknowledgement of the weaknesses of the textbooks used by participants in this study. For example, some participants provided supplementary sheets to support the textbook tasks due to perceived deficiencies or gaps in the teaching and learning activities contained with textbooks. More than half of the respondents and all interviewees also used worksheets. However, the supplementary sheets and worksheets typically contained closed response questions for learners to work through in a passive manner and thus this practice did not appear to exemplify learner-centred approaches.

A reliance on textbooks has been criticised by Padermprach (2017) who, in his study, concluded that this resulted in insufficient knowledge and knowledge that was not tailored to students' levels and their needs. If textbooks are to be relied on, Diniah (2013) found teacher adapted tasks and materials aligned to students' needs were more effective than relying on

the original textbook tasks. However, the current study revealed that few teachers made such adaptations.

Another example of a limited variety in teaching tasks and resources is the minimal use of technology to support student learning. The majority of the participants stated that they utilised technology devices to facilitate learning. However, they did not expand further on how they used technology in their pedagogical practices. In contrast to these views, as described in section 4.3.1.3, the data from one student focus group at an extra-large school showed that while classrooms contained digital equipment, it was rarely used by teachers. This seems to indicate that some teachers do have access to resources, but that they are not making use of them in their teaching. The data from four student focus groups also revealed that they typically studied in classrooms without access to technology support. Thus, there seems to be variability in the provision of technology resources across schools.

This contradiction in the reported use of technology between teachers and students might be related to their differing perspectives. For example, from teachers' perspectives, where available, they might use technology devices such as a computer or a projector as a means to present the content to students. However, from students' perspectives, they might feel that they did not have the opportunity themselves to use technology as part of their learning. There was some evidence in the data that this does happen; however, this practice was not widespread. For example, some students said that the internet was important for them in searching for more information, such as the meaning of words or further explanation of the content. However, overall there appears to be a lack of use of technology to support the development of higher level thinking skills such as critical thinking, which is considered important in learner-centred learning. For some participants, provision of technological resources could be an issue. Similarly Ghaicha and Mezouari (2017) found that teachers could not implement learner-centred activities properly due to the lack of having an internet connection. For other participants in this study, the use of technology devices aligns with the findings of Thamraksa (2003), who stated that many teachers lack technology training and technical support. Therefore, they do not have sufficient skills to integrate technology in their teaching practices.

As detailed above, the questionnaire respondents and interviewees at small schools considered an inadequate range of teaching and learning resources as a significant impediment to the implementation of learner-centred approaches, while having an adequate range of teaching and learning resources was seen by participants in both small and extra-large schools as the most or second most important factor which would support teachers in implementing learner-centred approaches. This suggests that while having adequate resources is an issue for both school types, provision and use is a more serious issue for teachers at small schools.

### **5.2.6 Engaging students to learn**

Learner engagement was the most frequently discussed aspect by participants, when talking about their understanding of learner-centred approaches, with over half of the questionnaire respondents mentioning it. However, a much lower proportion of respondents emphasised learner engagement in tasks in discussing their implementation of learner-centred approaches. Additionally, when discussing engagement, it was found that participants were focused on learner participation in tasks, rather than active learner engagement. For example, students' raising their hands to answer questions was viewed as participation in classroom activities. The data from all student focus groups also showed that teachers invited students to answer questions from worksheets by randomly asking them to answer questions in class. Similarly, students also participated in activities such as filling in the right words on a worksheet and completing sentences on the board.

These above practices suggest that teachers simply count students' behavioural participation as engagement; rather than fostering attentive engagement and thus that they have only a superficial understanding of engagement. According to Weimer (2013), teachers need to concentrate on what learners are learning and directly engage them to generate their own examples, ask questions, solve problems, and summarise content with their classmates. While learning, students can show their engagement through their participation to build up their skills to collaborate with others and self-regulate to achieve higher levels of engagement (Cornelius-White & Harbaugh, 2010). A deeper sense of learner engagement would also have teachers attending to behavioural, affective and cognitive engagement. Tinio (2009 cited in

Killen, 2016) explains that the behavioural aspect includes concentration, attention, persistence and contribution to discussions. The affective aspect comprises the relationship between students and teachers, as well as classmates, and a range of learning and school concerns. The cognitive aspect involves students' self-motivation and learning attempts. These aspects were not evidenced in the findings of this study, suggesting that engagement is seen from only from the perspective of behavioural participation in teaching and learning activities.

### **5.2.7 Group learning**

The vast majority of questionnaire respondents reported that they used small group activities for students to share ideas and to work collaboratively, when implementing learner-centred approaches. This finding seems to align well with a learner-centred paradigm where learners learn collaboratively (Ghaicha & Mezouari, 2018; Huba & Freed, 2000), to develop their cooperative skills (Schunk, 2012). Collaboration is about learners working together and acknowledging the contributions and abilities of other members to the learning of the group (Panitz, 1999). In terms of cooperative learning, Killen (2016) defines it as learners' learning in small groups and helping individual group members to jointly accomplish learning goals. The belief is that students learn more when they work collaboratively in small groups (Killen, 2016). Additionally, their engagement is reported to increase through working in groups, and from increased awareness of the importance of their involvement in the learning process (Van Dang, 2006). Students can also learn from one another's strengths and weaknesses through collaborative learning (Cornelius-White & Harbaugh, 2010). Working collaboratively in groups can support a learner-centred approach, as learners have more opportunity to take responsibility for their own learning (Panitz, 1999). In group activities, learners are able to see the value of individual differences in learning abilities and background experiences (Aronson, 2000). The finding of the current study demonstrates that these teachers do have some understanding of learner-centred approaches, and contrasts with that of Jony (2016) who studied 100 teachers from 20 schools in Bangladesh perceptions on learner-centred teaching and found that group work was rarely used.

In terms of the formation of groups, the data signified that some teachers tried to ensure students with varying levels of English proficiency worked together. This is in line with Kirkpatrick and Jianrattanapong (2010) who conducted interviews with eight teachers and had 378 questionnaire responses from students in nine leading high schools in Bangkok, Thailand, and found that teachers combined students with different proficiency levels and encouraged students with higher levels of English proficiency to assist those with lower levels of English proficiency. Although some teachers in the current study did have students of different ability levels working together in groups, and may perceive this to be collaborative learning, in reality this approach was not always learner-centred, as generally students simply helped one another to complete individual learning tasks. For example, students of different proficiency levels worked in groups to study the same content and to help one another complete closed-ended questions in their worksheets. While, as reported in section 4.3.1.1, teachers perceive that students preferred to learn through group activities, in reality the practices described do not fully exemplify a collaborative learning approach where it is expected that learners interact, share ideas for solutions to a common problem and take charge of learning as a group. As Schunk (2012) states, the tasks should be designed so that members can work together to accomplish task components, and tasks are not simply completed by a more competent group member.

These perspectives of teachers also contrast with students' reported experiences where in four of the six student focus groups, it was found that group composition was typically in accordance to seating location. This sort of grouping suggests that teachers prioritised convenience over use of collaborative group strategies to encourage learning. While teachers might believe that organising students to work in groups is cooperative learning, the formation of groups discussed by teachers in this study does not appear to support a cooperative learning approach. Simply having learners work together in groups to complete learning tasks is not on its own sufficient. If group work is not implemented effectively, learners may not actively engage in activities to achieve their learning. While in this example, students were working in a group, there was no collaboration, as learners simply rehearsed their part of the dialogue provided and recited it in class. This mirrors an example from a small school where the content was divided up for each member of the group to present in

class. Each member in the group was allocated content and had responsibility for presenting their part in class in both Thai and English. One student focus group at an extra-large school confirmed this and commented that this was a frequent activity. The missing component, from a cooperative learning perspective, is interaction with other students during the preparation stage to co-construct the output and to deepen individual and group understanding before presenting the task to the remainder of the class.

As Al-Zu'be (2013) stated, learners are information sources and they can learn through interactive discussions with one another. This type of learning encourages students to socially interact and share ideas to build up their own knowledge. Furthermore, learners are expected to be more active and responsible to make choices in their own learning (Bansberg, 2003; Dörnyei, 2001; McCombs & Vakili, 2005; Naruemon, 2013; Van Dang, 2006). For example, Vietnamese students in Van Dang's (2006) study stated that they worked in pairs and small groups and they were happy that they could decide their own topics and use different resources to support their learning. When students are provided with choices, they learn to lead their own learning and support one another to learn. Teachers need to gradually share responsibility with students in the learning process to enable them to take control of their own learning (Dörnyei, 2001; Thamraksa, 2003). Scaffolded change management and modelling about these new ways of learning are needed, however, to assist students to be active learners.

The findings of this study accord with those of Boo et al. (2001) and Naruemon (2013) who argued that the use of pair work or group work does not mean that a learner-centred approach is used, because students working together with limited interaction is not cooperative learning. Johnson and Johnson (2009) stated that in cooperative learning, group members must have face-to-face interaction and build trust to improve group interactions and help one another to learn. Johnson and Johnson (1994, cited in Killen, 2016) also stated that group members have to take responsibility and accountability for individual member's success. They need to show their understanding of the task and help one another to learn through asking questions for effective interaction. In addition, it depends on the type of learning tasks that teachers give to students. The nature of the tasks for group learning should be more open-

ended tasks that require students to work interdependently, rather than tasks that can be completed by individuals, such as the dominant use of textbooks, worksheets and supplementary sheets reported in this study.

### **5.2.8 Lack of student interaction**

As outlined in section 5.2.7, while a large number of participants stated that group work was utilised in their teaching practice, and more than half of the questionnaire respondents stated that students preferred to learn through group activities, worksheets and textbooks were widely used (see also Section 5.2.5). More than half of questionnaire respondents and all interviewees stated that they used worksheets for students to work individually to practise and check their understanding. Furthermore, all six student focus groups confirmed that they did individual worksheets in a typical class. On completion, they would typically send them to their teacher for marking.

Use of worksheets for individual student work is likely to limit the time that students have for interactions and to share ideas and co-construct language with one another through the completion of a shared learning task. A further contradiction is seen when asked about the most important English skill within a learner-centred approach. For example, questionnaire respondents viewed listening and speaking as the two most significant skills. However, teachers indicated that in reality they focused mostly on reading, writing, followed by listening and speaking. This finding is in line with Nonkukhetkhong et al. (2006) who found that teachers focused more on reading and writing than listening and speaking within English language classes in Thailand, evidence of individual, rather than interactive pair/group learning.

In general, in secondary schools in Khon Kaen, there are two English courses which are taken by all students in each grade. These include a fundamental English course and an additional course. The fundamental English course incorporates listening, speaking, reading and writing skills. The additional course focuses mostly on the development of listening and speaking skills. It is common for Thai teachers to have responsibility for the fundamental English course. Thai teachers are expected to teach all English skills. Often, depending on

availability, the teaching of listening and speaking skills in the additional course is undertaken by native speakers. This situation may contribute to this finding. While Thai teachers are expected to teach all language skills, where there is the availability of a native speaker, Thai teachers may feel that this relieves them of the need to place much focus on teaching listening and speaking skills. For some teachers this may bring about a sense of relief, if they have concerns about their own levels of English language proficiency. This aligns with the ranking data where teachers saw increasing the opportunities for students to use English and improving the level of teachers' English language proficiency as two of the most important factors that would support their implementation of learner-centred approaches. While the NEA 1999 puts the emphasis on teachers' implementation of learner-centred approach policy in the classrooms, in this study it was found that Thai English teachers focus on the traditional skills of reading and writing in their actual practice. This means that there is a lack of the integration of all English skills in types of learning tasks, particularly listening and speaking skills in the classroom teaching and learning. This limits the potential for teachers to implement learner-centred approaches within their classroom, since listening and speaking skills are required for students to exchange information and discuss ideas with their classmates.

These findings also support the questionnaire data where only a small number of respondents said that they used the CLT in their teaching to improve students' English skills for communicative language use. As Kumaravadivelu (2006) notes the CLT is a learner-centred approach, since it provides opportunities for learners to practice communicative activities in the target language. Nunan (1988) further explained that the underlying principle of communicative approaches is for learners to improve their own ability by using language in real-world tasks through communicative interaction. As Kumaravadivelu (2006) discusses, in the CLT, authentic language is used to build students' fluency to communicate in real world contexts. In this study, despite the fact that some participants stated that the CLT was used, much of what was discussed appears to have a teacher-led, rather than communicative orientation. For example, as mentioned earlier in section 5.2.1, drilling dialogues tends to be more teacher-oriented, which prevents students from using language for interactive communication in real contexts. This aligns with the fact outlined above that the majority of

questionnaire respondents did not talk about using CLT. This scenario illustrates how on the surface the opportunity to practise dialogues can be perceived as communicative and supportive of a learner-centred approach, but the way this is applied in the classroom actually becomes a teacher-centred approach, as the emphasis was on memorising and drilling short model dialogues. This kind of practice does not support students in interacting with one another in authentic situations.

These findings are consistent with those of Nonkukhetkong et al. (2006), Prapaisit de Segovia and Hardison (2008), and Razmjoo and Riazi (2006) who found that teachers make limited use of communicative activities in classes. For example, Prapaisit de Segovia and Hardison (2008) stated that there was limited communicative interaction in classes between the teacher and students or between students. Findings from these studies show that teachers corrected students' pronunciation when students repeated words after them (Prapaisit de Segovia & Hardison, 2008; Razmjoo & Riazi, 2006). Teachers also asked students to read model dialogues from their textbooks or handouts and present the dialogue in class (Nonkukhetkong et al., 2006). Additionally, Abahussain (2016) investigated the implementation of CLT with Saudi Arabian teachers and found that they had some misconceptions of CLT aspects, which resulted in the use of tasks that were not really communicative in nature, and reduced their confidence in adopting CLT in their teaching practice. The findings presented above for the current study, imply that teachers lack understanding of the underlying concepts of CLT, resulting in the restricted use of communicative activities in their implementation, and thus limited opportunities for students to use the language. Hence, more support such as additional pedagogical training is needed to enable teachers to effectively promote interactive communication in classrooms, alongside opportunities for teachers to improve their own levels of English language proficiency. These measures may help to provide teachers with more confidence in teaching listening and speaking, rather than seeing this as something that is the responsibility of native English speaking teachers.

### **5.2.9 Use of assessment results**

From the Ministry officials' perspectives, individual teachers should use a range of summative and formative assessments to capture students' different learning outcomes. A

high number of participants discussed using a range of methods to assess student learning outcomes in implementing learner-centred approaches, e.g. learning behaviour observation, interviews or tests to grade students' learning outcomes. Assessment results from a range of measures help to inform teachers about decisions on how to enhance learner progress and achievement (Harlen, 2007; Lamprianou & Athanasou, 2009; McMillan, 2007). These measures include learning behaviour observation, learning conversations, structured interview questions, rubrics, portfolios, performance, tests, and giving feedback (Cooper, 1997; Huba & Freed, 2000; MoE, New Zealand, 2018; Nitko & Brookhart, 2011; Weimer, 2013).

However, in this study it was found that tests were the most commonly used type of assessment. The majority of participants mentioned frequent use of tests when discussing implementation of learner-centred approaches. This may be because the Thai educational system predominantly uses exam-based assessment. Therefore, teachers tend to place more emphasis on student achievement, rather than on more formative aspects of teaching and learning. Other participants talked simply about having unit tests, midterm and final exams. The student focus groups support this finding, with all six focus groups discussing high and regular use of tests, such as tests at the end of each learning unit as well as midterm and final exams. While tests are commonly used, participants did not comment on using the results to provide students with feedback to improve their learning. This suggests that they may not know how to give constructive feedback to support student learning, or they do not see its importance as part of the learning process. As will be discussed in section 5.4.3, having large class sizes may impede teachers in providing individual students with detailed feedback on their learning. The findings in this study align with previous studies, which have reported that tests are the most widely used assessment tool in assessing learners (e.g., Black & William, 2005; Darasawang, 2007; Kirkpatrick & Jianrattanapong, 2010; Lea et al., 2003; Zohrabi et al., 2012).

Participants in the current study rarely used self-assessment and peer assessment to empower learners in a learner-centred approach. For example, only a small number of participants talked about the need for students to be involved in assessing their learning to identify their

strengths and weaknesses and to improve their learning as part of their understanding of learner-centred approaches. In terms of implementation, numbers were even lower with only a few participants mentioning involving students in assessment of their learning. Thus, it appears that self-assessment and peer-assessment are not widely considered by teachers, and are even less commonly used in classrooms. Students do not have much of a role in assessing their own learning and lack the opportunity to develop their assessment skills. This practice goes against what is recommended in the literature on learner-centred approaches, e.g. Al-Zu'be (2013) states that self-assessment and peer assessment help to diagnose learning needs and to promote learning among students. One of the roles of learners is to assess their own learning and their peers' performance (Weimer, 2013). Self-assessment, where learners are involved in setting their learning goals can also enhance learner motivation and support learners in becoming more self-directed and autonomous learners (APA Work Group of the Board of Educational Affairs, 1997; Cooper, 1997; Lea et al., 2003; McCombs & Miller, 2007). Where these practices are promoted, learners are able to take more responsibility and control of their own learning rather than depend on teachers (Lea et al., 2003), thus helping them to become more active and independent learners (Cooper, 1997). Teachers' limited use of self-assessment and peer-assessment to promote students' self-regulated learning in this study may be because teachers have insufficient knowledge and understanding of appropriate assessment methods within learner-centred approaches. Factors such as large class sizes, the exam-based system in Thailand, as well as other features of the Thai culture may impact on the extent to which teachers are able to, and see it as desirable, to involve students in assessing their own and their peers' learning. These aspects will be discussed further in section 5.4.

In terms of authentic assessment, which is used to assess application of knowledge and skills in real world situations, the majority of the participants who mentioned this simply stated that authentic assessment should be used, or is used, without expanding further. Again a higher proportion of questionnaire respondents discussed this as part of their understanding of learner-centred approaches than they did in relation to their implementation of. Authentic assessment is considered important within learner-centred approaches as authentic tasks are argued to be more directly relevant, and more meaningful, to learners' lives, and thus better support their learning (Nitko & Brookhart, 2011). Authentic assessment in teaching directly

assesses learners' ability to perform real world tasks (McMillan, 2007) and prepares learners to solve problems and learn from their errors for better understanding (Huba & Freed, 2000). As previously discussed in section 5.2.5, worksheets and textbooks were the most frequently used learning tasks. Hence, there was not much evidence in the participant responses of authentic learning tasks being used in practice. This suggests that teachers may not have a very advanced understanding of what authentic assessment means, and thus do not really use it in their teaching practice.

#### **5.2.10 Summary of the implementation of learner-centred approaches**

The evidence indicates that teachers have a relatively limited understanding of learner-centred approaches, and that their implementation is more reflective of teacher-centred approaches. While the majority of the participants believed that they adopted a facilitative role in the classroom, in practice teachers tended to perform a more didactic role, relying on teacher-centred approaches with students as passive learners. In terms of the use of teaching methods, only a very small number of teachers mentioned using the CLT, with some evidence of reliance on more traditional teacher-centred approaches like the GTM to transmit knowledge to students. This indicates that students have few opportunities to use English language for communication, which aligns with the student focus group data and with the finding that while listening and speaking were viewed as important, reading and writing tended to dominate classroom practice. Additional support for this finding comes from the ranking data where increased opportunities for students to use English, and improved levels of the English language proficiency of teachers were viewed as important factors that would better support the implementation of learner-centred approaches.

Furthermore, while the majority of teachers stated that they use a wide range of teaching and learning tasks and resources, in reality there appeared to be little variety, with heavy reliance on textbooks and worksheets. Despite the high number of teachers who mentioned that they organised group activities, there was little evidence that students were given tasks that required interaction between them to complete the task. Learning tasks were largely restricted to individual worksheets or drilling dialogues. As also discussed, despite a large number of teachers stating that they use of a range of assessments, tests were the most frequently used

assessment type. Self-assessment was rarely used, and peer assessment did not appear to be used at all to assess students' learning. However, teachers widely tended to use informal observation as a formative assessment in their classroom teaching practice.

### **5.3 Key aspects impacting teachers' implementation of learner-centred approaches**

This section presents two key aspects that reveal teachers' limited implementation of learner-centred approaches. These include misconceptions of learner-centred approach principles and lack of professional development and learning.

#### **5.3.1 Misconceptions of learner-centred approach principles**

The participants tended to have misconceptions of the principles of learner-centred approaches. Teachers may view that when they assist students to learn, such as by completing worksheets, they facilitate students to learn in a learner-centred way. However, this indicates their misconception of their role within learner-centred approaches. As discussed in section 5.2.7, teachers may perceive that simply organising students to learn in groups is a cooperative learning. Instead, small groups should support students to take responsibility in both their own learning and other group members' learning. Further evidence that points to possible misconceptions about learner-centred approaches can be seen in the authoritative role taken by teachers in controlling classes and telling students what to do, such as drilling prepared dialogues and translating reading passages (see Section 5.2.1). Teachers also tend to have fallacies on learner engagement (see Section 5.2.6). They believe that students' participation in learning activities in classes, such as answering questions, shows that students are engaged in their learning. This practice demonstrates superficial participation of students in their learning. These findings about teachers' misconceptions in implementing learner-centred approaches align with previous studies in the Thai context. For example, Naruemon (2013) found that Thai pre-service teachers had different levels of understanding, and often a superficial level of understanding, of the underlying principles of learner-centred approaches and their implementation. She also found that teachers had some misconceptions and that there was limited application of learner-centred approaches in teachers' pedagogical practices. Similarly, teachers perceived that students are actively involved in a learner-

centred teaching when students answer teachers' questions and present a dialogue with their pairs in class. Thamraksa (2003) also reports evidence that teachers misinterpret the underlying concepts of learner-centred approaches. In particular she noted that some teachers perceive that learner-centred approaches diminish their role and that they become less important in class. She further states that numerous teachers doubt whether this approach could help improve student learning, and that they are unsure how to implement it. Thus, to address this, it is important to support teachers to gain a deeper understanding about learner-centred concepts and how to utilise them in the classroom (Rasyidah, 2017).

### **5.3.2 Lack of professional development and learning**

Related to their levels of understanding about learner-centred approaches, some teachers commented that they have not received sufficient training. The interview data showed that schools did support teachers by providing professional development to improve their teaching practices, but that not all teachers were able to join due to their teaching commitments. Thus, some teachers as representatives were assigned to take part in the training and to cascade the information to other teachers after the training. Teachers felt that this did not work well, as hard copies of training information were simply distributed to other teachers, with no opportunity for teachers who did not attend the training sessions to participate and engage in discussions about learner-centred approaches.

Further support and training may help teachers to develop a better understanding of learner-centred concepts and to make more use of communicative activities in their class. Hence, training focused on contemporary English teaching methods could extend teachers' knowledge in applying learner-centred pedagogies in their teaching practice. Additionally, support for teachers to improve their levels of English language proficiency may also lead to increased levels of confidence to use English more regularly in the classroom. The importance of training, and the view from teachers that they lack sufficient training, accords with the views of Nonkukhetkhong et al. (2006) who argued that insufficient training impacts on teachers' ability to apply the learner-centred teaching in their classrooms. This perspective is in line with other studies that teachers need training support or workshops to shift from

teacher-centred concepts to implement learner-centred principles in their classroom practices (Altinyelken, 2011; Yilmaz, 2009).

### **5.3.3 Implications of teachers' misunderstanding about learner-centred approaches and implementation**

Whether teachers correctly understand learner-centred approaches and their implementation is an important issue because, through the NEA 1999, Thailand has mandated education reforms to improve student levels of English language proficiency for effective communication. A key factor in these educational reforms is the adoption of learner-centred approaches (ONEC, 2000). The BECC 2008 also outlined and encouraged the use of learner-centred approaches across all subject areas. One of the main aims is to use English for communication (MoE, 2008). It has been two decades since the NEA 1999 was mandated. However, as discussed, it appears that learner-centred approaches are not widely used in the Thai classrooms studied as part of this research. Teachers do not appear to have a clear understanding as to what learner-centred approaches are, and what constitutes learner-centred practices. Furthermore, the way the policy is implemented with the use of native speakers does not support teachers in developing their own levels of English language proficiency or in implementing learner-centred approaches. As stated, Thai teachers commonly teach the fundamental English course, which is supposed to encompass listening, speaking, reading and writing skills. However, at public secondary schools where there is the availability of native speakers, the native speakers tend to take responsibility for teaching listening and speaking skills focusing on English for communication, with Thai teachers putting more emphasis on reading and writing skills. This was evidenced in this study, where although teachers felt that listening and speaking were more important, reading and writing dominated their teaching practice. It can be concluded from the current study that if Thailand strives for effective implementation of learner-centred approaches, teachers need to be well-trained through intensive professional development and learning, comprising professional reading, discussions, expert demonstrations, and sustained periods of supportive coaching and feedback for teachers to adjust their teaching practice accordingly (Poskitt, 2014).

## **5.4 The Thai cultural context**

This section presents considerations of the Thai cultural context that impact the implementation of a learner-centred approach. These factors include the examination-oriented system, teachers' authoritative role, large class sizes, resource constraints and misalignment of cultural values with learner-centred approaches. Each of these points is discussed in more detail as follows.

### **5.4.1 The examination-oriented system**

The findings of the current study illustrate that some principals, heads of foreign language departments and teachers focus more on achievement than learning. As noted in Watson Todd (2008), English listening and speaking skills are generally excluded from the exams in Thailand. As a result, teachers generally put more focus on reading and writing skills to prepare students for tests, and leave listening and speaking skills to native speaker teachers. Teachers might be under pressure from the school to support students to pass the exams, such as the O-NET and entrance examination. The principals, heads of a foreign language department and teachers see this as an indication that schools are providing a high quality of teaching and learning aligned with the core curriculum 2008. With the tension for students to pass the exams, and to obtain as high a score as possible, both small and extra-large secondary schools place more focus on preparing students for main content of the national exam, rather than focusing their teaching on developing communication or critical thinking skills. This suggests that teachers might feel that teacher-centred approaches are more appropriate for teaching students about the main content related to the English core curriculum that they need to know for the exam.

As outlined, teachers tended to focus more on summative assessment, such as tests, rather than using the assessment results to promote student learning. From the perspective of Ministry officials, teachers used tests to assess language knowledge, rather than language performance. The need to achieve a high score on the O-NET and the university entrance examination influences teaching and learning practice in the Thai context (Jianrattanapong, 2011). This point was also noted by Dhanasobhon (2006) who stated that preparing for the national test and the university entrance examination means that teachers put more emphasis

on tests, rather than on language skills or performance assessment. As a result there is more focus on reading and writing, and students view listening and speaking skills as less important to learn. As Islam and Bari (2012) found there were two main problems in implementing the CLT in Thai contexts: students focus primarily on their grades, rather than English proficiency, and examinations are not CLT based. In addition, Noom-ura (2013) asserted that teachers had to organise tutorial sessions to students for both school exams, and the university entrance exams.

This focus on achievement is also seen in other non-western contexts outside of Thailand, e.g., China, Indonesia, Iran and Turkey. As a consequence, Altinyelken (2011) and Maskhao (2002, cited in Nonkukhetkhong et al., 2006) reported that teachers put a greater focus on exam knowledge, such as on grammar, vocabulary and reading. Zohrabi et al. (2012) argued that Iranian principals, teachers, students and parents put a significant focus on achieving high exam scores, while in Indonesia there is also a strong focus on teaching students to pass exams (Mokoginta, 2013). Many Chinese students in Shang's (2018) study also focused on the results of assessment, rather than on the processes of acquiring and applying knowledge. Accordingly, learners place a greater focus on grades than on their learning (Weimer, 2013). The implication of this is that teachers spend more time preparing students to pass standardized tests (Kirkpatrick & Jianrattanapong, 2010; Yilmaz, 2009). This indicates that the cultural focus on high achievement affects classroom practices, and leads to teachers and students placing more focus on tests than attending to communicative skills.

As discussed above, the O-NET influences teachers in how they go about assessing students' learning. All eight interviewees commented that teachers took the O-NET into account in planning their teaching. This impacts teachers' use of learner-centred approaches as teachers focus on teaching students necessary topics for exams instead of improving their learning progress. This finding contrasts with the literature and the views of Thai ministry officials that assessments should be used for formative and summative purposes (Naruemon, 2013; ONEC, 1999). A focus on formative assessment purposes ensures learners' strengths and weaknesses inform future teaching and learning, and thereby support learners to achieve their learning goals (APA Work Group of the Board of Educational Affairs, 1997; Bansberg,

2003). It also helps learners to learn from their mistakes and know their own abilities (Huba & Freed, 2000; Van Dang, 2006).

The above discussion illustrates that there is an inherent tension between the policy promoting learner-centred approaches and a culture which places a strong emphasis on achievement and passing exams. This tension may be a factor which prevents teachers from implementing learner-centred pedagogy more fully and appropriately. This interpretation aligns with Cheewakaroon (2011) and, Pan and Block (2011) who reported that the policy to adopt learner-centred approaches and the implementation of the CLT are mismatched with an exam-based assessment. Cheewakaroon (2011) further stated that the policy was incompatible with teachers' actual practice as grammar knowledge is the main focus; rather than communication. Similarly, Pan and Block (2011) stated that the exam-oriented syllabus was inconsistent with the CLT, which aims to improve students' English for communication, as teachers have to put the priority on exams. The findings in the current study have also revealed a tension between the practice of using native speakers to focus on listening and speaking in Thai English classes, and the policy mandating the use of learner-centred approaches.

Within an exam-based culture, both students and teachers may be more inclined to focus more on the content needed to pass the exam, and on achieving high grades, rather than on learner-centred approaches and communication (Aliusta & Özer, 2017; Kirkpatrick & Ghaemi, 2011). The standardized curriculum and testing system, and grading culture, are dominant problems in implementing the learner-centred approach (Aliusta & Özer, 2017; Ghaicha & Mezouari, 2017). Ghaicha and Mezouari (2017) further explained that students were competitive and they placed importance on exams and grades. They stated that teachers had to utilise teacher-led methods as a result of the students' requirement for good examination grades. This indicates that the exam-based assessment may impede the implementation of the learner-centred approach.

#### **5.4.2 Teachers' authoritative role**

According to participants in this study, parents believe that it is the teacher's role to impart knowledge to students. When teachers organise learning tasks for students to learn on their own such as searching for knowledge and doing group work, parents may perceive that teachers are not doing their job properly. Expectations for students to pass the exams with high scores, as well as parents' perception of teachers as knowledge transmitters, may result in teachers drawing on more traditional teaching approaches, rather than as facilitators of student learning, as would be more appropriate within learner-centred approaches. Teachers thus feel pressure to impart all the information needed for the exam to students. Thai students are also respectful towards teachers. Therefore, they infrequently ask teachers questions, and show their respect to teachers who have the authority in class. This aligns with the previous studies that many teachers retained an authoritative role of a knowledge transmitter (e.g., Aliusta & Özer, 2017; Marcellino, 2015; Thamraksa, 2003). Aliusta and Özer (2017) also explained that teachers did not give students choice and control in their learning as they agreed that students needed to depend on their decisions. Students perform traditional roles in class and avoid challenging or questioning teachers due to their need to show respect to their teachers and their authority.

The findings of this study align with Loh and Teo (2017)'s view that cultures affect the way learners learn. In Thai culture, teachers are viewed as the main source of knowledge and as a role model for teaching morals to students. The hierarchy in Thai society and the education model encourage teachers to remain teacher-oriented. This has the drawback that students learn passively, receiving knowledge imparted from teachers (Thamraksa, 2003). A similar situation is found in other cultures and countries. For example, in Bangladesh, it has been argued that the culture influences the level of interaction between teachers and students because students view teachers as authoritative sources of knowledge (Chowdhury & Le Ha, 2008). Similarly, Le Ha (2008) stated that the role of teachers as facilitators also opposed their image of a knowledge imparter in Vietnam. In China, it has been found that students have to keep their opinions to themselves to avoid expressing views which oppose those of teachers. This situation means that frequently students are left on their own to consider how to solve problems in their learning. O'Sullivan (2004) argues that the Western pedagogies,

such as learner-centred approaches focusing on individuals, seem to be more appropriate within Western cultures, and are not suitable for all other cultural contexts.

Like other countries in Asia, such as China and Indonesia, Thai students pay high respect to their teachers by following their instructions. As outlined in section 5.2.1, students believe that teachers are knowledge sources who impart knowledge to them. Questioning teachers while learning may be viewed as disobeying teachers and being disrespectful to them for Thai students. The high respect that students show towards teachers could be a barrier to implementing learner-centred approaches as students are unlikely to speak out against teachers or their teaching even if they encounter issues. This is in line with Maskhao (2002, cited in Nonkukhetkhong et al., 2006) who stated that Thai students were obedient to teachers. Similarly, Mokoginta (2013) and Novera (2004) reported that Indonesian students obeyed and listened to the seniors like teachers. Shang (2018) also found that Chinese students paid high respect to teachers, who controlled the learning process, and likewise O'Sullivan (2004), that Namibian children are expected to pay respect to elders as authorities. A learner-centred approach is seen as a contradiction to respectful relationships with teachers.

Other tensions exist in the roles expected of students. For example, Thai students are generally shy and lack confidence to express their opinions or even to pronounce English words or speak English as they are afraid that they will make mistakes. The culture and nature of Thai students has been said to inhibit the implementation of learner-centred approaches (e.g., Chorrojprasert, 2005; Marcellino, 2015; Mokoginta, 2013; Stainton, 2017; Wiriyachitra, 2001). For example, Stainton (2017) found that Thai students are hesitant to speak loudly due to Thai cultural norms. Teachers may face problems in encouraging students to actively engage in learning due to their limited responses in class (Mokoginta, 2013), as it is common for students in class to learn passively and comply with teachers (Marcellino, 2015). Students' unwillingness to speak English is a common barrier in Thai classrooms (Wiriyachitra, 2001). Islam and Bari (2012) also reported that all 10 Thai teachers in their study stated a cultural conflict between the nature of the students and the nature of the CLT as one of the more important barriers in implementing the CLT in Thai contexts.

In summary, the current study contributes to research literature in identification of several cultural factors that limit the use of learner-centred approaches in Thailand: that teachers are viewed as knowledge imparters, students are respectful to teachers and shy in expressing themselves, and tensions between high expectations for achieving good results in examinations, and time required for learner-centred approaches. As a result, teachers largely remain in an authoritative, rather than a facilitative role in the classroom.

### **5.4.3 Large class sizes**

In the Thai context, it is typical to have a large number of students per class in extra-large schools. Large class sizes were ranked by questionnaire respondents as the second most important impeding factor in the implementation of learner-centred approaches. As expected, this issue was more strongly felt by teachers in extra-large schools where there tend to be approximately 40-50 students per class, compared with small schools where there are generally around 30 students per class. With large class sizes, teachers felt that they could not provide sufficient support to all students and did not have the time to respond to all student queries and questions. Large class sizes also impact on teaching and learning activities as in pair or group activities, teachers can struggle to circulate around all groups. Accordingly, teachers feel it is challenging to successfully implement learner-centred approaches at extra-large schools due to the number of students in each class.

Large class sizes may therefore lead teachers to using a teacher-centred approach. Previous studies found that large class sizes hinder teachers from implementing learner-centred approaches (e.g., Cheewakaroon, 2011; Chen, 2007; Marcellino, 2015; Noom-ura, 2013; Yilmaz, 2009). Nonkukhetkhong et al. (2006) found that a Thai school located in the city has a typical class of 65 students. Aliusta and Özer (2017) and Altinyelken (2011) also reported that a large class with 35 or 40 students hinders the use of a wide range of activities and students' active involvement in class. It is also challenging to organise group work with limited classroom space. Large class sizes can therefore reduce student interaction and collaboration in class (Ghaicha & Mezouari, 2017), and teachers struggled to support the needs of individual students in large classes (Chen, 2007). Furthermore, Dhanasobhon (2006) stated that teachers find it challenging to plan learning activities for mixed ability students in

large classes. He further explained that it is difficult for teachers to monitor students' learning, and teachers are more likely to rely on textbooks. Soysal and Radmard (2017) further reported that oversized classes affect teachers' pedagogical decisions, such as classroom management strategies and provision of adequate learning materials and technological resources. In addition, Nagaraju et al. (2013, cited in Emaliana, 2017) stated that the teacher-centred approach was appropriate for large class sizes, as teachers prepared materials and activities that were time efficient. In short, large classes appear to influence teachers' pedagogical approaches.

A small number of questionnaire respondents at extra-large schools mentioned that smaller class sizes would support the implementation of learner-centred approaches. This finding is in line with that of Ghaicha and Mezouari (2017) who suggest that the number of students per class should be decreased to enhance opportunities for students to learn collaboratively. In terms of the ideal number, Altinyelken (2011) suggests 20-25 students per class. The findings of the current study support the view that smaller class sizes could increase the likelihood of learner-centred approaches being implemented.

#### **5.4.4. Power distance**

Due to the power difference, and top-down hierarchical approach in Thailand, teachers may feel obliged to comply with instructions to implement learner-centred approaches without questioning it even though they do not fully understand how to implement them in the classroom. This suggests that some type of monitoring from those in a more senior position may be an expectation within the Thai culture. This view aligns with Hallinger and Kantamara (2000a) who stated that the high power distance in Thai culture requires compliance from those with lower status. The high power distance of the Thai culture (Cheewakaroon, 2011; Hallinger & Kantamara, 2000b) reflects a hierarchical system in which a lower status person politely accepts orders from a higher status person. High top-down decision making is still found in the Thai educational system (Hallinger et al., 2017) as well as in educational organisations in Thai society (Chalapati, 2007; Thamraksa, 2003). Nonkukhetkhong et al. (2006) stated that the NEA 1999 mandated the education reform top-

down. However, Fry and Bi (2013) reported top-down systems tended to ignore what educators actually need.

In Thai society, Thai people pay respect to their seniors. Hence in schools, younger teachers refrain from adopting pedagogical approaches that differ from senior teachers. For example, one of the four teachers in Vanichakorn's (2003) study found that experienced teachers in her department used the traditional approach in teaching such as focusing on textbooks. Despite trying to implement learner-centred pedagogies, she had to comply with those conventional teachers. Age is an important cultural factor for Thai people and junior teachers must show respect to their senior colleagues (Hallinger & Kantamara, 2000a; Naruemon, 2013; Thongthew, 2014). Interestingly, the current study found that seniority was rated as the least important factor in impeding implementation of learner-centred approaches. Similarly, the interviewees did not talk about the seniority system when asked to rank the top five impeding factors of the implementation. While at first glance this suggests that the seniority system is not a factor inhibiting teachers from implementing learner-centred approaches, this finding warrants further consideration. For example, it may be that participants are accustomed to paying respect to the seniors in Thai society, and see this as natural within their daily practice and lives. Hence, they might not realise the impact of the seniority system on their teaching practice. Although the factor was not highly rated, impacts of the seniority system could be seen in the data. For example, the interview data highlighted that one important aspect of Thai culture is keeping face and that Thai people will choose to not do things that lead them to losing face.

Thai cultural norms including “*grewng jai*” and “*sia naa*” influence Thai educational system. When Thai people oppose what they are requested to do, they still do it due to their politeness and deference (Hallinger & Kantamara, 2001). For example, heads of foreign language departments may *grewng jai* principals by accepting the need to implement learner-centred approaches in schools, despite their lack of deep understanding of the underlying learner-centred approach principles. Teachers may also *grewng jai* heads of foreign language departments or the senior teachers who use traditional teaching pedagogies by not changing their teaching methods. Similarly, students may *grewng jai* their teachers by avoiding

expressing their opposing ideas and instead comply with teachers' instruction. This shows that the Thai cultural norm that Thais keep someone's face even when they do not agree with the suggested ideas.

#### **5.4.5 A summary of cultural contexts on the learner-centred approach implementation**

The data in the current study indicates that there is a tension between the policy to implement learner-centred approaches and the Thai cultural context. While the policy focuses on learner autonomy, the expectation of stakeholders emphasises student achievement and there is a strong exam culture in Thai schools. In addition to the hierarchical structure in Thai society and the seniority system, the large class sizes which are common in extra-large schools tend to be a barrier to implementing learner-centred approaches. This suggests that there may be aspects of the cultural context which are incompatible with the current implementation of learner-centred approaches in Thai classrooms.

#### **5.4.6 Importance of cultural contexts to learner-centred approach implementation**

As previously stated in section 5.3.3, learner-centred approaches are prioritised within the NEA 1999. However, this thesis demonstrates that there are some inconsistencies between the policy and the Thai cultural context, which significantly impact the implementation of learner-centred approaches. The data indicates that the emphasis on the high power distance, the examination-oriented system and large class sizes are important barriers in implementing learner-centred approaches in Thai English classrooms.

According to Marcellino (2015), teachers believe that they are knowledge givers and students deem that they are knowledge receivers. Hence, teachers need to be aware of their facilitative role in the implementation of learner-centred approaches to empower students to become active learners. If teachers remain in their dominant role or act as a higher status than students in the hierarchical structure of Thai society, this power status impacts the role of teachers and students in learner-centred classrooms. The role of teachers in the classroom to facilitate students to become active learners who seek understanding and construct their knowledge is critical for the success of the implementation of learner-centred approaches. Furthermore, the

Thai education has an examination-oriented system. Thus, assessment practices focus on grades and tests. The implication of this is that teachers and students pay less attention to other forms of assessment and that English for communication is not prioritised in the classroom. As a result, students are not prepared to engage globally as they lack communicative skills to communicate with other people. The barrier of large class sizes in extra-large schools also affects teachers' teaching and assessment practices as teachers find it difficult to teach and to assess students' learning with a large number of students in class. These cultural barriers restrict opportunities for students to be self-regulated and questioning learners, central components of learner-centred approaches. These findings align well with other studies (e.g., Hallinger, 2010; Hallinger & Kantamara, 2000b). For example, Hallinger (2010) stated that there is a conflict between Thai cultural values and educational reforms. Hallinger and Kantamara (2000b) further stated that Thai cultural norms impact the successful implementation of educational reforms. They also suggest that the strength of Thai culture, such as the power distance limits the implementation of change in Thai society.

As such, to effectively implement learner-centred approaches in Thai classrooms, it is essential that the Thai cultural context is taken into account. For this to happen, the Thai government would need to further consider how learner-centred principles could be adapted to align more appropriately with the Thai context. Views of wider stakeholders, including teachers, need to be elicited as teachers are the ones who implement policies in the classroom. In considering how learner-centred approaches might more appropriately align with Thai culture, the roles of both teachers and learners need to be considered along with the time required for changes to occur. An ongoing issue in need of further debate and discussion is around the examination system which does not align well with learner-centred approaches. As the focus of policy is on improving communication skills, placing a greater focus on speaking and listening in the exam would better support this objective. In addition, policy-makers could consider smaller class sizes to support teachers in implementing learner-centred approaches in Thai classrooms.

## 5.5 Chapter summary

This chapter presented two key aspects that impact teachers' implementation of the learner-centred approaches. These include the dominant use of teacher-centred approaches and Thai cultural contexts.

The findings of this study indicate that teachers have misconceptions and a limited understanding of learner-centred approaches. Despite stating some learner-centred concepts when discussing their understanding; for example, teachers as facilitators, learner engagement, self-directed learning, thinking skills, motivation and authentic assessment, teachers did not expand on what these concepts were and how to implement them in learner-centred classrooms. Furthermore, it appears that when discussing their implementation of learner-centred approaches, teachers discussed their practice more generally, which was predominantly teacher-centred. To bridge the gap between participants' understanding of learner-centred approaches and their implementation of this approach in classroom teaching practice, it is recommended that teachers need further professional development, particularly in the area of effective pedagogy. The findings also highlight the need for teachers to be supported to improve their level of English language proficiency. Additionally having an adequate range of appropriate teaching and learning resources could better support teachers, particularly those in small schools. These are areas where further support is most urgently needed for teachers to effectively implement learner-centred approaches.

There were several tensions between expectations of learner-centred approaches and Thai cultural, and educational practices. Firstly, teachers resort to a teacher-centred approach due to the Thai belief system and cultural norms, such as the hierarchical society, the seniority system, and parental expectations. Secondly, the dominant exam-based system places additional pressure on teachers to prepare students for the exams, and expectations for students to obtain high scores. Thirdly, teachers felt that having a large number of students in a physically small classroom space inhibited their ability to implement learner-centred approaches.

## **CHAPTER 6**

### **CONCLUSION**

#### **6.1 Introduction**

This chapter starts by presenting a brief summary of the research conducted for this thesis, before discussing the contributions and implications of the study. Limitations of this study are then presented, followed by recommendations for future research. This chapter ends with some concluding remarks.

#### **6.2 Summary of the study**

An exploratory qualitative case study approach was adopted in this study for the purposes of exploring stakeholders' understanding of learner-centred approaches, their implementation, and the factors that support and impede successful implementation. This study gathered data from different types of educational stakeholders who are involved with educational service area 25, Khon Kaen in Thailand. These included Ministry of Education officials, English educational supervisors, chairmen of school boards, principals, heads of foreign language departments, teachers and students. Questionnaire data was obtained from participants in ten small and eight extra-large public secondary schools, while the interview data focused on one small and one extra-large school. There were a total of 117 questionnaire respondents, 16 interviewees and six student focus groups. The study addressed the following research questions which guided every step of this case study:

1. What understanding do stakeholders have about learner-centred approaches?
2. How do practitioners implement learner-centred approaches?
3. What are the factors that support and impede the implementation of learner-centred approaches?

## **6.3 Main Research Findings**

This section summarises the main findings of each of the three research questions.

### **6.3.1 Findings related to research question 1**

Questionnaire respondents provided very brief and general responses to the open-ended questions. They mentioned aspects or terms related to learner-centred approaches without providing further detail to demonstrate their understanding of the concepts. The data revealed that participants did not have a consensus on their understanding of learner-centred approaches, which was evidenced by the low percentages observed in Table 4.1. The key ideas expressed by participants also reflected a high similarity to the Thai documents related to learner-centred approaches, such as the NEA 1999 and the BECC 2008. This congruence suggests that the participants may be aware of some key terms or ideas from these same documents, but that they may not have a deep understanding about learner-centred approaches. If the participants had a more in-depth understanding of learner-centred approaches, the researcher would anticipate that they would have contributed longer and more detailed responses. Hence, this is an indicator that suggests the participants tend to have a superficial understanding of learner-centred approaches.

Further evidence can be seen for this. For example, out of all of the different aspects mentioned, the highest number of participants mentioned learner engagement as part of their understanding of learner-centred approaches, demonstrating that there was some consensus that this is an important underlying principle. However, while more than half of the participants discussed learner engagement in tasks, they mentioned only behavioural engagement in tasks, such as student participation in teaching and learning activities. Other forms of engagement, such as emotional and cognitive engagement, were not mentioned. Similarly, there were many important aspects that were not mentioned by many participants suggesting that, in general, these were not seen as important by participants. For example, instructional design and the use of technology in teaching and learning were talked about by less than half of the participants. Furthermore, while participants noted that it was important to use a range of teaching methods, teaching and learning tasks and resources, as well as a range of assessments, there was little evidence to suggest that participants understood what

these meant in practice with very few participants providing any further explanation on these aspects.

In addition, there was evidence, particularly in the interviews, that suggests that teacher-centred practices dominate. For example, there were data that indicate that teachers maintain the role of knowledge imparters rather than facilitators in their teaching practice. Some interviewees also highlighted that a number of teachers still performed their didactic role in the classroom.

### **6.3.2 Findings related to research question 2**

Participants provided much more detail when discussing their implementation of learner-centred approaches than when talking about their understanding. However, much of what was discussed was reflective of teacher rather than learner-centred practices. For example, in terms of the teaching and learning tasks and resources used, worksheets and textbooks dominated. While group work was used, the interaction among students in each group was not really collaborative. Rather, students would sit in groups and work as individuals. While teachers understood that listening and speaking were important within learner-centred approaches, reading and writing tended to dominate classroom practice because these are the main skills assessed in exams. Much of what was discussed demonstrates that teachers still teach in a didactic way. There was little evidence to suggest that teachers were facilitators of student learning. Aspects of the Thai culture which may account for this were seen in the data. For example, in Thai society teachers are seen as holders of knowledge and a reported expectation from parents was for a more didactic style of teaching.

Formative classroom assessment practices were also limited, with self- and peer-assessment rarely used. Additionally, teachers talked about giving points and rewards to motivate students to learn. These rewards tend to be extrinsic motivation, rather than intrinsic motivation for active learners. Summative tests were frequently used to assess students' learning. The data indicates that teachers were concerned about large class sizes, and the preparation that students needed to pass exams like the O-NET. This finding highlights the pervasiveness of the exam-based system that exists in Thai education.

### **6.3.3 Findings related to research question 3**

Across both school types, participants ranked other school duties and responsibilities as the most significant impeding factor, followed by a limited understanding of the principles of learner-centred approaches, large class sizes, inadequate teaching and learning resources, and the use of traditional approaches. Differences were also observed between the school types. For example, small schools highlighted a limited understanding of the principles of learner-centred approaches as the main impeding factor, whereas the extra-large schools were focused on large class sizes. This study shows that there are different concerns for different school types. This is an important contribution of this study, and supports the provision of tailored support for schools in the future.

Slightly different perspectives were also observed from different participant types. For example in small schools, a limited understanding of the principles of learner centred approaches was seen as a more significant factor by principals and heads of foreign language departments, whereas teachers were more concerned about other school duties and responsibilities. In extra-large schools, teachers were more concerned about large class sizes.

Factors that would support the implementation of learner-centred approaches were identified as: improvising the English proficiency of teachers, having adequate teaching and learning resources and more pedagogical training. A difference was observed between small and extra-large schools with small schools highlighting that increasing students' opportunity to use English would support the implementation of learner-centred approaches, while extra-large schools highlighted smaller class sizes.

## **6.4 Contributions of the Study**

The unique contribution to knowledge of this thesis lies in the systematic and systemic approach taken by this study. This study was a large-scale study involving a range of different stakeholders from Ministry level to student level. Previous studies have typically focused on only one of these groups of stakeholders. The inclusion of the student voice is a particularly unique feature of this study. This study also provided a more comprehensive overview of learner-centred approaches than previous studies by exploring the levels of

stakeholders' understanding of learner-centred approaches alongside their implementation of learner-centred approaches and the factors that impact implementation. Typically studies have focused on only one of these aspects. Past studies in this area are also now quite dated, and so through a more comprehensive and large-scale study, this research was able to provide an up-to-date overview of the situation and highlight the gaps between practitioner understanding and implementation of learner-centred approaches. The following sections present theoretical and methodological implications as described below.

#### **6.4.1 Theoretical implications**

The aims of this study were to explore stakeholders' understanding about learner-centred approaches, their implementation and the factors that support and impede this. As stated earlier in section 6.2, the perspectives of learner-centred approaches from a range of research participants, along with multiple data sources, is scarce in the Thai context. The research paradigm of this study draws on social constructivism, expecting that the participants constructed their knowledge and understanding related to learner-centred approaches through multiple experiences or interpretations in their context. This study has revealed that current theories of learner-centred approaches need to be tailored and adjusted to better align with non-Western contexts and cultures. Furthermore, stating expectations about learner-centred approaches in schools, regardless of whether the statements are written in official documents or verbalised by Ministry officials, is insufficient to cause change in teacher understanding or practice. Principals, Heads of departments, and teachers have expressed concerns about demands on leaders' and teachers' time, such as large class sizes, or multiple demands on their professional time, that by implication, limit opportunities to deepen understandings about learner-centred approaches, and restrict their attention to implementing changes in practice.

#### **6.4.2 Methodological implications**

The findings of the current study presented collected data from a range of participants and data collection instruments. The use of a range of data collection instruments and participant types, has allowed for deeper and broader insights into the understanding and use of learner-centred approaches in Thailand. Through this comprehensive research design, both

similarities and contradictions across sources could be assessed. Hence, the data obtained for triangulation could corroborate the trustworthiness of the qualitative data in this study.

## **6.5 Implications of the study**

The findings of this study have a number of implications. These include implications for research, policy makers, educational trainers and teachers as presented below.

### **6.5.1 Implications for research**

The current study is significant in providing new insights into teachers' perspectives of learner-centred approaches and their implementation in the context of Thai classrooms. The findings highlight the incompatibility of adopting Western practices as policy within the Thai context without full consideration of how the two can be aligned. This study highlights the need for further research in this area. Additionally, if policy implementation is to be successful, it is crucial that all stakeholders, particularly teachers, understand the underlying principles of learner-centred approaches and how to implement them in the classroom. Furthermore, the findings of this study could draw researchers' attention to explore stakeholders' understanding of learner-centred approaches, their implementation and factors that affect their implementation in English language programmes at a broader range of schools, school types and regions and levels of education, such as primary, and university, than was possible in the current study.

### **6.5.2 Implications for policy makers**

To improve English teaching and learning in Thai classrooms, it would be more advantageous for education reforms if policy makers involved stakeholders from the outset in making decisions which impact pedagogy. Current practices are top-down, and ensuring a broader representation of views in future would help to ensure that policies are better understood and supported by educators. These educators can reflect on the challenges in their teaching practice, and provide suggestions to more effectively support the implementation of new approaches in these reforms. From doing this, the government can also more effectively tailor additional support that responds to the professional learning needs of teachers in implementing learner-centred approaches.

In addition, as this thesis highlights, cultural aspects can influence the implementation of learner-centred approaches. Western educational policies may require adaptation to cultures which have hierarchical societies. This study has raised the important issue of whether it is appropriate to adopt learner-centred approaches when the underlying principles are not aligned with some of the Thai cultural values. For example, the power distance and the examination-based system are dominant in the Thai educational system. As Thailand has a hierarchical educational system, this impacts on relationships and teaching and learning within schools. Young teachers with knowledge and skills about learner-centred principles may hesitate to use these approaches in their teaching practice as they seek to pay respect to senior teachers who may prefer more traditional approaches. Thus, young teachers may comply with senior teachers by not implementing learner-centred approaches in their teaching practice to avoid conflict. Similarly, Thai students pay high respect to teachers by following a teacher's instructions. Students typically avoid doing anything that might offend teachers. For example, if teachers provide an inaccurate or unclear explanation, students would not question this as this could be seen to undermine the teacher's authority. These aspects of Thai culture do not align well with learner-centred principles where students are viewed as active participants in their learning and interact and collaborate with one another to solve problems and construct knowledge.

In the Thai context, teachers are considered as the source of knowledge. They are expected to impart knowledge to students. When teachers organize teaching and learning activities in ways which align with learner-centred practices, parents tend to be critical as from their perspective, this is not teaching, and goes against what they think the role of a teacher is. Furthermore, the Thai education system is exam-dominated. Therefore, parents expect teachers to prepare students well for tests and exams. Students focus on obtaining good grades and passing exams rather than on learning English to communicate in the future. This indicates that parental expectations and the assessment system are also constraints in teachers being able to implement learner-centred approaches in the classroom. As a result, teachers maintain a more traditional role and transmit knowledge to the students.

If Thai policy makers are determined to implement learner-centred approaches, it is important that they consider changes to the current assessment system so that the two are better aligned. All English language skills, including listening and speaking should be taught and assessed so that all English skills receive equal focus and are integrated in a more authentic way in the teaching and learning process. As part of this process, more support could be provided for teachers to adopt more formative assessment practices, rather than relying predominantly on summative measures as this study found.

As stated, Thai policy mandates learner-centred approaches for use in Thai classrooms. However, the approach taken by policy-makers seems to reflect a process of simple and wholesale adoption rather than adaptation for the Thai context. As a result, there is a mismatch between the intentions of the policy and its implementation. The type of autonomous learning discussed in the literature as an essential component of learner-centred approaches appears to be incongruent with Thai classrooms where teachers typically take on an authoritative role while students learn passively and comply with their teacher's instructions. It is therefore important to consider what learner-centred teaching could look like in Thai classrooms and what types of learner-centred teaching and learning activities might be appropriate within the Thai cultural context. Further consideration needs to be given to how policy-makers in countries with more traditional and hierarchical societies, such as Thailand, might be able to learn from the principles of learner-centred approaches outlined in the literature but adapt these in a way that is appropriate to and for their own culture and context. As Altinyelken (2011) states there is the need to develop pedagogies which respond to the culture and society where they are to be implemented. This further suggests the importance of policy makers consulting widely with those impacted by their policies to ensure that Western teaching approaches are appropriately adapted for the Thai context rather simply adopted and superficially implemented.

### **6.5.3 Implications for educational trainers**

The findings of this study revealed that educators had a limited and somewhat superficial understanding of learner-centred principles. As such, to implement learner-centred approaches in Thai classrooms more effectively, it is suggested that further support and

training is needed for teachers to develop a better understanding of learner-centred concepts and to make more use of communicative activities in their classrooms. Thus, investment is required by the Thai government to provide professional development and pedagogical support for practitioners to understand the underlying principles of learner-centred approaches, so that they have a common understanding of this approach and are able to implement it more confidently. Teachers would benefit from more in-depth professional development and learning to expand their pedagogical approaches. According to Poskitt (2014), teachers need to be well-trained through intensive professional development and learning to effectively implement new pedagogies in their practice. In addition to this, on-going coaching and follow up on how teachers are adapting their practices is necessary to better support teachers. Teachers are likely to need additional support from English educational supervisors on an on-going basis. This could take the form of regular observations of their classes, coaching and collegial discussions to navigate some of the challenges they face in applying learner-centred approaches. Without more extensive understanding and practical support, it is challenging for teachers to more fully implement the Thai education reform policy of adopting learner-centred approaches, which are partly aimed at developing student autonomy.

As stated above, teachers need more support for the implementation of learner-centred approaches. Pedagogical training is required to support teachers with learner-centred theories and different strategies for their practice. One approach that might be effective is the provision of modelling of learner-centred approaches and the modelling of teaching and learning activities using learner-centred approaches in the classroom. It would be beneficial for teachers to visit different classrooms and to observe a range of teaching practices or good models of teaching using learner-centred approaches. Expert teachers can also provide coaching and monitoring for teachers to give them guidance on how learner-centred approaches can be implemented effectively in class. This will hopefully lead to teachers gaining a more in-depth understanding about how to incorporate learner-centred approaches in their practice, and hopefully this will also help to increase their confidence in trialing different approaches in their classrooms.

As highlighted above, further consideration needs to be given to the appropriateness of adopting a new approach from Western to Eastern cultures, as it clashes with cultural norms of the practitioners (Hallinger, 2010). An implication of this is that educational supervisors may require more time to develop a more advanced understanding of learner-centred approaches, and to consider how these can be more effectively adapted for the Thai context.

#### **6.5.4 Implications for school management**

As mentioned above, the Thai government needs to support schools with resources and facilities, such as classrooms and technological devices to effectively shift to learner-centred approaches. The provision of sufficient teaching and learning resources may facilitate learner-centred activities in classes more effectively. Furthermore, smaller class sizes may be needed to support teachers to use learner-centred approaches. It is possible for teachers to better monitor, facilitate and assess students' learning with a smaller number of students per class.

#### **6.5.5 Implications for teachers**

This study found that currently teachers have a rather limited understanding of the principles of learner-centred approaches. It is clearly important for teachers to have a more in-depth understanding of the underlying principles of learner-centred approaches if they are to successfully implement them. In particular, this study highlights that teachers need further support with the knowledge and skills of learner-centred teaching relating to teachers and students' roles, more appropriate teaching methods, and teaching and learning activities, as well as formative assessment practices. There was little evidence in the current study of teachers supporting students to become autonomous and self-directed learners aware of their own strengths and weaknesses. Teachers will need time to feel comfortable with relinquishing control to students and to change their role from authoritative to facilitative, to empower students to take responsibility for their own learning, and become autonomous learners who actively learn, interact with peers, seek and construct their own knowledge. As the hierarchical system is embedded within the Thai educational system and with society more broadly, it is likely to take some time for teachers to be able to change their practice.

As stated, this is a particular issue within the Thai context where parents have expectations of teachers and teaching that are more in line with traditional approaches.

The establishment of professional learning communities may support teachers in improving their understanding of learner-centred approaches and how to implement them. As part of this, teachers may find it a support to have their teaching observed or video recorded, and then to discuss with other teachers in small groups particular challenges experienced and ways to improve their future teaching. Additionally, it might be useful to provide teachers with more professional development on how to more effectively incorporate technology into their practice. As well as supporting teachers with the implementation of learner-centred approaches, the use of technology could also make teaching and learning activities more interesting and increase students' motivation to learn.

This study has also highlighted that teachers may need support in improving their levels of English language proficiency, so that they are able to incorporate more communicative language activities in their practice and provide more opportunities for students to use spoken English in the classroom.

#### **6.5.6 Implications for students**

It would be useful for students to be given more explicit detail on the purpose and benefits of learner-centred approaches, so that they are able to take on the role of active learners who take responsibility for their own learning to seek and construct knowledge. Students will need specific guidance and coaching in developing skills to become autonomous and collaborative learners. When both teachers and learners are aware of their roles, and equipped with the necessary knowledge and skills to undertake learner-centred approaches, there is the potential to successfully implement this approach in a Thai context.

In addition, as Thai students tend to lack confidence in using English in class, one suggestion is for teachers to make more use of small group work and apply cooperative learning strategies in their teaching, such as peer tutoring, think-pair-share, small group discussions, problem-based learning, etc. Cooperative learning strategies would support students in being able to

collaboratively work with one another to solve problems and to complete tasks or learning goals in small groups. This may support students in developing positive and collaborative relationships with their classmates and help them to feel more comfortable to interact, share ideas and discuss things with their peers and teachers. For effective implementation, some guidance should be provided to students so that they learn more about the benefits of learning in groups, and strategies such as self and peer assessment. These measures will hopefully empower students to gradually take on more responsibility for their own learning and to become more self-directed learners.

## **6.6 Limitations of the Study**

This study employed an exploratory case study approach focusing on two school types, small public secondary schools and extra-large public secondary schools, in the educational service area 25, Khon Kaen province, Thailand. Consequently, there were no participants from municipal schools, demonstration schools, private schools and international schools in the Khon Kaen area. While this study contributes to a deepening of understanding of learner-centred approaches in these school types in the Khon Kaen area, which others may be able to identify with, it is not possible to claim that the findings are generalisable to the broader population.

As noted many of the questionnaire respondents provided very brief responses in relation to their understanding of learner-centred approaches. Few participants expanded on their answers and few provided examples. While, as mentioned, this highlights that many of the teachers and heads of foreign language departments do not have a good understanding of learner-centred approaches, it is possible that these participants realised this and did not want to lose face by further demonstrating their lack of understanding. Future research should consider this important aspect of Thai culture in the design of the study. For example, it is possible that the use of closed questionnaires, or scenarios to prompt responses, may have elicited more data from participants.

## **6.7 Recommendations for Future Research**

Several issues are highlighted by this study, which could form the focus of further research. First, the Thai education reforms emphasise learner autonomy and the use of English for communication. However the adoption of new approaches, like learner-centred approaches in a Thai classroom setting, is in tension with aspects of the Thai cultural context, such as the high power distance that exists in Thai society, and the focus on exams within the educational system. This study supports the findings of Abahussain (2016), who comments on the incompatibility of English language teaching policies and summative exams, and that this impacts on the extent to which teachers are able to implement new approaches in their actual practices. For this reason, more in-depth research focused within the Thai context on how learner-centred approaches can be implemented within Thai classrooms, and how this may differ from Western conceptualisations of learner-centred approaches is needed.

Second, students are one of the key agents in educational reforms as they are central to the teaching and learning process. According to other studies (e.g., Dörnyei, 2001; McCombs & Vakili, 2005; Naruemon, 2013), students are required to be active learners who take responsibility to make choices and to take control for their own learning within learner-centred approaches. In this study, participants commented that students in Thailand were not yet ready to take on this role. Therefore, more research in this area focused on learners' perspectives should be undertaken to explore learners' perceptions of and awareness of their role within learner-centred approaches. This type of research may illuminate factors that affect the implementation of learner-centred approaches from students' views, which would allow teachers to adjust their teaching and be better able to provide teaching and learning activities suited to their students' needs.

Third, the current study could be extended to different school types and regions in Thailand to explore participants' understanding of learner-centred approaches and their implementation on a wider scale. This would determine whether the findings of this study were replicated in other school types and regions, and help to provide a deeper insight into issues in teachers' understanding and implementation of learner-centred approaches. Data from studies would also be helpful in informing the design of pedagogical training to better

support teachers' needs and also to empower teachers in more effectively implementing learner-centred approaches. This might also include additional support for teachers to improve their level of English language proficiency so that they feel more comfortable and competent to incorporate more oral activities within the classroom.

Fourth, the research instruments used in this study were questionnaires, semi-structured interviews and student focus group interviews. In future research, more formal classroom observations could be included to obtain a deeper picture and insight into what students and teachers are actually doing in the classroom. Findings from such studies would be helpful in feeding into professional development support and training for teachers.

Fifth, as large class sizes was one of factors that participants felt impeded the implementation of learner-centred approaches in the extra-large schools, there is potential for future research to investigate teacher collaboration and group teaching in this context so that teachers felt better supported in moving away from teacher-centred practices.

Sixth, the findings of this study also suggest the need for future research on collaborative learning and in effective management of group activities, so that students have increased opportunities to use English in the class to work with other students on collaborative tasks to share ideas and construct their knowledge.

Lastly, as this study is a qualitative study, it is suggested that it may be beneficial for further research to employ mixed methods to gain more breadth and depth of the findings of the implementation of learner-centred approaches.

## **6.8 Concluding remarks**

This study explored stakeholders' understanding of learner-centred approaches, how they implement them, and factors that support and impede their implementation in Thai classrooms. Through undertaking a larger-scale study with a wider range of stakeholders, this study has contributed to the literature and knowledge on the level of teachers' understanding of learner-centred approaches and their implementation within small and

extra-large public secondary schools in Thailand. It is important to highlight that a gap was found between their understanding and implementation of learner-centred approaches. Teachers were found to have a limited and relatively superficial understanding of learner-centred approaches. As a result, their practice in the classroom is more reflective of teacher-centred than learner-centred approaches. It is challenging for teachers in Thailand to move to learner-centred approaches as teacher-centred approaches are prevalent in Thai classrooms. Thus, professional development and learning, and the better provision of resources and facilities are needed to assist teachers to change their practice. As this study has highlighted, caution is needed when Western pedagogical approaches are adopted in non-western contexts. Some adaptation to Western approaches is likely to be needed to align with the Thai cultural context, in particular the power distance and the exam-based system. The underlying issue in the exam-based system is that achievement is valued more highly than learning. Examinations are designed to assess students' content knowledge such as grammar, vocabulary and reading passages. The lack of focus on oral skills in the examinations means that teachers and students are less likely to prioritise these in their teaching and learning. It would be also beneficial for the implementation of learner-centred approaches in the Thai classroom if the Thai government could adjust the assessment system to be compatible with learner-centred ways of teaching, which put the emphasis on individual differences to actively and collaboratively learn and construct their own knowledge. Thai policy makers, educators and other stakeholders need to more deeply consider the appropriateness of adopting learner-centred approaches in an exam-oriented culture.

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## **APPENDICES**

## **Appendix A: The learner-centred psychological principles**

### **Cognitive and metacognitive factors**

1. *Nature of the learning process.* The learning of complex subject matter is most effective when it is an intentional process of constructing meaning from information and experience.
2. *Goals of the learning process.* The successful learner, over time and with support and instructional guidance, can create meaningful, coherent representations of knowledge.
3. *Construction of knowledge.* The successful learner can link new information with existing knowledge in meaningful ways.
4. *Strategic thinking.* The successful learner can create and use a repertoire of thinking and reasoning strategies to achieve complex learning goals.
5. *Thinking about thinking.* Higher order strategies for selecting and monitoring mental operations facilitate creative and critical thinking.
6. *Context of learning.* Learning is influenced by environmental factors, including culture, technology, and instructional practices.

### **Motivational and affective factors**

7. *Motivational and emotional influences on learning.* What and how much is learned is influenced by motivation. Motivation to learn, in turn, is influenced by the individual's emotional states, beliefs, interests and goals, and habits of thinking.
8. *Intrinsic motivation to learn.* The learner's creativity, higher order thinking, and natural curiosity, all contribute to motivation to learn. Intrinsic motivation is stimulated by tasks of optimal novelty and difficulty which are relevant to personal interests, and provide opportunities for personal choice and control.
9. *Effects of motivation on effort.* The acquisition of complex knowledge and skills requires extended learner effort and guided practice. Without the motivation to learn, the willingness to exert this effort is unlikely without coercion.

### **Developmental and social factors**

10. ***Developmental influences on learning.*** As individuals develop, there are different opportunities for and constraints on learning. Learning is most effective when differential development within and across the physical, intellectual, emotional, and social domains is taken into account.
11. ***Social influences on learning.*** Learning is influenced by social interactions, interpersonal relations, and communication with others.

### **Individual differences factors**

12. ***Individual differences in learning.*** Learners have different strategies and capabilities for and approaches to learning that are a function of prior experience and heredity.
13. ***Learning and diversity.*** Learning is most effective when differences in linguistic, cultural, and social background are taken into account.
14. ***Standards and assessment.*** Setting appropriately high and challenging standards and assessing the learner as well as the progress of learning – including diagnostic, process, and outcome assessment – are integral parts of the learning process.

(APA Work Group of the Board of Educational Affairs, 1997, p. 2-7)

## **Appendix B: Chapter 4 National Education Guidelines**

### **Chapter 4 National Education Guidelines**

**Section 22** Education shall be based on the principle that all learners are capable of learning and self-development, and are regarded as being most important. The teaching-learning process shall aim at enabling the learners to develop themselves at their own pace and to the best of their potentiality.

**Section 23** Education through formal, non-formal, and informal approaches shall give emphases to knowledge, morality, learning process, and integration of the following, depending on the appropriateness of each level of education:

- (1) Knowledge about oneself and the relationship between oneself and society, namely: family, community, nation, and world community; as well as knowledge about the historical development of the Thai society and matters relating to politics and democratic system of government under a constitutional monarchy;
- (2) Scientific and technological knowledge and skills, as well as knowledge, understanding and experience in management, conservation, and utilization of natural resources and the environment in a balanced and sustainable manner; National Education Act B.E. 2542 (1999) and Amendments (Second National Education Act B.E. 2545 (2002)).
- (3) Knowledge about religion, art, culture, sports, Thai wisdom, and the application of wisdom;
- (4) Knowledge and skills in mathematics and languages, with emphasis on proper use of the Thai language;
- (5) Knowledge and skills in pursuing one's career and capability of leading a happy life.

**Section 24** In organizing the learning process, educational institutions and agencies concerned shall:

- (1) provide substance and arrange activities in line with the learners' interests and aptitudes, bearing in mind individual differences;
- (2) provide training in thinking process, management, how to face various situations and application of knowledge for obviating and solving problems;

- (3) organize activities for learners to draw from authentic experience; drill in practical work for complete mastery; enable learners to think critically and acquire the reading habit and continuous thirst for knowledge;
- (4) achieve, in all subjects, a balanced integration of subject matter, integrity, values, and desirable attributes;
- (5) enable instructors to create the ambiance, environment, instructional media, and facilities for learners to learn and be all-round persons, able to benefit from research as part of the learning process. In so doing, both learners and teachers may learn together from different types of teaching-learning media and other sources of knowledge;
- (6) enable individuals to learn at all times and in all places. Co-operation with parents, guardians, and all parties concerned in the community shall be sought to develop jointly the learners in accord with their potentiality.

**Section 25** The State shall promote the running and establishment, in sufficient number and with efficient functioning, of all types of lifelong learning sources, namely: public libraries, museums, art galleries, zoological gardens, public parks, botanical gardens, science and technology parks, sport and recreation centres, data bases, and other sources of learning.

**Section 26** Educational institutions shall assess learners' performance through observation of their development; personal conduct; learning behaviour; participation in activities and results of the tests accompanying the teaching-learning process commensurate with the different levels and types of education. Educational institutions shall use a variety of methods for providing opportunities for further education and shall also take into consideration results of the assessment of the learners' performance referred to in the first paragraph.

**Section 27** The Basic Education Commission shall prescribe core curricula for basic education for purposes of preserving Thai identity; good citizenship; desirable way of life; livelihood; as well as for further education. In accord with the objectives in the first paragraph, basic education institutions shall be responsible for prescribing curricular substance relating to needs of the community and the society, local wisdom and attributes of desirable members of the family, community, society, and nation.

**Section 28** Curricula at all levels of education and those for the persons referred to in the second, third, and fourth paragraphs of section 10 shall be diversified and commensurate with each level, with the aim of improving the quality of life suitable for each individual's age and potentiality. National Education Act B.E. 2542 (1999) and Amendments (Second National Education Act B.E. 2545 (2002)). The substance of the curricula, both academic and professional, shall aim at human development with desirable balance regarding knowledge, critical thinking, capability, virtue and social responsibility. Apart from the characteristics referred to in the first and second paragraphs, higher education curricula shall emphasize academic development, with priority given to higher professions and research for development of the bodies of knowledge and society.

**Section 29** Educational institutions in co-operation with individuals, families, communities, community organizations, local administration organizations, private persons, private organizations, professional bodies, religious institutions, enterprises, and other social institutions shall contribute to strengthening the communities by encouraging learning in the communities themselves. Thus communities will be capable of providing education and training; searching for knowledge, data, and information; and be able to benefit from local wisdom and other sources of learning for community development in keeping with their requirements and needs; and identification of ways of promoting exchanges of development experience among communities.

**Section 30** Educational institutions shall develop effective learning processes. In so doing, they shall also encourage instructors to carry out research for developing

(National Education Act B.E. 2542 (1999), 1999, p. 10-12)

## **Appendix C: The indicators regarding learners' activities**

### **Indicators regarding learners' activities**

1. Learners have a direct relationship with nature and the environment from which they draw authentic experience.
2. Learners have intensive practice until they realize their own aptitude and working methods.
3. Learners carry out activities in which knowledge and experience of members of the group are exchanged.
4. Learners have the practice in analytical thinking in several ways in which imagination and creativity play an important role. They are also capable of clear and logical self-expression.
5. Learners receive encouragement and support in finding answers to questions and problem-solving. Mutual assistance is also attained.
6. Learners have practice in research, data collecting and constructing knowledge themselves.
7. Learners are able to select activities in line with their capabilities, aptitude and interests, which are carried out with contentment.
8. Learners train themselves for attainment of self-discipline and work responsibility.
9. Learners receive training in evaluation for self-improvement and acceptance of others as well as the interest and enthusiasm to seek knowledge on a continuous basis.

(Office of the National Education Commission, 2000, p. 38)

## **Appendix D: The indicators regarding teachers' activities**

### **Indicators regarding teachers' activities**

1. Teachers make preparations relating to both content and methods of teaching.
2. Teachers provide an environment which motivates learners to learn. Learners also receive support and strengthening of their efforts to learn.
3. Teachers pay individual attention to learners who all receive nothing but kindness and generosity.
4. Teachers arrange for activities and situations conducive to encouraging learners to express themselves and think creatively.
5. Teachers encourage learners to think independently, undertake activities and constantly improve themselves.
6. Teachers encourage group activities in which knowledge and experience are exchanged. They also observe their students' strengths and provide remedial measures for their weaknesses.
7. Teachers avail themselves of instructional media for training in independent thinking, problem solving and attainment of knowledge.
8. Teachers avail themselves for a variety of learning sources and relate learning to real life.
9. Teachers provide training regarding manners and discipline in line with traditional Thai culture.
10. Teachers note and evaluate learners' development on a continuous basis.

(Office of the National Education Commission, 2000, p. 39)

## Appendix E: Questionnaire

# Questionnaire

## Learner-centred Approaches in Teaching English in Thailand

### Introduction

Thank you very much for agreeing to participate in this study which is part of my research at Massey University, New Zealand. Your participation will help me explore ways to help improve teaching and learning English in Thai classrooms. This research study is about the implementation of learner-centred approaches in English classrooms. The purpose of this questionnaire is to explore the understanding of stakeholders about learner-centred approaches and implementation, the implementation of learner-centred approaches current factors influence learner-centred approach in English classroom teaching. In this research, your responses are expected and you will not be evaluated.

Please take your time and answer the questions as accurately as possible so that the answers reflect your own perspectives of the implementation of learner-centred approaches to English classrooms.

This questionnaire should take approximately 15 minutes to complete.

All your responses are strictly confidential and will be used only for the purposes of this study. The results of this study will be published as part of my doctoral thesis. After 7 years all original questionnaires will be destroyed.

When you return the completed questionnaire to me, I will contribute money to the charity (40 baht per questionnaire). Please tick (✓) one of the foundations below.

- Khaenthong Children's home
- Banlookruk
- Soldiers in the South of Thailand
- Other (please specify)

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Please return this questionnaire within 2 weeks. The final date for submission is **12<sup>th</sup> February 2016**.

If you have any questions regarding your participation, please contact Ong-Art Namwong via e-mail at [ongartna@kku.ac.th](mailto:ongartna@kku.ac.th) or phone me directly on 0956364863.

Thank you for taking the time to answer the questionnaire.

## Section 1: Personal information

Please tick (✓) and enter your information below.

**1. Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**School:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Contact number:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Email address:** \_\_\_\_\_

**2. Gender**  male  female

**3. Age**

21-30 years  31-40 years  41-50 years  51-60 years

**4. Status**

- A principal
- Head of a foreign language department
- An English teacher

**5. Education** (Please fill in all degrees you have obtained or are currently studying towards.)

- Bachelor's degree Major: \_\_\_\_\_
- Master's degree Major: \_\_\_\_\_
- Doctoral degree Major: \_\_\_\_\_
- Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

**6. Years of working experience:** \_\_\_\_\_ years

**7. Current academic position and education rewards obtained**

- Principal
- Special expertise principal
- Skillful principal
- Teacher
- Special expertise teacher
- Skillful Special expertise
- Outstanding teaching
- Model teacher
- Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

**8. Seminars attended and training experiences**

- English curriculum
- English teaching methods
- Lesson planning
- Learner-centred approaches
- Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

**Section 2: Learner-centred approaches**

**The following questions are for *all participants*. Please answer the following questions as completely as possible:**

9. What are learner-centred approaches in your understanding?

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10. What understanding do you have about teaching using learner-centred approaches?

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10.1 What do you understand about planning and using resources based on learner-centred approaches?

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10.2 What do you understand about teaching strategies in learner-centred approaches?

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10.3 What do you understand about assessment in learner-centred approaches?

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11. How are learner-centred approaches used in the teaching of English classes in your school?

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12. In your viewpoints, what are the factors that impede teachers using learner-centred approaches in English classes in general?

Please tick the important factors that impede teachers using learner-centred approaches in English classes in your opinions.

- Teacher-centred approaches
- A limited understanding of the principles of learner-centred approaches
- Heavy teaching loads
- Other school duties and responsibilities
- Seniority system
- Large class sizes
- Inadequate teaching and learning resources
- Limited time in a teaching period
- Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_
- Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_
- Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_
- Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_
- Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

Are there any others? (Please specify)

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From the list above, please rank top 5 of these factors (1 indicating the most important, 2 the next most important, etc.).

- Teacher-centred approaches
- A limited understanding of the principles of learner-centred approaches
- Heavy teaching loads
- Other school duties and responsibilities
- Seniority system

- Large class sizes
- Inadequate teaching and learning resources
- Limited time in a teaching period
- Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_
- Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_
- Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_
- Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_
- Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

13. In your viewpoints, what are the factors that support teaching using learner-centred approaches in English classes in general?

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14. What factors do you think that they are necessary to further enhance teachers using of learner-centred approaches in English classes in general?

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**The following questions are for Head of foreign language department. Please answer the following questions as completely as possible:**

15. As Head of foreign language department, do you have a policy about English teaching and learning using learner-centred approaches? Please give some examples.

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15.1 What kind of support does the foreign language department provide for English teachers in teaching using learner-centred approaches in your school?

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15.2 Can you give some examples of English teaching and learning activities using learner-centred approaches in your school?

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**The following questions are for current English teachers or Heads of foreign language department who are also current English teachers, please answer the following questions as completely as possible:**

16. What do you have to consider for your class preparation?

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16.1 What types of resources and environment do you use in your classes?

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16.2 How do you go about planning for your classes?

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17. Please describe your typical English lesson in terms of

- Typical teaching and learning activities;
- typical materials used;
- groups versus whole class or individuals; and

- proportion of class of listening, speaking, reading, writing skills and interaction.

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17.1 According to listening, speaking, reading, writing skills and interaction, what do you consider the most important and why?

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17.2 Do you use group work activities?

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17.3 If yes, every lesson or how often compared to whole class and individuals?

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17.4 If yes, how do you manage group work activities?

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17.5 In your opinion, how do your students prefer to learn by the whole class, group or as individuals?

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18. What strategies do you use to encourage students' thinking skills in your classes?

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19. What strategies do you use to help students when they are having difficulty understanding?

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20. How do you motivate students to learn?

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21. What range of strategies do you use to assess students learning?

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**Please add any comments about teaching English using learner-centred approaches.**

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**Please tick (✓) in the box to answer the questions below.**

**I am very interested in talking with you further about your responses. It doesn't matter whether you are currently using learner-centred approaches or not. I am also interested in talking to some of your students. All data collected will be confidential and anonymous.**

Are you willing to participate in an interview?

Yes.       No.

Are you willing to allow some of your students participate in a student focus group?

Yes.       No.

**Thank you very much for your time and cooperation.**

## **Appendix F: A letter to request for permission to pilot questionnaires and student focus group**

TESOL programme,  
Faculty of Education,  
Khon Kaen University,  
Muang, Khon Kaen 40002

December, 2015

Dear Principal,

My name is Ong-Art Namwong. I am a full-time doctoral student within the Institute of Education, College of Humanities and Social Sciences, Massey University, New Zealand. I am conducting my research entitled *Learner-centred Approaches in Teaching English in Thailand*. I would like to ask your permission to pilot questionnaires at your school with you, head of foreign language department and English teachers as well as pilot the student focus group questions with some of your secondary school students.

The purpose of this doctoral research project is to explore the implementation of learner-centred approaches to find the factors that support and impede the implementation of learner-centred approaches in English classes. This research will be expected to gain the perspectives of the stakeholders in implementing learner-centred approaches.

If you agree to give permission, the questionnaires and the student focus group questions will be piloted at your school during 4-15 January, 2016. If you need more information or have any further questions, please feel free to contact me at the address below.

I would like to thank you for considering my request.

Yours sincerely,  
Ong-Art

### **The researcher contact details in Thailand**

Ong-Art Namwong  
TESOL programme, Faculty of Education,  
Khon Kaen University, Muang, Khon Kaen 40002  
E-mail address: [ongartna@kku.ac.th](mailto:ongartna@kku.ac.th)  
Mobile phone: [REDACTED]  
Office: 043-343-452

### **Committee Approval Statement**

This project has been evaluated by peer review and judged to be low risk. Consequently it has not been reviewed by one of the University's Human Ethics Committees. The researcher(s) named in this document are responsible for the ethical conduct of this research. If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research that you want to raise with someone other than the researcher(s), please contact Dr Brian Finch, Director (Research Ethics), and email: [humanethics@massey.ac.nz](mailto:humanethics@massey.ac.nz). The reference number is 4000015189.

## **Appendix G: An invitation letter for schools to participate in the research**

TESOL programme,  
Faculty of Education,  
Khon Kaen University,  
Muang, Khon Kaen 40002

December, 2015

Dear Principal,

My name is Ong-Art Namwong. I am a full-time doctoral student within the Institute of Education, College of Humanities and Social Sciences, Massey University, New Zealand. I am conducting my research entitled *Learner-centred Approaches in Teaching English in Thailand*. I would like to ask you for permission for your school to participate in this research.

Please look at the attached Information Sheet and Consent Form for this research. If you need more information or have any further questions, please feel free to contact me at the address below.

I would like to thank you for considering my request.

Yours sincerely,  
Ong-Art

### **The researcher contact details in Thailand**

Ong-Art Namwong  
TESOL programme,  
Faculty of Education,  
Khon Kaen University,  
Muang, Khon Kaen 40002  
E-mail address: [ongartna@kku.ac.th](mailto:ongartna@kku.ac.th)  
Mobile phone: [REDACTED]  
Office: 043-343-452

### **Committee Approval Statement**

This project has been evaluated by peer review and judged to be low risk. Consequently it has not been reviewed by one of the University's Human Ethics Committees. The researcher(s) named in this document are responsible for the ethical conduct of this research. If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research that you want to raise with someone other than the researcher(s), please contact Dr Brian Finch, Director (Research Ethics), and email: [humanethics@massey.ac.nz](mailto:humanethics@massey.ac.nz). The reference number is 4000015189.

## **Appendix H: A school information sheet to participate in the research**

### **LEARNER-CENTRED APPROACHES IN TEACHING ENGLISH IN THAILAND**

#### **INFORMATION SHEET**

**Dear Principal,**

#### **Project Description and Invitation**

This research project will provide an opportunity for your school to participate in exploring the implementation of learner-centred approaches. The findings from this research may be used by the policymakers to solve the current English teaching problems, develop English teaching and learning in Thai classrooms and support what English teachers need to improve English teaching for the benefits of both English teachers and students.

I would like to ask your permission for your school to participate in this research from January to June 2016. The research will be conducted with you, the head of the foreign language department and English teachers for questionnaires and interviews as well as student focus groups with some of your secondary school students. The questionnaire will take 15 minutes to complete. The interview will take 90 minutes. The student focus group will take 45 minutes.

I would also like to ask your permission for your school secretary to put the questionnaires with stamp address envelopes for you, head of foreign language departments and English teachers' mail boxes. The completed questionnaires can be returned in stamped address envelopes provided to the school secretary. Then the school secretary will send them to me by post. The school secretary will be also asked to collect the focus group participant's parent consent forms for the students who are lower than 16 years of age and send them to me by post.

#### **Data Management**

The data will be stored securely. According to Massey University policy, the data will be disposed of after seven years.

#### **Participant's Rights**

The identities of the participants will only be known by me as the researcher. The information that your school participants provide will be used for the purpose of this research only. Pseudonyms will be used to protect participant anonymity.

Your school is under no obligation to accept this invitation. If you decide for your school to participate, you have the right to:

- decline to answer any particular question;
- withdraw from the study at any time during the data collection process without any effect;
- ask any questions about the study at any time during participation;
- be given access to a summary of the project findings when it is concluded.

The data obtained will be analysed and written up as my doctoral thesis after finishing the data collection process. It will be disseminated the findings of the research in the conferences as well as publish the findings in a related peer review journal.

I appreciate your valuable time and assistance. I hope that you will consider for your school participating in this research. If you agree for your school to participate in this research, please return the Consent Form using a stamped address envelop provided to me within two weeks after receiving this letter. If you have any questions or concerns regarding this research, please feel free to contact me or my supervisors via the contact details below.

Yours sincerely,  
Ong-Art

**Names and contact details of the researcher and supervisors:**

**Researcher**

Ong-Art Namwong  
TESOL programme,  
Faculty of Education,  
Khon Kaen University,  
Muang, Khon Kaen 40002  
E-mail address: [ongartna@kku.ac.th](mailto:ongartna@kku.ac.th)  
Mobile phone: [REDACTED]

**Supervisors**

1. Dr. Karen Ashton  
([K.Ashton@massey.ac.nz](mailto:K.Ashton@massey.ac.nz))  
Telephone: +64 (06) 356 9099 ext. 84445
2. Dr. Alyson McGee  
([A.McGee@massey.ac.nz](mailto:A.McGee@massey.ac.nz))  
Telephone: +64 (06) 356 9099 ext. 84449  
Institute of Education, Massey University,  
Private bag 11222, Palmerston North,  
4442, New Zealand

**Committee Approval Statement**

This project has been evaluated by peer review and judged to be low risk. Consequently it has not been reviewed by one of the University's Human Ethics Committees. The researcher(s) named in this document are responsible for the ethical conduct of this research. If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research that you want to raise with someone other than the researcher(s), please contact Dr Brian Finch, Director (Research Ethics), and email: [humanethics@massey.ac.nz](mailto:humanethics@massey.ac.nz). The reference number is 4000015189.

## **Appendix I: A school consent form for research participation**

### **LEARNER-CENTRED APPROACHES IN TEACHING ENGLISH IN THAILAND**

#### **SCHOOL CONSENT FORM FOR RESEARCH PARTICIPATION**

I have read the Information Sheet and have had the details of the study explained to me. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I understand that I may ask further questions at any time.

**Please tick (✓) your choice below.**

I agree for my school to participate in the questionnaires.

Yes                       No

I agree for my school to participate in the questionnaires, interviews and student focus groups.

Yes                       No

I agree for my school to participate in this study under the conditions set out in the Information Sheet.

**Signature:** ..... **Date:** .....

**Full Name - printed** .....

**Appendix J: Interview questions for heads of foreign language departments and English teachers.**

**Interview Questions**

1. How do you understand learner centred approaches?
2. What is your understanding of teaching using learner-centred approaches?

Probes:

- What is your role in promoting learner-centred approaches in English classes?
- What are your policies about English teaching and learning using learner-centred approaches in your school? Please give some examples.
- What are your expectations from teachers in using learner-centred approaches in English classes?
- How do you support English teachers in teaching English using learner-centred approaches?
- Is there any support available in teaching English using learner-centred approaches? Tell me more about this.
- How do you monitor English teachers' teaching using learner-centred approaches in English classes?
- Do you need to ask for permission to use any teaching methods in your English classes? Why or why not?
- Does your school design the school curriculum to teach English using learner-centred approaches? Why or why not? How do you do this?
- Are learner-centred approaches used to teach English in your school?
- Can you give some examples of good practice in English teaching using learner-centred approaches of your school?
- Do you think schools which are located in rural areas have more problems or challenges using learner-centred approaches? Why or why not?
- Do you think there are any differences in teaching English using learner-centred approaches between Thailand and other countries? If yes, why and what differences are there?
- Do you think using learner-centred approaches in English classes is appropriate for the Thai context? Why or why not?

- Do you think learner-centred approaches are used successfully in English classes at your school? Why or why not?

3. How do you prepare the lessons in your English classes?

Probes:

- How do you use the English core curriculum to plan your lessons?
- How do you use the school curriculum to plan your English lessons?
- What learning resources do you use in your English lessons?
- What teaching materials do you use in your English lessons?
- What are three teaching materials that you use most often in your English lessons? And how?
- What is the level of students' English language proficiency?

4. Can you describe a typical English lesson?

Probes:

- What English teaching methods do you use in your English classes?
- Could you please give some examples of typical activities that you use in your English classes?
- What kind of group work activities do you use in your English classes? And how often do you use them compared to whole class and individuals?
- How do you go about dividing students into groups for group work activities?
- Do you find any problems in managing group work activities in your English classes? What are they? And how do you solve them?
- In your opinion, how do your students prefer to learn English by whole class, group work or individual?
- How do your students share their ideas in your classes?
- What is the proportion of listening, speaking, reading, writing skills and interaction in your English classes?
- Among listening, speaking, reading, writing skills and interaction in your English classes, what do you consider the most important and why?
- Do you use English, Thai or both in teaching English in your classes?
- What is the proportion of using English and Thai in your classes?

5. What strategies do you use to assist students when they are having difficulty understanding in learning English?

Probes:

- What types of problems do students in your class have in learning English?

- Which problems are the most common?
- How do you help students with the problems they encounter in class?
- How effective is this in supporting students?

6. What strategies do you use to encourage students' thinking skills in learning English?

Probes:

- What activities do you use to encourage students to find the answers to tasks?
- How do you encourage students to find the answers to tasks?
- How do you support students in completing tasks?

7. How do you motivate students to learn English?

Probes:

- How is students' motivation in learning English?
- What attitude do students have towards learning English? Why?
- What activities do you use to encourage students' interest in your English classes?

8. How do you assess students' English language learning?

Probes:

- What kind of assessments do you usually use to assess students' English learning outcome
- Could you please give an example and explain more?
- Do you think the assessment of students' English from the English core curriculum is based on learner-centred approaches? Why or why not?
- Do you think the National test which is used to assess students' English is based on learner-centred approaches? Why or why not?

9. What are the factors that impede teaching using learner-centred approaches in your English classes?

Probes:

- Which one is the most important factor in your opinion?
- How do you overcome the difficulties of teaching using learner-centred approaches?

(Prompt cards about the factors that impede teaching using learner-centred approaches in English classes were provided to ask an English teacher to rank the top five factors and discuss about them.) The factors that impede teaching using learner-centred approaches in English classes from the literature and questionnaire findings are presented below.

- Teacher-centred approaches;
  - A limited understanding of the principles of learner-centred approaches;
  - Heavy teaching loads;
  - Other school duties and responsibilities;
  - Seniority system;
  - Large class sizes;
  - Inadequate teaching materials and learning resources;
  - Limited time in a teaching period;
  - School contexts;
  - Students’ English assessments;
  - Lack of English training about using teaching methods and techniques;
  - Teachers’ English proficiency;
  - Students’ levels of English proficiency;
  - Ministry of Education’s Policies in teaching English; and
  - Lack of supervising English teachers’ teaching concretely and continuously;  
and
  - Other (please specify) .....
- (Please add any suggestions about the factors that impede teaching using learner-centred approaches in English classes.)

10. What are the factors that support teaching using learner-centred approaches in your English classes?

Probes:

- Which factor do you think is the most important to help improve teaching using learner-centred approaches in English classes and why?

(Prompt cards about the factors that support teaching using learner-centred approaches in English classes will be provided to ask the interviewee to rank the top five factors and discuss about them.) The factors that support teaching using learner-centred approaches in English classes from the literature and questionnaire findings are presented below.

- English teaching method training;
- English teachers’ good English proficiency;
- The concrete English teachers’ teaching supervision system;
- Understanding English core curriculum;
- Good and adequate teaching materials and learning resources;

- Students opportunities to use English;
  - Students' attitude towards using English.;
  - Small class sizes;
  - Time in teaching English per period;
  - Using English in classes; and
  - Other (please specify) .....
- (Please add any suggestions about the factors that support teaching using learner-centred approaches in English classes.)

*Thank you very much for your time. Is there anything else would you like to add?  
If you have further information that you would like to add, you can email me.*

## **Appendix K: Interview questions for student focus groups**

### **Student focus group questions**

1. What English teaching and learning activities do you usually learn in English classes?

Probes:

- Please describe a typical English lesson that you learn in your English classes.
- What kind of activities that your teacher uses in English classes make you interest in learning English?
- How do you practice English in your classes? Please give some examples.
- What activities provide you the opportunity to practice English in class?
- What learning resources do you use in learning English in your English classes?
- What learning materials do you use in learning English in your English classes?
- Does your English teacher use English or Thai in teaching English in classes?
- What is the proportion of your English teacher in using English and Thai in your classes?
- Do you prefer to learn English in your classes in English or in Thai? Why?

2. Please tell the proportion of listening, speaking, reading, writing skills and interaction in your English classes.

Probe:

- What do you consider the most important and why?  
(Prompt cards of listening, speaking, reading, writing skills and interaction were provided to ask students to rank and discuss about their proportion learned in English classes.)

3. Do you work in groups in your English classes?

Probes:

- How often compared to whole class and individuals?
- How do you arrange to work in groups?
- What types of activities do you do in groups?
- How do you exchange your ideas to find tasks' answers in working in groups?
- Do you have any problems in working in groups? How do you solve the problems?

- How do you prefer to learn English through whole class, group work or individual? Why?

4. What kind of activities help you find the answers to tasks?

Probes:

- How do they help you find the answers to tasks?
- How effective is this in helping you find the answers to tasks?

5. Do you have any problems in learning English in classes?

Probes:

- What are they?
- Which problems are the most common?
- How do you feel in learning English?

6. When you encounter problems in learning English in classes, how do you solve the problems?

Probes:

- How does your English teacher support you to learn English?
- How is your English learning in classes after you get supported?

7. What kind of assessments does your English teacher use to assess your English learning in classes?

Probes:

- What assessments are the most often used?
- What assessments do you prefer and why?

***Thank you very much for your time. Is there anything else would you like to add?***

***If you have further information that you would like to add, you can email me.***

**Appendix L: A transcriber's confidentiality agreement**

**LEARNER-CENTRED APPROACHES IN TEACHING ENGLISH IN THAILAND**

**TRANSCRIBER'S CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT**

I ..... agree to transcribe the recordings provided to me.

I agree to keep confidential all the information provided to me.

I will not make any copies of the transcripts or keep any record of them, other than those required for the project.

**Signature:** ..... **Date:** .....

**Full Name - printed** .....

**Appendix M: Interview questions for Ministry of Education officers, English educational supervisors, chairmen of school boards, and principals.**

**Interview questions**

1. How do you understand learner centred approaches?
2. What is your understanding of teaching using learner-centred approaches?
3. What is the current situation regarding the teaching of English using learner-centred approaches?

Probes:

- Which Ministry of Education policy documents promote the use of learner-centred approaches? What are your opinions about these?
- How does the English core curriculum promote the use of learner-centred approaches? What are your opinions about these?
- What is your role in promoting learner-centred approaches in English classes?
- What are the challenges that teachers face in using learner-centred approaches in English classes?
- What are your expectations from schools and teachers in using learner-centred approaches in English classes?
- How do you work with relevant stakeholders in using learner-centred approaches in English classes?
- How do you support schools and teachers in using learner-centred approaches in English classes?
- How do you monitor English teachers' teaching using learner-centred approaches in English classes?
- Do you think schools which are located in rural areas have more problems or challenges using learner-centred approaches? Why or why not?
- Do you think the assessment of students' English from the English core curriculum is based on learner-centred approaches? Why or why not?
- Do you think the National test which is used to assess students' English is based on learner-centred approaches? Why or why not?

- Do you think there are any differences in teaching English using learner-centred approaches between Thailand and other countries? If yes, why and what differences are there?
- Do you think using learner-centred approaches in English classes is appropriate for the Thai context? Why or why not?
- Do you think using learner-centred approaches in current English classes is successful or not? Why or why not?

4. What are the factors that impede teaching using learner-centred approaches in English classes?

Probe:

- Which one is the most important factor in your opinion?  
(Prompt cards about the factors that impede teaching using learner-centred approaches in English classes were provided to ask the interviewee to rank the top five factors and discuss about them.) The factors that impede teaching using learner-centred approaches in English classes from the literature and questionnaire findings are presented below.

- Teacher-centred approaches;
- A limited understanding of the principles of learner-centred approaches;
- Heavy teaching loads;
- Other school duties and responsibilities;
- Seniority system;
- Large class sizes;
- Inadequate teaching materials and learning resources;
- Limited time in a teaching period;
- School contexts;
- Students' English assessments;
- Lack of English teaching method training;
- Teachers' English proficiency;
- Students' levels of English proficiency;
- Ministry of Education's Policies in teaching English;
- Lack of supervising English teachers' teaching concretely and continuously;  
and
- Other (please specify) .....

(Please add any suggestions about the factors that impede teaching using learner-centred approaches in English classes.)

5. What are the factors that support teaching using learner-centred approaches in English classes?

Probes:

- Which factor do you think is the most important factor to help improve teaching English using learner-centred approaches and why?

(Prompt cards about the factors that support teaching using learner-centred approaches in English classes will be provided to ask the interviewee to rank the top five factors and discuss about them.) The factors that support teaching using learner-centred approaches in English classes from the literature and questionnaire findings are presented below.

- English teaching method training;
- English teachers' good English proficiency;
- The concrete English teachers' teaching supervision system;
- Understanding English core curriculum;
- Good and adequate teaching materials and learning resources;
- Students opportunities to use English;
- Students' attitude towards using English.;
- Small class sizes;
- Time in teaching English per period;
- Using English in classes; and
- Other (please specify) .....

(Please add any suggestions about the factors that support teaching using learner-centred approaches in English classes.)

***Thank you very much for your time. Is there anything else would you like to add?  
If you have further information that you would like to add, you can email me.***

**Appendix N: Sample of the questionnaire data preliminary analysis on the understanding of learner-centred approaches**

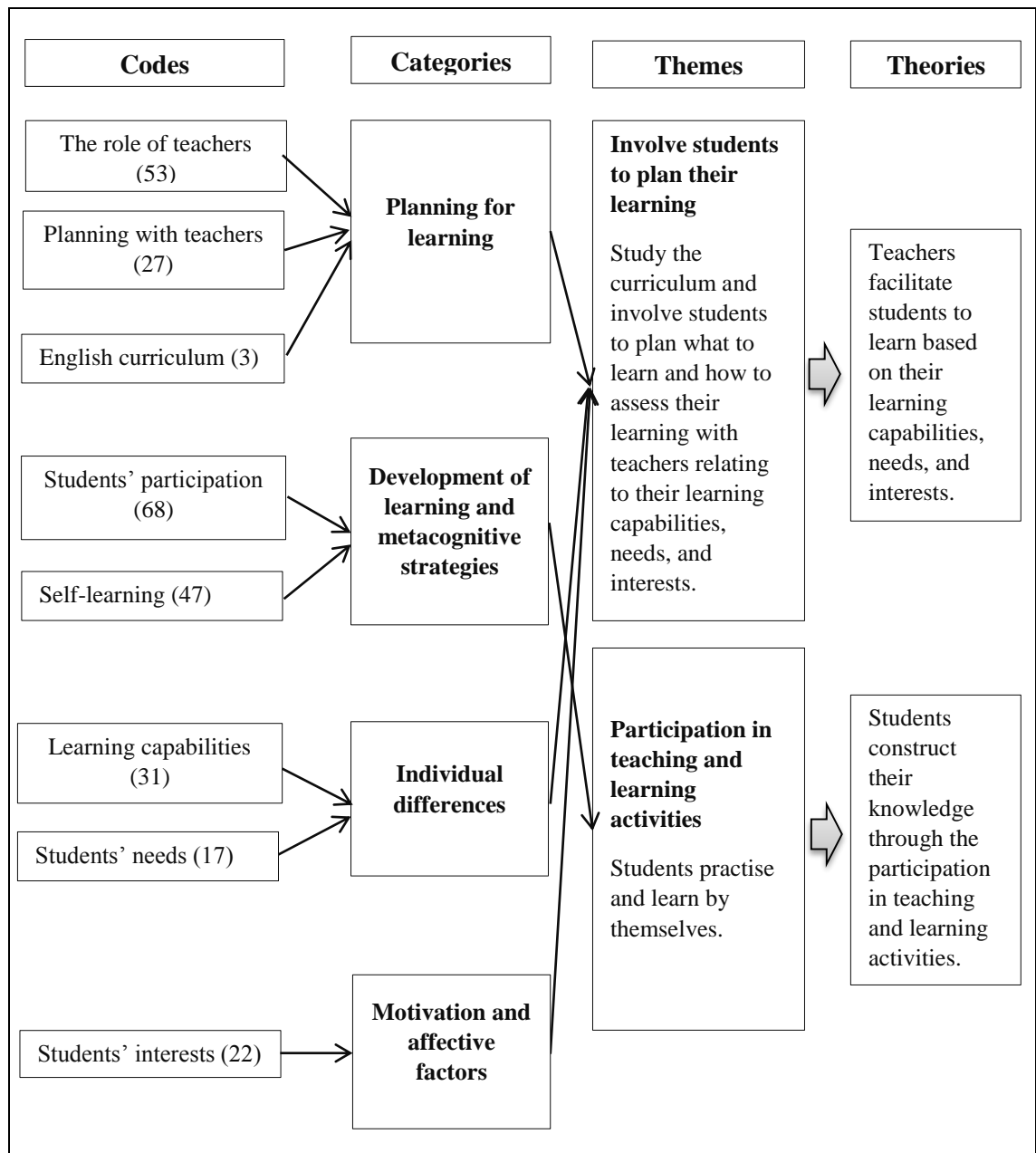
**1. Sample of the questionnaire data coding**

| Questionnaire data  | Codes   |
|---|---|
| <b>SPQ5</b>   |   |
| <p><b>9. What are learner-centred approaches in your understanding?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students participate [in teaching and learning activities] based on their learning capabilities and learning interests.</li> </ul> <p><b>10. What understanding do you have about teaching using learner-centred approaches?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students participate in learning activities as well as take part in assessment and evaluation.</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ = Students' participation</li> <li>■ = Learning capabilities</li> <li>■ = Students' interests</li> <li>■ = Planning with teachers</li> <li>■ = Self-learning</li> <li>■ = The role of teachers</li> <li>■ = English curriculum</li> <li>■ = Students' needs</li> </ul> |
| <b>STQ5</b>   |   |
| <p><b>9. What are learner-centred approaches in your understanding?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Organising teaching and learning activities that focuses on students' constructing their own knowledge. Teachers are both knowledge transmitters and facilitators for students.</li> </ul> <p><b>10. What understanding do you have about teaching using learner-centred approaches?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The focus of organising teaching and learning activities is on self-learning relating to students' learning capabilities.</li> </ul> |   |
| <b>EHQ1</b>   |   |
| <p><b>9. What are learner-centred approaches in your understanding?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Organising teaching and learning activities relates to English curriculum, students' needs, students' learning capabilities and students' interests.</li> </ul> <p><b>10. What understanding do you have about teaching using learner-centred approaches?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students take part in planning and choosing teaching and learning activities in relation to their needs and interests.</li> </ul>                               |   |

**2. Sample of the questionnaire data on codes and categories of the understanding of learner-centred approaches**













| <b>Code</b>             | <b>Frequency</b> | <b>Explanation</b>  | <b>Category</b>   |
|-------------------------|------------------|---|---|
| The role of teachers    | 53               | Teachers are facilitators to support students' learning.  | <b>Planning for learning</b>                                |
| Planning with teachers  | 27               | Students are involved in planning and choosing teaching and learning activities as well as assessing and evaluating their learning. |   |
| English curriculum      | 3                | Teachers organise teaching and learning activities in relation to English curriculum.   |   |
| Students' participation | 68               | Students participate in teaching and learning activities to develop their own learning.   | <b>Development of learning and metacognitive strategies</b> |
| Self-learning           | 47               | Students construct their own knowledge through teaching and learning activities.  |   |
| Learning capabilities   | 31               | The students' capabilities in learning  | <b>Individual differences</b>                               |
| Students' needs         | 17               | The students' needs in learning   |   |
| Students' interests     | 22               | The students' interests in learning   | <b>Motivation and affective factors</b>                     |

### 3. Sample of questionnaire data coding chart



**Appendix O: Sample of the semi-structure interview data preliminary analysis on the understanding of learner-centred approaches**

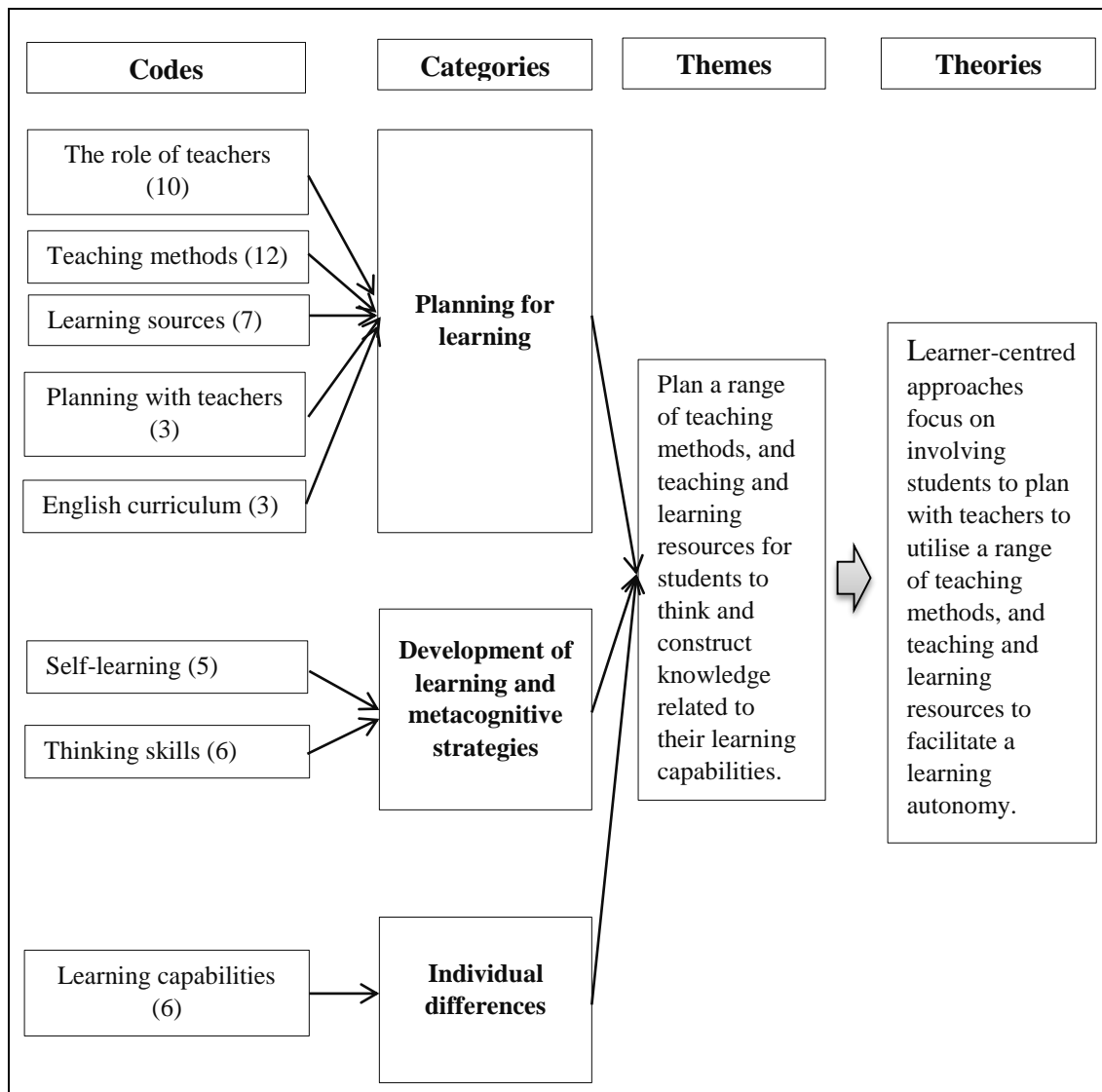
**1. Sample of the semi-structure interview data coding**

| Interview data  | Codes   |
|---|---|
| <b>MOE1</b>   |   |
| <p><b>1. How do you understand learner centred approaches?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Teachers are assistants who help students to seek knowledge and learn on their own from various learning sources.</li> </ul> <p><b>2. What is your understanding of teaching using learner-centred approaches?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Teachers need to change their teaching methods in using learner-centred approaches as teaching is not imparting knowledge. Individual students are different as they have different learning capabilities, so teachers should organise a range of teaching methods for students to learn such as task-based learning and project work.</li> </ul>   | <p> = The role of teachers</p> <p> = Self-learning</p> <p> = Learning sources</p> <p> = Teaching methods</p>                  |
| <b>ESI1</b>   |   |
| <p><b>1. How do you understand learner centred approaches?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Students are involved in planning what to learn and how to learn with teachers. Teachers have to analyse students' learning to support their learning capabilities.</li> </ul> <p><b>2. What is your understanding of teaching using learner-centred approaches?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Before teaching, teachers need to study the English curriculum to plan what to teach. In terms of learner-centred approaches, a range of learning activities should be provided to suit individual students' learning capabilities.</li> </ul>  | <p> = Learning capabilities</p> <p> = Thinking skills</p> <p> = Planning with teachers</p> <p> = English curriculum</p> |
| <b>STI1</b>   |   |
| <p><b>1. How do you understand learner centred approaches?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A learner-centred approach is a learning process emphasising students are able to think and analyse things in learning to construct knowledge on their own. Teachers are only assistants who provide advice for students in their learning.</li> </ul> <p><b>2. What is your understanding of teaching using learner-centred approaches?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Learner-centred approaches relate to the learning process that focuses on students' self-learning process that brings the benefits to their own learning. Teaching methods and techniques are emphasised for students to have the opportunity to develop their English skills such as co-operative learning. In teaching and learning activities, the emphasis is on students' opportunities to use their thinking skills to express their opinions.</li> </ul> | <p> = The role of teachers</p> <p> = Self-learning</p> <p> = Teaching methods</p> <p> = Thinking skills</p>           |

**2. Sample of the semi-structure interview data on codes and categories of the understanding of learner-centred approaches**

| <b>Code</b>            | <b>Frequency</b> | <b>Explanation</b>   | <b>Category</b>               |
|------------------------|------------------|--|-------------------------------|
| The role of teachers   | 10               | Teachers give advice to facilitate students to learn.  | <b>Planning for learning</b>  |
| Teaching methods       | 12               | Teachers utilise a range of teaching methods to facilitate students' learning such as co-operative learning, task-based learning and project work. |                               |
| Learning sources       | 7                | A wide range of learning sources is used to support students' constructing knowledge.  |                               |
| Planning with teachers | 3                | Students are involved in planning what to learn and how to learn with teachers.  |                               |
| English curriculum     | 3                | Teachers study the English curriculum to plan what to teach.   |                               |
| Self-learning          | 5                | Students seek and construct knowledge on their own.  |                               |
| Thinking skills        | 6                | Students use their thinking skills to find solutions.  |                               |
| Learning capabilities  | 6                | The students' capabilities in learning   | <b>Individual differences</b> |

### 3. Sample of semi-structured interview data coding chart



**Appendix P: Sample of the student focus group interview data preliminary analysis on the understanding of learner-centred approaches**

**1. Sample of the student focus group data coding**

| Student focus group data   | Codes   |
|--|---|
| <p><b>SSF1</b></p> <p><b>1. What English teaching and learning activities do you usually learn in English classes?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We normally study English in the classroom without <b>technology</b> support. The English <b>textbook</b> is used in our learning. A teacher typically <b>presents a lesson</b> and the <b>Thai</b> language is frequently used. We take notes of <b>new words</b> and search for their meanings then complete <b>worksheets</b>. We also learn to speak by using <b>a prepared dialogue</b>. The teacher sometimes writes the dialogue on the blackboard then <b>models of speaking</b> instead of using a CD. We practise it in <b>pairs</b> and present it in class. In terms of reading, we <b>read comprehensive passages</b> and <b>answer the questions</b> from those passages. We play <b>games</b>, such as Bingo and matching words and pictures. We typically <b>work individually</b> to complete tasks. We sometimes work in <b>groups</b> to do the <b>reports</b> and <b>present</b> them in class using both English and Thai.</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><span style="color:blue">■</span> = Technology</li> <li><span style="color:olive">■</span> = Textbook</li> <li><span style="color:gold">■</span> = Present a lesson</li> <li><span style="color:cyan">■</span> = Thai</li> <li><span style="color:orange">■</span> = New words</li> <li><span style="color:green">■</span> = Worksheets</li> <li><span style="color:yellow">■</span> = A prepared dialogue</li> <li><span style="color:lightgrey">■</span> = Model of speaking</li> <li><span style="color:gold">■</span> = Pairs</li> <li><span style="color:lightcoral">■</span> = Reading passages</li> <li><span style="color:green">■</span> = Answer questions</li> <li><span style="color:lightpink">■</span> = Games</li> <li><span style="color:magenta">■</span> = Work individually</li> <li><span style="color:blue">■</span> = Groups</li> <li><span style="color:lightblue">■</span> = Reports</li> <li><span style="color:lightblue">■</span> = Presentation</li> <li><span style="color:lightgreen">■</span> = Whole class</li> <li><span style="color:magenta">■</span> = Assess</li> <li><span style="color:blue">■</span> = Mobile phones</li> <li><span style="color:yellow">■</span> = Dictionaries</li> <li><span style="color:lightpink">■</span> = Internet</li> </ul> |
| <p><b>ESF1</b></p> <p><b>1. What English teaching and learning activities do you usually learn in English classes?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We commonly use English <b>textbooks</b> in our learning. We follow the content from the textbooks and learn <b>new words</b>. Then we are assigned to do <b>worksheets</b> <b>individually</b> or <b>groups</b>, but mostly we individually complete the worksheets. Sometimes we learn English through <b>a prepared dialogue</b>. A teacher reads the prepared dialogue then we repeat it. Sometimes the teacher divides students into two <b>groups</b> to practise the prepared dialogue in the <b>whole class</b>. Some students are randomly chosen to converse the dialogue in class. Then we practise the dialogue with our <b>pairs</b> before presenting it to the teacher. The teacher <b>assesses</b> our speaking in class. Besides, we read and translate <b>reading passages</b>. We often use our <b>mobile phones</b> to help us with the translation as <b>dictionaries</b> provided are insufficient. Moreover, the <b>internet</b> is quite weak and it does not cover all classroom areas. The teacher will explain the reading passage in <b>Thai</b> if we do not understand its content.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><span style="color:blue">■</span> = Technology</li> <li><span style="color:olive">■</span> = Textbook</li> <li><span style="color:gold">■</span> = Present a lesson</li> <li><span style="color:cyan">■</span> = Thai</li> <li><span style="color:orange">■</span> = New words</li> <li><span style="color:green">■</span> = Worksheets</li> <li><span style="color:yellow">■</span> = A prepared dialogue</li> <li><span style="color:lightgrey">■</span> = Model of speaking</li> <li><span style="color:gold">■</span> = Pairs</li> <li><span style="color:lightcoral">■</span> = Reading passages</li> <li><span style="color:green">■</span> = Answer questions</li> <li><span style="color:lightpink">■</span> = Games</li> <li><span style="color:magenta">■</span> = Work individually</li> <li><span style="color:blue">■</span> = Groups</li> <li><span style="color:lightblue">■</span> = Reports</li> <li><span style="color:lightblue">■</span> = Presentation</li> <li><span style="color:lightgreen">■</span> = Whole class</li> <li><span style="color:magenta">■</span> = Assess</li> <li><span style="color:blue">■</span> = Mobile phones</li> <li><span style="color:yellow">■</span> = Dictionaries</li> <li><span style="color:lightpink">■</span> = Internet</li> </ul> |

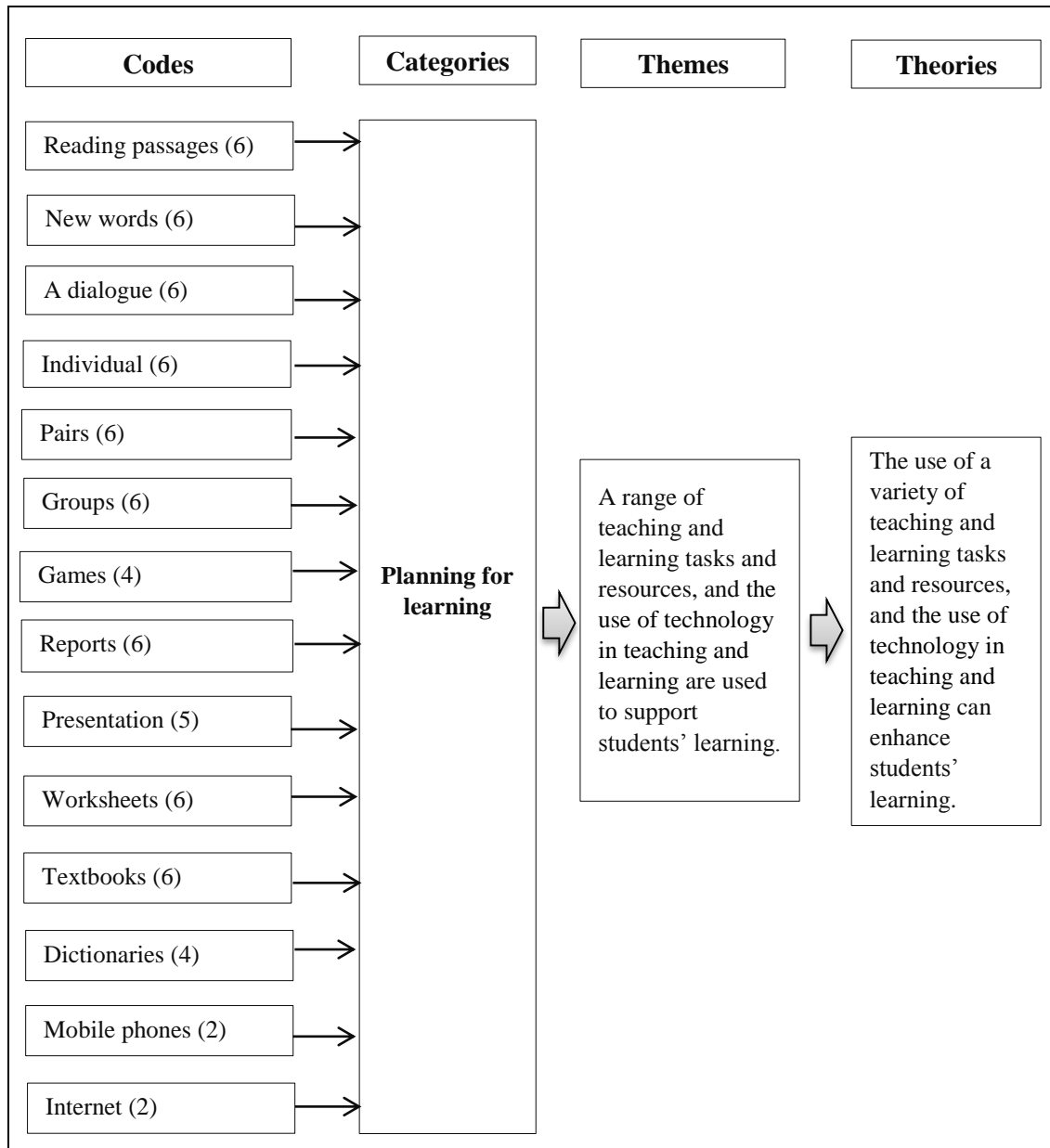
**2. Sample of the student focus group data developed from descriptive to abstract codes**

| <b>Codes</b>     | <b>Sub-categories</b> | <b>Sub-categories</b>                                 | <b>Categories</b>            |
|------------------|-----------------------|---|------------------------------|
| Reading passages | <b>Tasks</b>          | <b>Teaching and learning tasks and resources</b>      | <b>Planning for learning</b> |
| New words        |                       |   |                              |
| A dialogue       |                       |   |                              |
| Individual       |                       |   |                              |
| Pairs            |                       |   |                              |
| Groups           |                       |   |                              |
| Games            |                       |   |                              |
| Reports          |                       |   |                              |
| Presentation     |                       |   |                              |
| Worksheets       |                       |   |                              |
| Textbooks        | <b>Resources</b>      |   |                              |
| Dictionaries     |                       |   |                              |
| Mobile phones    |                       |   |                              |
| Internet         | <b>Technology</b>     | <b>The use of technology in teaching and learning</b> |                              |

### 3. Sample of the student focus group interview data on codes and categories of the understanding of learner-centred approaches

| Code             | Frequency | Explanation  | Category                                       |
|------------------|-----------|--|--|
| Reading passages | 6         | Students read and answer questions from the reading passages.      | Teaching and learning tasks                    |
| New words        | 6         | Students study the meanings of new words.                          |  |
| A dialogue       | 6         | Students practice speaking skill through a prepared dialogue.      |  |
| Individual       | 6         | Students learn individually.                                       |  |
| Pairs            | 6         | Student practise in pairs.   |  |
| Groups           | 6         | Students work in small groups.                                     |  |
| Games            | 6         | Students learn through games.                                      |  |
| Reports          | 4         | Students do reports in small groups.                               |  |
| Presentation     | 5         | Each student group presents the reports in class.                  |  |
| Worksheets       | 6         | Students complete worksheets after learning the content.           |  |
| Textbooks        | 6         | Textbooks are used in teaching and learning in class.              | Teaching and learning resources                |
| Dictionaries     | 4         | Students use dictionaries to search for the meanings of the words. |  |
| Mobile phones    | 2         | Students use mobile phones as tools to search for words' meanings. |  |
| Internet         | 2         | Students use the internet to access online learning resources.     | The use of technology in teaching and learning |

#### 4. Sample of student focus group data coding chart



**Appendix Q: Questionnaire and Interview data on participants' understanding of learner-centred approaches**

**1. Questionnaire data on participants' understanding of learner-centred approaches**

| <b>Key ideas</b>  | <b>Patterns</b>  |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teachers are facilitators, advisors or observers.</li> <li>• Teachers understand curriculum (school curriculum) and then create lesson plans to teach.</li> <li>• Involve students to plan what to learn with teachers.</li> <li>• Students participate in assessment and evaluation</li> <li>• Individual differences</li> <li>• Students' learning capabilities, students' needs and students' interests.</li> <br/> <li>• A wide range of teaching methods (Cooperative learning)</li> <li>• Use a range of learning activities (games and songs)</li> <li>• Use a range of resources (pictures)</li> <li>• Appropriate learning environment</li> <br/> <li>• Students' participation in doing activities</li> <li>• Self-learning</li> <li>• Work in teams (pairs and groups)</li> <li>• Promote thinking</li> <br/> <li>• A range of assessments</li> <li>• Self-assessment</li> <li>• Peer assessment</li> <li>• Authentic assessment</li> </ul> | <p><b>Planning/Preparation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Curriculum</li> <li>• The role of teachers</li> <li>• Student involvement</li> <li>• Individual differences</li> <li>• Motivation</li> </ul> <p><b>Teaching</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A range of teaching methods</li> <li>• A range of teaching and learning activities</li> <li>• A range of teaching and learning resources</li> <li>• The use of technology in teaching and learning</li> </ul> <p><b>Learning</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participation in learning activities</li> <li>• Self-learning</li> <li>• Work in pairs or groups</li> <li>• Thinking</li> </ul> <p><b>Assessment</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A range of assessments</li> <li>• Self-assessment</li> <li>• Peer assessment</li> <li>• Authentic assessment</li> </ul> |

## 2. Interview data on participants' understanding of learner-centred approaches

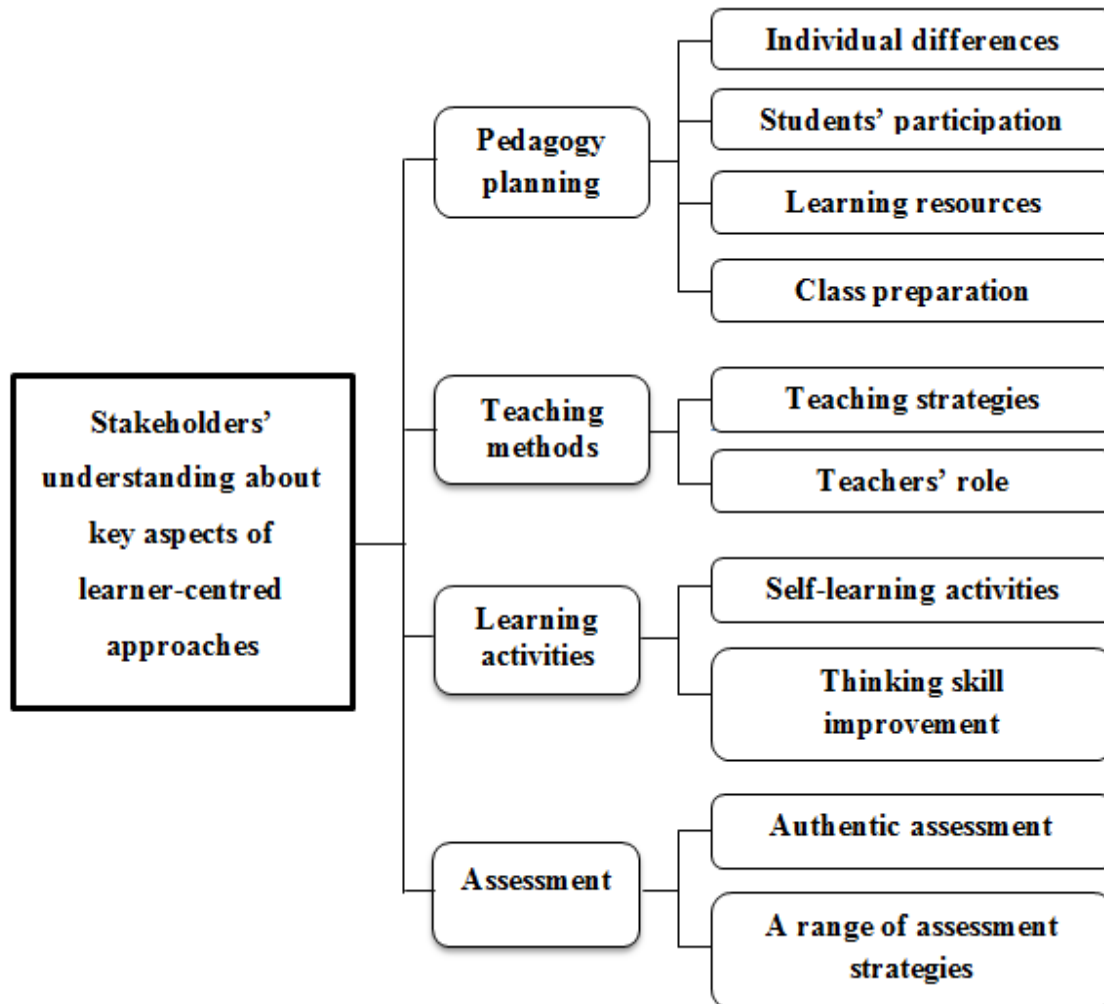
| Key ideas   | Patterns   |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teachers are advisors and facilitators.</li> <li>• Teachers assign topics and activities related to the curriculum.</li> <li>• Students participate in planning. They design and choose what to learn.</li> <li>• Individual differences: Students' needs students' interests and learning capabilities</li> <li>• Pre-test and students grades to know their primarily background</li> <li>• Students' proficiency analysis (pre-test, vocab, reading, writing and answering questions)</li> <br/> <li>• A variety of teaching methods (Grammars, language for communication in the real context, Cooperative learning (Pair or groups-mixed abilities), project work, task based learning)</li> <li>• A variety of learning activities (Worksheets, short conversations-pairs, mind maps, vocab, games, situations, brainstorming and creating cards)</li> <li>• Online materials</li> <br/> <li>• Students participate in learning activities.</li> <li>• Think and analyse things.</li> <li>• Self-learning</li> <br/> <li>• Authentic assessment (based on students' abilities)</li> <li>• Self-assessment</li> </ul> | <p><b>Planning/Preparation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Curriculum</li> <li>• The role of teachers</li> <li>• Student involvement</li> <li>• Individual differences</li> <li>• Motivation</li> </ul> <p><b>Teaching</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A range of teaching methods</li> <li>• A range of teaching and learning activities</li> <li>• Teaching and learning resources</li> </ul> <p><b>Learning</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participation in learning activities</li> <li>• Self-learning</li> <li>• Work in pairs or groups</li> <li>• Thinking</li> </ul> <p><b>Assessment</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Authentic assessment</li> <li>• Self-assessment</li> </ul> |

### 3. Questionnaire and Interview data on participants' understanding of learner-centred approaches

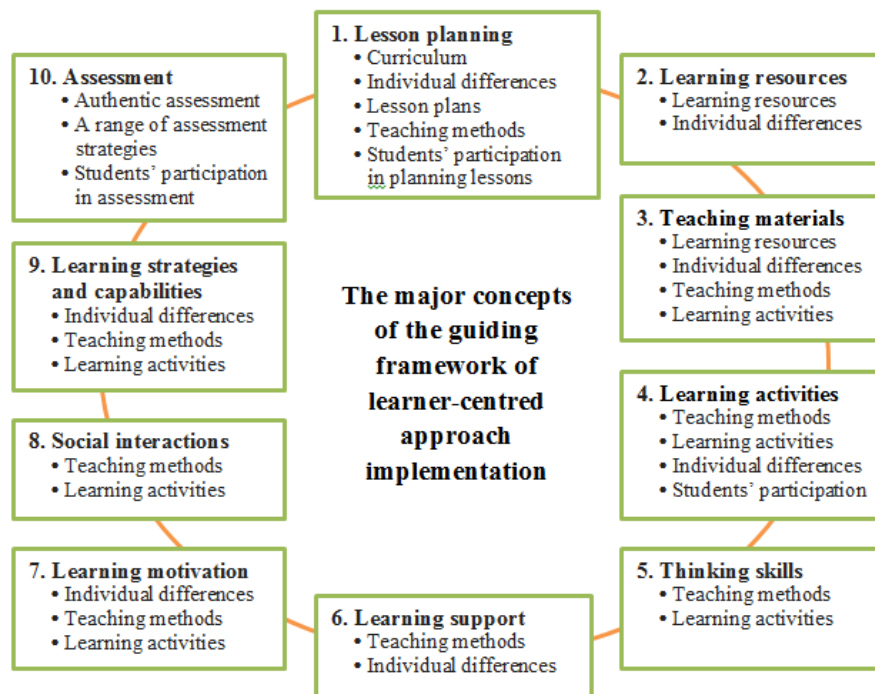
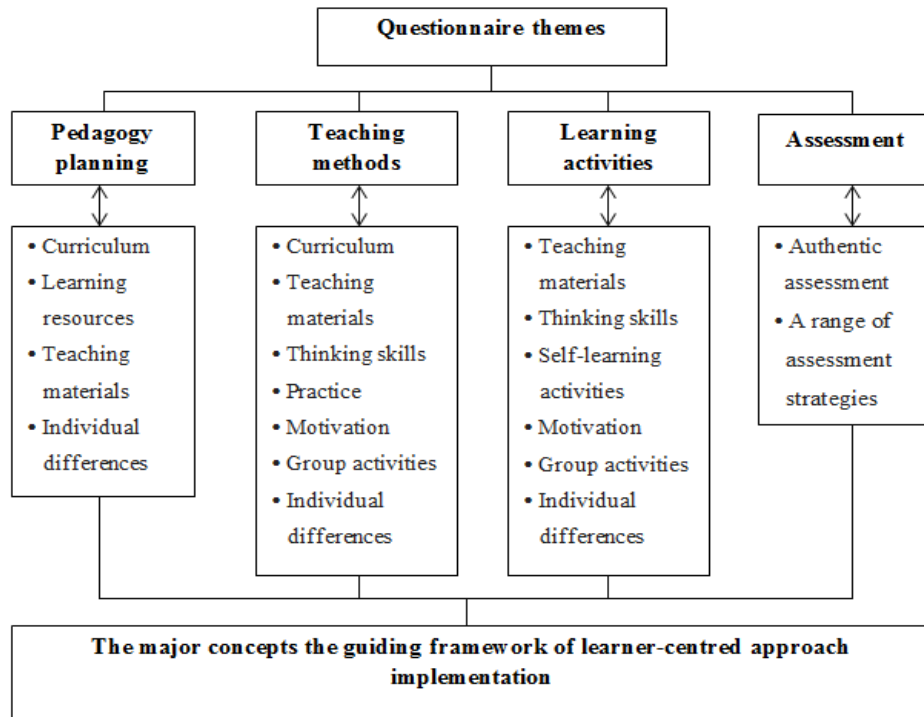
| Key ideas  | Patterns  |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teachers are facilitators, advisors, assistants, coaches or observers.</li> </ul>   | <p><b>The role of teachers</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Facilitators</li> <li>• Advisors</li> <li>• Assistants</li> <li>• Observers</li> <li>• Coaches</li> </ul>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students participate in planning what to learn with teachers as well as assessing and evaluating their learning.</li> <li>• Individual differences: Students' learning capabilities, students' needs and students' interests.</li> <li>• Curriculum: create lesson plans.</li> </ul>  | <p><b>Planning/Preparation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Curriculum</li> <li>• Student involvement</li> <li>• Individual differences</li> <li>• Motivation</li> </ul>  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A wide range of teaching methods (Grammars, language for communication, Cooperative learning, task-based learning)</li> <li>• Use a range of learning activities (vocab, worksheets, short conversations, role-play, mind maps, situations, brainstorming, games, songs, creating cards and projects,)</li> <li>• Use a range of resources (textbooks, worksheets, pictures, online materials)</li> <li>• Appropriate learning environment</li> </ul> | <p><b>Teaching</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A range of teaching methods</li> <li>• A range of teaching and learning activities</li> <li>• A range of teaching and learning resources</li> <li>• The use of technology in teaching and learning</li> </ul> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students' participation in doing activities</li> <li>• Self-learning</li> <li>• Work in teams (pairs and groups)</li> <li>• Promote thinking</li> </ul>   | <p><b>Learning</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participation in learning activities</li> <li>• Self-learning</li> <li>• Work in pairs or groups</li> <li>• Thinking and analysing</li> </ul>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A range of assessments</li> <li>• Self-assessment</li> <li>• Peer assessment</li> <li>• Authentic assessment</li> </ul>   | <p><b>Assessment</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A range of assessments</li> <li>• Self-assessment</li> <li>• Peer assessment</li> <li>• Authentic assessment</li> </ul>   |

**Appendix R: The initial drafts of the guiding framework of the learner-centred approach integrated to the themes emerged from questionnaires**

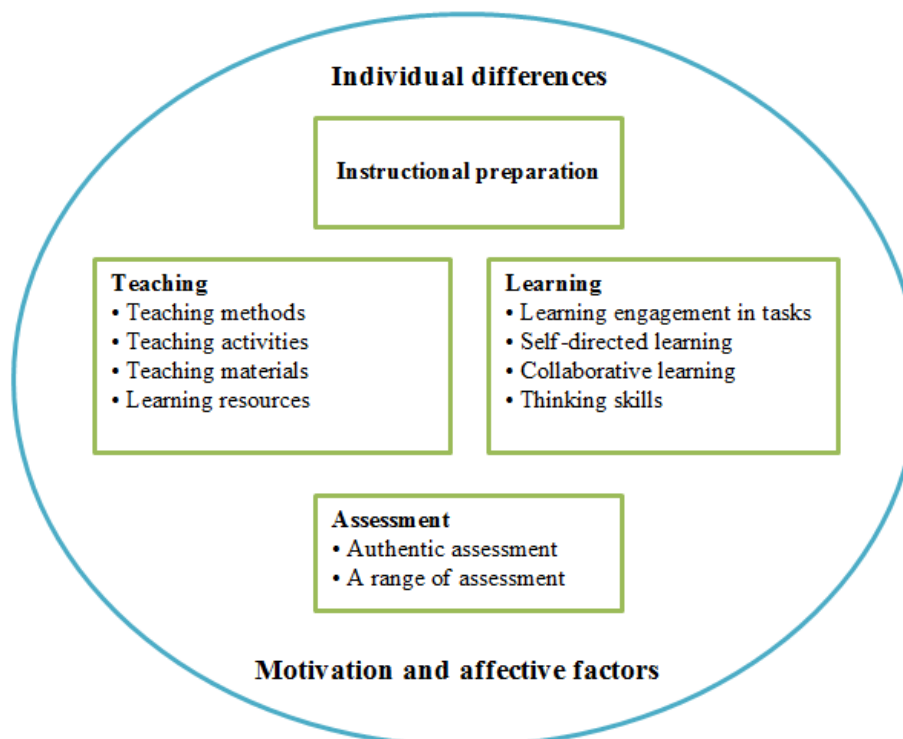
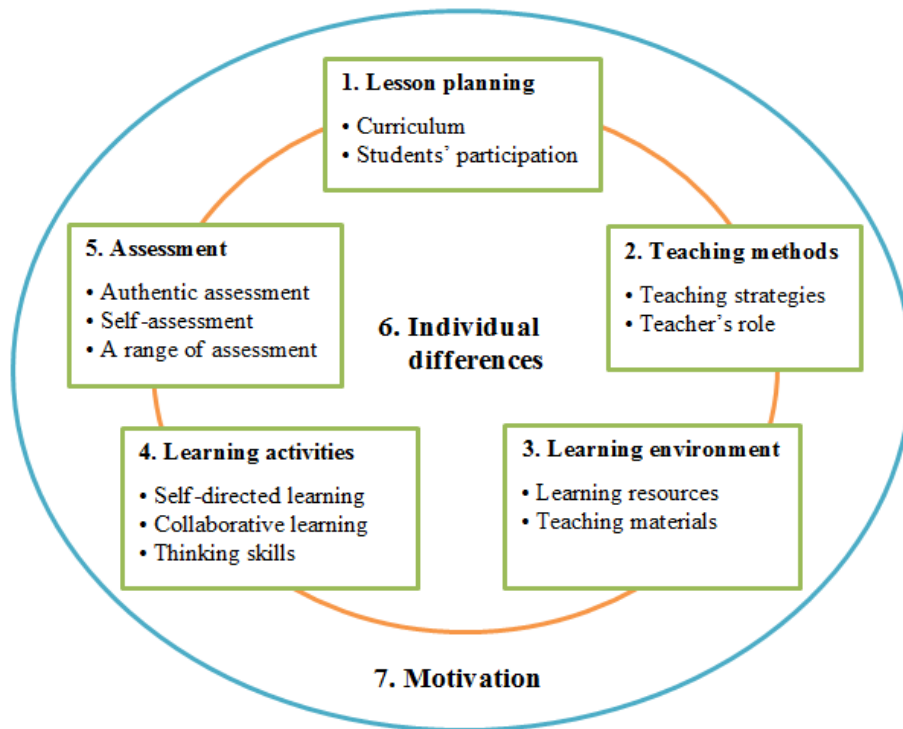
**1. The questionnaire themes**



2. The integration of the questionnaire themes and the major concepts of the guiding framework of learner-centred approach implementation



### 3. The initial drafts of guiding framework of the learner-centred approach



## Appendix S: Ethics Notification Letter



Date: 03 November 2015

Dear Ong-Art Namwong

Re: Ethics Notification - 4000015189 - Learner-centred Approaches in Teaching English in Thailand

Thank you for your notification which you have assessed as Low Risk.

Your project has been recorded in our system which is reported in the Annual Report of the Massey University Human Ethics Committee.

The low risk notification for this project is valid for a maximum of three years.

If situations subsequently occur which cause you to reconsider your ethical analysis, please contact a Research Ethics Administrator.

Please note that travel undertaken by students must be approved by the supervisor and the relevant Pro Vice-Chancellor and be in accordance with the Policy and Procedures for Course-Related Student Travel Overseas. In addition, the supervisor must advise the University's Insurance Officer.

**A reminder to include the following statement on all public documents:**

*"This project has been evaluated by peer review and judged to be low risk. Consequently, it has not been reviewed by one of the University's Human Ethics Committees. The researcher(s) named in this document are responsible for the ethical conduct of this research."*

*If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research that you want to raise with someone other than the researcher(s), please contact Dr Brian Finch, Director - Ethics, telephone 06 3569099 ext 86015, email [humanethics@massey.ac.nz](mailto:humanethics@massey.ac.nz).*

Please note, if a sponsoring organisation, funding authority or a journal in which you wish to publish requires evidence of committee approval (with an approval number), you will have to complete the application form again, answering "yes" to the publication question to provide more information for one of the University's Human Ethics Committees. You should also note that such an approval can only be provided prior to the commencement of the research.

Yours sincerely

Dr Brian Finch  
Chair, Human Ethics Chairs' Committee and Director (Research Ethics)

## **Appendix T: Information sheets**

### **1. A questionnaire information sheet**

#### **LEARNER-CENTRED APPROACHES IN TEACHING ENGLISH IN THAILAND**

##### **INFORMATION SHEET FOR QUESTIONNAIRE**

**Dear .....**

#### **Project Description and Invitation**

This research project will provide an opportunity for you to discuss and reflect your experiences for the implementation of learner-centred approaches. The findings from this research may be used by the policymakers to solve the current English teaching problems, develop English teaching and learning in Thai classrooms and support what English teachers need to improve English teaching for the benefits of both English teachers and students.

Since you are a potential participant, I would like to invite you to participate in my research. To complete a questionnaire should approximately take 15 minutes. If you agree to participate in this research, you should return the questionnaire that you have filled out to the school secretary by using the stamped addressed envelope provided. To return the questionnaire to me will imply your consent that you agree to participate in this research.

#### **Data Management**

The data from the questionnaires will be stored securely. According to Massey University policy, the data will be disposed of after seven years.

#### **Participant's Rights**

Your identity will only be known by me as the researcher. The information that you provide will be used for the purpose of this research only. Pseudonyms will be used to protect participant anonymity.

You are under no obligation to accept this invitation. If you decide to participate, you have the right to:

- decline to answer any particular question;
- withdraw from the study at any time during the data collection process without any effect;
- ask any questions about the study at any time during participation;
- be given access to a summary of the project findings when it is concluded.

The data obtained will be analysed and written up as my doctoral thesis after finishing the data collection process. It will be disseminated the findings of the research in the conferences as well as publish the findings in a related peer review journal.

I appreciate your valuable time and assistance. I hope that you will consider participating in this research. Please return the questionnaire you have filled out to the school secretary

within 2 weeks. If you have any questions or concerns regarding this research, please feel free to contact me or my supervisors via the contact details below.

Yours sincerely,  
Ong-Art

**Names and contact details of the researcher and supervisors:**

**Researcher**

Ong-Art Namwong  
TESOL programme,  
Faculty of Education,  
Khon Kaen University,  
Muang, Khon Kaen 40002  
E-mail address: [ongartna@kku.ac.th](mailto:ongartna@kku.ac.th)  
Mobile phone: [REDACTED]

**Supervisors**

1. Dr. Karen Ashton  
([K.Ashton@massey.ac.nz](mailto:K.Ashton@massey.ac.nz))  
Telephone: +64 (06) 356 9099 ext. 84445
2. Dr. Alyson McGee  
([A.McGee@massey.ac.nz](mailto:A.McGee@massey.ac.nz))  
Telephone: +64 (06) 356 9099 ext. 84449  
Institute of Education, Massey University,  
Private bag 11222, Palmerston North,  
4442, New Zealand

**Committee Approval Statement**

This project has been evaluated by peer review and judged to be low risk. Consequently it has not been reviewed by one of the University's Human Ethics Committees. The researcher(s) named in this document are responsible for the ethical conduct of this research. If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research that you want to raise with someone other than the researcher(s), please contact Dr Brian Finch, Director (Research Ethics), and email: [humanethics@massey.ac.nz](mailto:humanethics@massey.ac.nz). The reference number is 4000015189.

## 2. An interview information sheet

### LEARNER-CENTRED APPROACHES IN TEACHING ENGLISH IN THAILAND

#### INFORMATION SHEET FOR INTERVIEW

Dear .....

#### **Project Description and Invitation**

This research project will provide an opportunity for you to discuss and reflect your experiences for the implementation of learner-centred approaches. The findings from this research may be used by the policymakers to solve the current English teaching problems, develop English teaching and learning in Thai classrooms and support what English teachers need to improve English teaching for the benefits of both English teachers and students.

Since you are a potential participant, I would like to invite you to participate in my research. An interview should approximately take 90 minutes. If you agree to participate in this research, you should return a Consent Form to me using the stamped addressed envelope provided.

#### **Data Management**

The data from the interview transcripts will be stored securely. The data and the Consent Forms will be stored separately. According to Massey University policy, the data will be disposed of after seven years.

#### **Participant's Rights**

Your identity will only be known by me as the researcher. The information that you provide will be used for the purpose of his research only. Pseudonyms will be used to protect participant anonymity.

You are under no obligation to accept this invitation. If you decide to participate, you have the right to:

- decline to answer any particular question;
- withdraw from the study at any time during the data collection process without negative effect;
- ask any questions about the study at any time during participation;
- be given access to a summary of the project findings when it is concluded.
- ask for the tape recorder to be turned off at any time during the interview.

The data obtained will be analysed and written up as my doctoral thesis after finishing the data collection process. It will be disseminated the findings of the research in the conferences as well as publish the findings in a related peer review journal.

I appreciate your valuable time and assistance. I hope that you will consider participating in this research. Please allow me to have the appointment at your convenience for the interview. If you have any questions or concerns regarding this research, please feel free to contact me or my supervisors via the contact details below.

Yours sincerely,  
Ong-Art

**Names and contact details of the researcher and supervisors:**

**Researcher**

Ong-Art Namwong  
TESOL programme,  
Faculty of Education,  
Khon Kaen University,  
Muang, Khon Kaen 40002  
E-mail address: [ongartna@kku.ac.th](mailto:ongartna@kku.ac.th)  
Mobile phone: [REDACTED]

**Supervisors**

1. Dr. Karen Ashton  
([K.Ashton@massey.ac.nz](mailto:K.Ashton@massey.ac.nz))  
Telephone: +64 (06) 356 9099 ext. 84445
2. Dr. Alyson McGee  
([A.McGee@massey.ac.nz](mailto:A.McGee@massey.ac.nz))  
Telephone: +64 (06) 356 9099 ext. 84449  
Institute of Education, Massey University,  
Private bag 11222, Palmerston North,  
4442, New Zealand

**Committee Approval Statement**

This project has been evaluated by peer review and judged to be low risk. Consequently it has not been reviewed by one of the University's Human Ethics Committees. The researcher(s) named in this document are responsible for the ethical conduct of this research. If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research that you want to raise with someone other than the researcher(s), please contact Dr Brian Finch, Director (Research Ethics), and email: [humanethics@massey.ac.nz](mailto:humanethics@massey.ac.nz). The reference number is 4000015189.

### **3. A student focus group information sheet**

#### **LEARNER-CENTRED APPROACHES IN TEACHING ENGLISH IN THAILAND**

##### **INFORMATION SHEET FOR STUDENT FOCUS GROUP**

**Dear Student,**

I would like to introduce myself and tell you about my research. My name is Ong-Art Namwong. I am a full-time doctoral student within the Institute of Education, College of Humanities and Social Sciences, Massey University, New Zealand. I am conducting my research entitled Learner-centred Approaches in Teaching English in Thailand. My research supervisors are Dr. Karen Ashton and Dr. Alyson McGee.

#### **Project Description and Invitation**

This research project will provide an opportunity for you to discuss and reflect your understanding and opinions of learner-centred approaches. The findings from this research may be used by the policymakers to solve the current English teaching problems, develop English teaching and learning in Thai classrooms and support what English teachers need to improve English teaching for the benefits of both English teachers and students.

Since you are a potential participant, I would like to invite you to participate in my research. A focus group discussion should approximately take 45 minutes. If you agree to participate in this research, you should return a Consent Form to me using the stamped addressed envelope provided. If you are under 16 years of age, your parental consents will be requested. I will ask you to take the Information Sheets and Consent Forms for your parents to read and sign the Consent Forms. If your parents agree to give their consents for you to participate in the research, you will return your parents' Consent Forms to the school secretary using stamped address envelopes provided.

#### **Participant Identification and Recruitment**

I have randomly selected 6-10 students who studied in English classes of English teachers in your school. There will be three student focus groups from your school. Each student focus group will be asked to discuss typical teaching and learning activities implemented by English teachers in the classrooms.

#### **Data Management**

The data from the interview transcripts will be stored securely. The data and the Consent Forms will be stored separately. According to Massey University policy, the data will be disposed of after seven years.

#### **Participant's Rights**

Your identity will only be known by me as the researcher. The information that you provide will be used for the purpose of his research only. Data will be analysed at group level and individuals will not be able to be identified.

You are under no obligation to accept this invitation. If you decide to participate, you have the right to:

- decline to answer any particular question;
- withdraw from the study at any time during the data collection process without negative effect;
- ask any questions about the study at any time during participation;
- be given access to a summary of the project findings when it is concluded;
- ask for the tape recorder to be turned off at any time during the interview.
- send you a summary of the transcript to verify the correctness.

The data obtained will be analysed and written up as my doctoral thesis after finishing the data collection process. It will be disseminated the findings of the research in the conferences as well as publish the findings in a related peer review journal.

I appreciate your valuable time and assistance. I hope that you will consider participating in this research. Please allow me to have the appointment at your convenience for the focus group discussions. If you have any questions or concerns regarding this research, please feel free to contact me or my supervisors via the contact details below.

Yours sincerely,  
Ong-Art

#### **Names and contact details of the researcher and supervisors:**

##### **Researcher**

Ong-Art Namwong  
TESOL programme,  
Faculty of Education,  
Khon Kaen University,  
Muang, Khon Kaen 40002  
E-mail address: [ongartna@kku.ac.th](mailto:ongartna@kku.ac.th)  
Mobile phone: [REDACTED]

##### **Supervisors**

1. Dr. Karen Ashton  
([K.Ashton@massey.ac.nz](mailto:K.Ashton@massey.ac.nz))  
Telephone: +64 (06) 356 9099 ext. 84445
2. Dr. Alyson McGee  
([A.McGee@massey.ac.nz](mailto:A.McGee@massey.ac.nz))  
Telephone: +64 (06) 356 9099 ext. 84449  
Institute of Education, Massey University,  
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4442, New Zealand

#### **Committee Approval Statement**

This project has been evaluated by peer review and judged to be low risk. Consequently it has not been reviewed by one of the University's Human Ethics Committees. The researcher(s) named in this document are responsible for the ethical conduct of this research. If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research that you want to raise with someone other than the researcher(s), please contact Dr Brian Finch, Director (Research Ethics), and email: [humanethics@massey.ac.nz](mailto:humanethics@massey.ac.nz). The reference number is 4000015189.

## Appendix U: Consent forms

### 1. An interview consent form

#### LEARNER-CENTRED APPROACHES IN TEACHING ENGLISH IN THAILAND

##### PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM FOR INTERVIEW

I have read the Information Sheet and have had the details of the study explained to me. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I understand that I may ask further questions at any time.

**Please tick (✓) your choice below.**

I agree to the interview being sound recorded.

Yes       No

I agree to get the interview transcript, validate any parts if I wish, and return it to the researcher within two weeks. If the transcript is not returned this implies that the interview transcript is a valid representation of what I said.

Yes       No

I agree to participate in this study under the conditions set out in the Information Sheet. I agree that the edited transcript and extracts from this may be used in reports and publications arising from the research and my responses will be anonymous.

**Signature:** ..... **Date:** .....

**Full Name - printed** .....

## 2. A student focus group consent form

### LEARNER-CENTRED APPROACHES IN TEACHING ENGLISH IN THAILAND

#### FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

I have read the Information Sheet and have had the details of the study explained to me. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I understand that I may ask further questions at any time.

**Please tick (✓) your choice below.**

I agree to the focus group being sound recorded.

Yes       No

I agree to get a summary of the transcript, validate any parts if I wish, and return it to the researcher within two weeks. If the transcript is not returned this implies that the summary of transcript is a valid representation of what was said at the focus group.

Yes       No

I agree not to disclose anything discussed in the Focus Group.

I agree to participate in this study under the conditions set out in the Information Sheet.

**Signature:** ..... **Date:** .....

**Full Name - printed** .....

### 3. A parent consent form for a student focus group

#### LEARNER-CENTRED APPROACHES IN TEACHING ENGLISH IN THAILAND

#### FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANT'S PARENT CONSENT FORM

I have read the Information Sheet and have had the details of the study explained to me. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I understand that I may ask further questions at any time.

**Please tick (✓) your choice below.**

I agree to the focus group being sound recorded.

Yes       No

I agree that my son or daughter will get a summary of the transcript, validate any parts if they wish, and return it to the researcher within two weeks. If the transcript is not returned this implies that the summary of transcript is a valid representation of what was said at the focus group.

Yes       No

My son or daughter agrees not to disclose anything discussed in the Focus Group. I agree to allow.....who is my .....to participate in this study under the conditions set out in the Information Sheet.

**Signature:** ..... **Date:** .....

**Full Name - printed** .....