



**THAI UNIVERSITY STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF  
THE LEARNER-CENTRED APPROACH**

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## ABSTRACT

Thailand's National Educational Act mandated in 1999 has demanded significant change to Thai education norms from a traditional teacher-centred to a learner-centred approach (LCA). However, despite enormous efforts on behalf of the Thai government to restructure Thai education, the adoption of the new approach has been riddled with challenges and existing literature indicates that Western-developed learner-centred concepts may entail assumptions and cultural values that are not normally found in Thai learners' thinking and learning behaviours. Since perceptions and beliefs can have a profound influence on learning behaviour (Cotterall, 1995), understanding students' perceptions of the approach will potentially contribute to improvement in the implementation of the approach in Thailand.

This study reports findings on the LCA from the perceptions and experience of 37 second-year undergraduate students in an English literature module over a 16-week semester and examines whether local cultural traits, such as social hierarchy or social harmony, were reflected in their views. The students were asked for their perceptions of learner-centred principles based on Weimer's (2002) five key components: the balance of power, the function of content, the role of the teacher, the responsibility for learning, and the purpose and processes of evaluation. A multiple method design that combines quantitative (pre- and post- questionnaires) and qualitative (learning diaries, classroom observations and semi-structured interviews) research methods was employed.

The findings reveal that the students held positive perceptions of the learner-centred classroom practice, indicating a developmental path for a constructivist learning environment. Evidence from this study indicates that Thai students' perceptions do not reflect their adherence to passive learning styles, as has widely been posited in the literature. However, despite the students' positive attitudes, the findings also show cultural and behavioural barriers in their adjustment to a more active learning style. In order to overcome these barriers, this study proposes three initial steps to facilitate students' adjustment to a learner-centred learning environment.

The study contributes to the international literature regarding the LCA and its implementation in developing countries and allows teachers, educators and curriculum designers to understand learner-centred teaching and learning from the perspectives of Thai learners. It provides an avenue for debate and consideration on the importance of the need to weave learners' perceptions and contextual implications into the application of the

## **DEDICATION**

To the soul of my father

To my dear mother

To my aunt, Nittaya, and

To the memory of my aunt, Tatsanai, and my uncle-in-law, Boonchai, who left me before this  
journey ended.

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CLT	Communicative language teaching
EFL	English as a foreign language
ESL	English as a second language
LCA	Learner-centred approach
PBL	Problem-based learning
QUAN	Quantitative
QUA	Qualitative
TBL	Team-based learning
TCA	Teacher-centred approach
ZPD	Zone of proximal development



# **Chapter 1. Introduction**

## **1.1 Introduction**

This research explores Thai university students' perceptions of the learner-centred approach (LCA) and investigates whether cultural beliefs influence students' views of this approach. In order to justify the rationale and the aims of this study, this chapter starts with a brief introduction to Thailand and its current education system, focusing on the pedagogical reform and the English language curriculum. The research questions are then presented and the significance of the study is outlined. Finally, the chapter concludes with the organisation of the research.

## **1.2 Context of the study**

### ***1.2.1 The structure of Thailand's education***

The context of this study is Thailand, which is a developing country with a population of more than 68 million, meaning that it is on the developing path of sustained economic growth, poverty reduction and equal public education (The World Bank, 2017). The current education structure in Thailand is under the National Education Act 1999 (B.E.2542), which brought about considerable changes to the Thai education system. The Act, which was amended in 2002, stipulated an equal right to 12 years of free basic education for all Thai citizens. The basic education system is divided into a 6-3-3 format: primary education (Pratomsuksa 1-6: Grades 1-6), lower secondary education (Matayomsuksa 1-3: Grades 7-9), and upper secondary education (Matayomsuksa 4-6: Grades 10-12) and this was extended to 14 years by adding 2 years of pre-primary schooling in May 2004 (UNESCO, 2010). A completion of Matayomsuksa 6 or equivalent is required for higher education admission. Students can either apply directly to a university or take the General Aptitude Test (GAT), combined with their Grade Point Averages (GPA) and their O-net scores (Rungwaraphong, 2012).

### ***1.2.2 The learner-centred approach in the Thai National Education Act***

Apart from changes to the basic education structure mentioned in the previous section, the 1999 National Education Act also placed the LCA as the heart of the reform. Its intention was to

promote the teaching process that allows learners to develop their learning and thinking skills for life-long learning, with consideration for their interests, aptitudes and individual differences (Figure 1.1) (Office of the National Education Commission, 1999). Termed ‘a sweeping reform’ by Atagi (2002), the reform presented a major overhaul of the education system from the prevalent teacher-centred approach (TCA) to the LCA.

However, since the LCA has been introduced, it is recognised that the reform has not had the expected or desired impact on Thai classrooms that had been hoped for (Kantamara *et al.*, 2006; Fitzpatrick, 2011). One of the reasons often cited for the lack of adoption of the approach is the uncertainty of its underlying theory and practice (Pillay, 2002; Nonkukhetkhong *et al.*, 2006). It has been reported that there exist misunderstandings and inadequate knowledge of the theoretical (principles and assumptions) and the practical (procedures and actions) nature of the new learning model among Thai teachers. Previous studies reported that many teachers misinterpreted that their role in the learner-centred classroom is minimised and students do all the learning by themselves in the new approach (Thamraksa, 2003; Nonkukhetkhong *et al.*, 2006). The underlying cause of the issue could partly be the fact that teachers have not yet been provided with a set of clear practices as to how the LCA should be carried out in practice (Atagi, 2002; Pillay, 2002; Fitzpatrick, 2011). So far, the reform only informs teachers of a broad concept of learner-centred learning as noted above. This may well have been due to the government wanting to leave some room for flexibility and to encourage teachers to be creative. However, the lack of clear practical guidance means the LCA is susceptible to multiple interpretations, which can potentially lead to a different quality of teaching and learning in different educational institutions. According to Fullan (2007), clarity is one of the crucial factors affecting the implementation process. Unspecified guidelines may generate resistance to change due to confusion and frustration as well as running the risk of superficial change when people oversimplify the proposed change (Cheewakaroon, 2011).

**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 ambience, 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.

Figure 1.1 Section 24 of the National Education Act 1999

### ***1.2.3 English language education in Thailand***

English in Thailand is taught as a foreign language (EFL) rather than a second language (ESL), partly because Thailand is the only country in Southeast Asia never to have been colonised (Laopongharn and Sercombe, 2009). In Kachru's (1998) Three Concentric Circles of Asian English, Thailand is placed in the Expanding Circle of English users. This means that English is not a native language for most Thais but is used in international communication and business (Khuvasanond, 2013). The proficiency of English became even more critical for Thai people when it was stated as the working language among the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) (Kirkpatrick, 2012). As for the basic education curriculum, a foreign language is offered as one of eight main learning subjects. According to the Ministry of Education (2008), the primary aim of learning foreign languages is to:

Enable learners to acquire a favorable attitude towards foreign languages, the ability to use foreign language for communicating in various situations, seeking knowledge, engaging in a livelihood and pursuing further education at higher levels (p. 252)

The English curriculum consists of four strands, also known as the four Cs: communication, culture, connection and communities (Ministry of Education, 2008, pp. 21-22) with specific defined learning attainments. For instance, the first standard of the connection strand requires learners to use ‘foreign languages to link knowledge with other learning areas, as a foundation for further development and to seek knowledge and widen one’s world view’ (ibid., p.274). Time allocation for learning English can be different depending on levels and schools’ capabilities. A minimum numbers of hours required for each level of basic education is shown in table 1.1 below.

<b>Level</b>	<b>Hours of teaching</b>	<b>Foreign languages on offer</b>
Primary 1-3	40 hours a year (1 hour per week)	English
Primary 4-6	80 hours a year (2 hours per week)	
Lower secondary	120 hours a year (3 hours per week)	English Other foreign languages
Upper secondary	80 hours a year + elective hours (2 hours per week+ electives)	

Table 1.1 Number of hours of English education (Adapted from Keyuravong, 2010)

The 1999 National Education Act also made changes in terms of attainment of credits and learning hours in the Thai tertiary English curriculum. To complete the degree, university students should acquire a minimum of twelve credits (instead of six, as in the past), in each of the following: English, and general English and English for academic or specific purposes (e.g. English for medicine, English for engineering, etc.). The time allocated for English is three to four periods per week, with each period ranging from 50-70 minutes, varying by individual universities. In addition to that, other changes taking place at the tertiary level include encouraging international programmes in various disciplines, exchanges of Thai and foreign students, and setting up self-access centres to allow students additional exposure to English (Darasawang, 2007). These changes suggest that promoting Thai students’ linguistic and

communicative competence was on the minds of those involved in developing education reforms.

Despite that, however, Thai learners' English proficiency is still not improving at a satisfactory rate. The National Survey conducted between 1997-1998 by the Office of Educational Testing of the Department of Curriculum and Instruction (Wiriyaichitra, 2002) showed unsatisfactory low proficiency in English writing, reading, listening and speaking skills among Thai learners. Almost twenty years on, the English proficiency of Thai students remained relatively low on TOEFL Tests (2011-2012) compared to students from other ASEAN countries such as Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines and Singapore (Noom-ura, 2013). In EF's recent English Proficiency Index review, Thailand was ranked 53th out of 80 countries (EF Education First, 2017). This naturally raised the question of why Thai students were performing poorly despite at least 12 years of learning English.

A number of various reasons have been proposed as to the cause of the relatively low English level proficiency. One of the reasons is low motivation to learn English among Thai students. It has been reported that English is considered a rather fearsome subject and the least favourite subject for some learners (Kaewmala, 2012). This may be because English is a foreign language in Thailand, and therefore most Thai students generally have little exposure to English outside the classroom. They are mainly exposed to English in the classroom, where they can learn 'when and how to say what to whom' in English (Larsen-Freeman, 2000, p. 121). However, given that most Thai students only attend English classes up to three hours per week as described earlier, it is not surprising that some students feel shy and anxious when using English as they are used to it and fear that they may not be understood (Mackenzie, 2002).

The lack of qualified teachers has also been identified as another contributor to Thai learners' unsatisfactory proficiency in English. It has been reported that many teachers in Thailand are not sufficiently qualified to teach English (Hayes, 2010). According to a survey conducted by the University of Cambridge, 60% of Thai teachers did not have adequate knowledge for teaching English and only 3% had a reasonable level of proficiency (Kaewmala, 2012). It is reported that many primary or secondary school teachers of English had not taken English as their major of studies (Dhanasobhon, 2006; Radic-Bojanic *et al.*, 2015). This may partly be because many English-majored graduates prefer to choose better-paying career options such as flight attendants or hotel staff. Therefore, it is common to find a teacher who graduated in other degrees, such as in science or physical education, to teach English to school students. The lack of English qualifications may have prompted these teachers to mostly use Thai as the medium

of instruction and rely heavily on grammatical points, drill-based activities and rote memorisation of isolated sentences (Khamkhien, 2010; Bruner *et al.*, 2014). It has been noted that Thai teachers rely mostly on the grammar-translation method and mainly focus on reading and writing exercises rather than on listening and speaking (Khamkhien, 2010; Kaur *et al.*, 2016). However, such methods have failed to equip Thai students with the expected proficiency as stated in the new English curriculum. Thus, in order to improve the quality of teaching and learning in Thailand, an educational reform was introduced. The following section presents Thailand's educational reform which was the impetus of this study.

### **1.3 Rationale for the study**

The rationale behind this study derives from two main sources. The first factor that forms the basis of this study is the aforementioned educational reform of 1999. As economic and social changes around the world become rapid and more complex, a change in education philosophies, from the teacher-led lecture form of learning to a more constructivist view of learning has become prevalent. As pointed out by Knowles (1980, p. 41), 'it is no longer functional to define education as a process of transmitting what is known; it must now be defined as a lifelong process of enquiry'. At the end of the twentieth century, the enthusiasm for learner-centred education became widespread in the educational community and the concept began to receive growing attention from research in both the general education and language learning literature (Nunan, 1988; Tudor, 1992; McCombs and Whisler, 1997; Weimer, 2002; Blumberg, 2009). Many countries, including Thailand, have endorsed the adoption of learner-centred education in their educational policies and reforms. After the economic crisis in 1997, Thailand recognised the need for strategic reforms to promote economic recovery and to keep up with the rapid social and economic changes wrapped up in globalisation. According to the Office of the National Education Commission (1999):

Thailand's relatively weak human resource base has been pinpointed as one of the underlying factors in the cause of the economic and financial crisis that has hit the country. Many have highlighted the lack of Thai graduates capable of independent analytical thought as one factor responsible for the country's economic downfall.

Realising that the education system plays a vital role as an engine for economic development (Power, 2002), the Thai government promulgated the 1999 National Education Act (ONEC, 1999) as part of the 1997 constitution, with the aim of improving the education system to create

and strengthen ‘Thai people in all aspects: physical and mental health; intellect; knowledge; morality; integrity and desirable way of life, so as to be able to live in harmony with other people’ (ibid., p.4). The Act comprises 9 chapters, with Chapter 4 considered the heart of the reform.

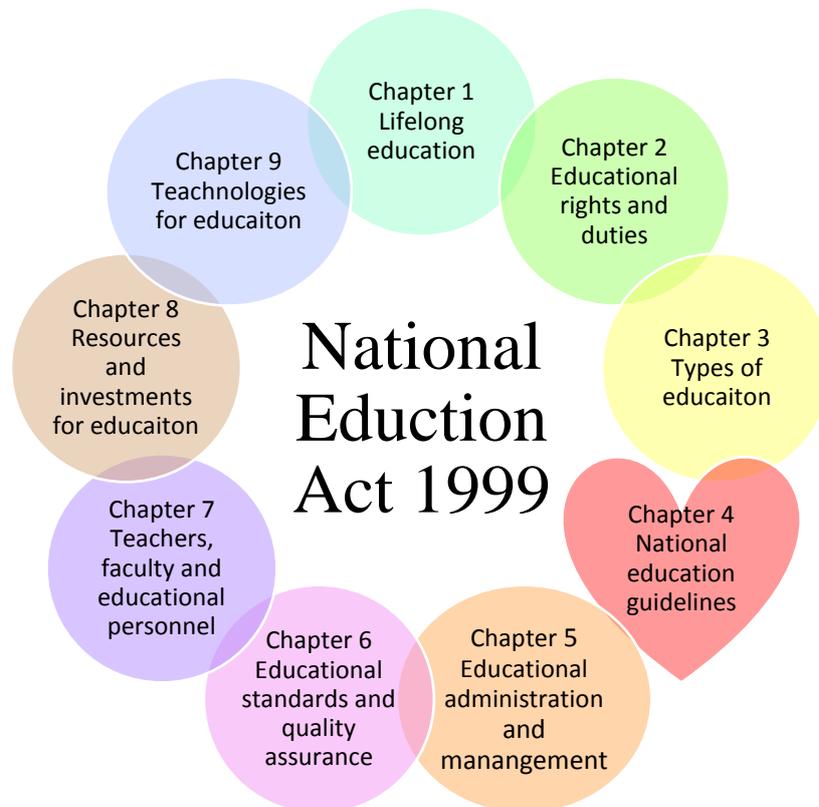


Figure 1.2 Provisions in the nine chapters of the National Education Act

Specifically, Section 22 in Chapter 4 declares that ‘all learners are capable of learning and self-development and are regarded as being most important’ (ONEC, 1999, p.10). This sends a clear message that students are now referred to as the main factor in educational reform. Section 24 in the same chapter continues with how the reform aims at changes in teaching and specifies the move to a learner-centred approach which is grounded in a constructivist view of learning (Raktham, 2008). In a constructivist classroom, teachers take into account the knowledge and experience that students bring with them and organise learning activities that allow students to actively seek out and construct their own understanding by making sense of new information based on their existing knowledge and experience (Gibbs, 1992; Harden and Crosby, 2000; Huba and Freed, 2000). In short, instead of concentrating on the subject matter or instruction, learner-centred teaching and learning address learners as knowledge discoverers. This changed emphasis to the LCA presented a major shift in Thai education. The 1999 National Education Act signals an unprecedented and long over-due break from traditional teacher-centred

approach (TCA) which was a prevalent form teaching and learning across the nation. The TCA became the subject of heavy criticism as it has been widely noted that students are not sufficiently prepared with necessary skills when the teacher are regarded as the sole expert and authority in imparting knowledge to the students in lecture-based teaching (Harden and Crosby, 2000). As this method puts the emphasis on covering the content, there is less time spent on activities that develop learning skills such as critical, analytical or problem-solving skills (Kantamara *et al.*, 2006).

However, despite the widely acknowledged inadequacies and failing of the prevailing method of education, as with many other countries which have sought to transform their education policies to keep up with the challenges of a globalised world, transition to the LCA has not been straightforward in the Thai context. Beane (1997) perceptively identified three learning styles adopted by students as unintended consequences of the traditional paradigm: *avoidance*, characterised by students' lack of participation and perhaps irregular attendance; *dependence*, characterised by students doing only what they are told; and *competitiveness*, characterised by students focusing on grades and viewing peers competitively. Beane's prognosis was further stressed by Weimer (2002), who noted that when the LCA is introduced in a predominately teacher-centred context, students may resist the LCA, as: 1) they have to put in more effort, in contrast to being told what to do; 2) they may lose their sense of security and familiarity in a new learning approach; and 3) they may feel that what is required by the approach is beyond their ability.

Consequently, it is not surprising that despite enormous effort from the government, the TCA still dominates Thai classrooms (Nonkukhetkhong *et al.*, 2006; McDonough and Chaikitmongkol, 2007). Teachers continue to transmit knowledge to students, who rely on rote memorisation and reproduction of knowledge (Fry and Bi, 2013). The continuity of the traditional approach may be due to the influence of national examinations, teachers' inadequate understandings or misconceptions of the approach or even the teachers' and learners' reluctance to let go of teaching and learning practices they have long been accustomed to (Atagi, 2002; Nonkukhetkhong *et al.*, 2006).

Additionally, it is argued that there is an incompatibility between the learner-centred principles and practices with the social and cultural values which predominate in some contexts. Schweisfurth (2015) claimed that two salient cultural values, namely hierarchical relationships and strong group orientation, in some countries may intersect with learner-centred practice. This also applies to the Thai context, where several educators and educational researchers have

argued that local cultural beliefs and values can impact the extent to which Thai teachers and students embrace the learner-centred learning paradigm (Hallinger and Kantamara, 2000; Kantamara *et al.*, 2006; Baker, 2008). For instance, according to Saengboon (2004, p. 24), Thai national cultural values of ‘cooperation to preserve a natural, hierarchical and social order’ does not align with learner-centred principles that promote a different relationship between teachers and students in which both parties are considered as co-learners who embark on the same journey of learning.

To sum up, the 1999 National Education Act stipulates a reform that indicates the urge to view learners in a new light in which they are placed at the forefront of the learning enterprise and learning activities should be guided by students’ needs. Despite considerable effort to move Thailand’s education system towards a more active LCA, there are several impediments that have hindered the implementation. As Foley (2005, p. 224) noted, ‘this approach did not succeed very well as it seemed to go against the rote learning tradition that was ingrained in both the educational and religious tradition of Thai culture’.

The second impetus behind this study stems from my own professional experience as a university lecturer. After attempts to provide a more active learning environment by getting students involved in the learning process, I soon discovered that students did not share the same enthusiasm for the learner-centred method. For example, when asked what topics they would like to include in their translation module, students looked confused and reluctant to discuss the matter as it was normally chosen by the teacher and given to them based on a pre-determined syllabus. Their past learning experiences did not prepare them to express their own ideas. It was not easy to simply dismiss the students’ reaction as it was clear that there were deep underlying reasons for this reluctance to participate in shared decision-making. Since the LCA does not only require a change in teachers’ practices but also a shift in the way students interpret learning, in-depth study of what students think of this approach may be useful in answering how they view the change. Consequently, I set out to learn more about students’ perceptions because perceptions and beliefs can have ‘a profound influence on learning behaviour’ (Cotterall, 1995, p. 195).

This research is not the first to examine students’ perceptions of the LCA, but it could be the first to explore reasons behind students’ perceptions and to establish whether students’ cultural beliefs could affect how they react to the LCA. A number of previous studies have revealed that, despite an initial struggle, students generally expressed satisfaction towards the LCA as they realised that they had become more responsible, active and engaged in the learning process.

These studies were conducted from various contexts, such as in the United States (Howell, 2006; Harpe and Phipps, 2008; Wohlfarth *et al.*, 2008; Parisi, 2009; Peters, 2010), the United Kingdom (Warburton and Whitehouse, 1998; Lea *et al.*, 2003), Canada (Kalbani, 2012), Korea (Lee, 2009), and Thailand (Klunklin *et al.*, 2011). Other studies, however, have reported that students feel anxious, doubtful and even resistant towards the concept such as those conducted in Korea (Jambor, 2007), Papua New Guinea (Bugave, 2005), Indonesia (Lestari and Widjajakusumah, 2009) and Thailand (Sovajassatakul *et al.*, 2011). The mixed results in students' views suggests that there is still an ongoing debate in the literature regarding this subject. However, although these studies provide interesting insights into how LCA is perceived by students, many of them do not explore in depth of what causes such perceptions, especially those that were negative, and nor do they examine the role of students' cultural beliefs and values on their adjustment to the LCA.

With regard to Thailand specifically, how Thai students perceive the LCA and whether their perceptions are associated with the cultural values is timely and pertinent. Nunan (1989, p. 177) is correct in claiming that 'No curriculum can claim to be truly learner-centered unless the learner's subjective needs and perceptions relating to the process of learning are taken into account'. The impact of perceptions on learning was also noted by Tudor (1992), who observed that the knowledge and beliefs learners hold as a result of their prior learning experiences can determine their approaches to language learning and their learning behaviour. To illustrate, learners who believe they can only learn when teachers explain everything to them may find working in groups with their peers pointless and may resist such learning activities. Teachers should therefore be aware of how learners view and feel about learning and how they act on these feelings so as to understand and appropriately facilitate them in the classroom.

#### **1.4 Aims of the study**

This study aims to provide a deeper understanding of the Thai educational reform through the eyes of students who are now placed at the centre of the learning process. The impetus of this study is based on the recognition that even though the implementation of the LCA has been supported with sound theoretical justifications and has been proven to enhance students' learning, motivation and achievement (McCombs and Whistler, 1997), the adoption of its principles may not yield uniform results in different contexts and successful implementation should thus be seen as affected by cultural variables. The objective of this investigation is to

explore the perceptions of the LCA held by a sample of Thai students in a higher education institution. The students in this study have the opportunity to talk about their experiences on a course that incorporated learner-centred principles. In addition, the study also attempts to identify the reasons behind the students' views, in addition to determining whether Thai cultural traits are reflected in their perceptions. It was hoped that the results may serve as a catalyst for future recontextualisation of learner-centred education in the Thai context.

### **1.5 Research questions**

To fulfill the main objective of examining the perceptions of Thai tertiary students of the learner-centred pedagogies, the broad research question guiding this study is:

What are Thai university students' perceptions of the LCA?

The sub-questions are:

- 1) What are Thai university students' perceptions with regard to the LCA and what are the reasons for their perceptions of the approach?
- 2) Are there any differences in the students' perceptions between before and after their learning experience in a course that adopted the LCA?
- 3) Are there any cultural factors influencing their perceptions of the LCA?

### **1.6 Significance of the study**

This study anticipated that the results would shed further light on the adoption of the learner-centred teaching methodologies during a period of pedagogical change in a context in which the TCA had prevailed. The research explores how learner-centred principles are perceived by Thai university students. As asserted by McCombs and Quiat (2002), students' attitudes and perceptions of learner-centred classrooms can provide added value to the implementation of the approach since they are a better and more effective measure of learner-centredness than teachers' perceptions. In particular, it was hoped that by studying students' viewpoints, any emerging challenges the students face in participating in a learner-centred classroom can be identified so that appropriate supports can be provided. This study might also uncover any

cultural implications that may impact Thailand's adoption of the LCA, which emerged from western education philosophy, so that a version of learner-centred pedagogy that takes account of local cultural issues might be developed.

With insights from students in a real classroom settings, it is hoped that the findings from this study will be useful in providing teachers with information and guidance as to what needs to be strengthened and what needs to be addressed when they wish to embark on the path of integrating the LCA into their classrooms. In a wider context, it is hoped that educators, instructional designers and curriculum developers in Thailand and other countries with similar backgrounds may utilise the results to design appropriate learner-centred courses that respond to the expectations of students and are more applicable in and sensitive to particular contexts.

### **1.7 Organisation of the thesis**

This thesis consists of six chapters presented as follows:

Chapter one describes the context of this study including contextual information about Thailand, its current education system and the recent educational reform. This is followed by the rationale which prompted the research project. Following that, the aims and the research questions are outlined, followed by the significance of the study.

Chapter two critically reviews the literature about the teacher-centred and the learner-centred approaches. It covers an overview of theoretical constructs as well as a review of various definitions of the LCA in the literature. Practical principles of the approach with regard to Weimer's (2002) five key tenets of the LCA are illustrated as a framework to explore the LCA in this study. This is followed by a discussion of the LCA in the Asian and, specifically, the Thai contexts and an analysis of the compatibility of the approach with relation to local socio-cultural values and beliefs. The review to identify gaps in the literature pertaining to students' perceptions of the LCA is put forth in the final section of the chapter.

The third chapter begins with an account of the research paradigm and research methodology employed in this study. The section that follows presents the methodological design of the study, the setting and the participants involved in this study. Following that, data collection methods are described, followed by the study's limitations and ethical considerations. Finally, the validity and reliability of this study are discussed in the last section of this chapter.

The fourth chapter reports on the integrated findings from both quantitative and qualitative data in relation to the research questions.

The fifth chapter is devoted to a discussion of the research findings with relation to the findings of previous studies, followed by a discussion of the cultural and practical issues that emerged from the study. The last section offers an overview of the discussion and a pedagogical recommendation for teachers who wish to integrate the LCA in their teaching.

The conclusions are drawn in Chapter 6, following which the implications and contributions of this study are presented. Finally, suggestions for future research are provided, along with some conclusion remarks.

## **Chapter 2. Literature Review**

### **2.1 Introduction**

Thailand's education is going through a major transition in teaching and learning as it adopts the LCA, which came under spotlight as a response to promote active and life-long learning among students. In order to uncover Thai tertiary students' perceptions of the learning paradigm, this chapter begins with a brief discussion of the traditional didactic approach as it is usually depicted as being located at the opposite end to the LCA on the learning paradigm continuum. A review of the philosophical and psychological foundations of the LCA is then followed, before the characteristics of the LCA are presented. Following that, this chapter looks into how practical and cultural issues regarding the implementation of the approach in Southeast Asia and Thai contexts may be obstacles in paving the way of a smooth adoption of the approach. Finally, the chapter ends with a review of previous research on students' perceptions of the learner-centred learning found in the literature.

### **2.2 Teacher-centred approach (TCA)**

In the literature, the notion of the LCA is often compared and contrasted with the traditional didactic TCA in order to illustrate the shifts that have occurred from the theoretical foundations to the practices between the two. The foundation of the TCA is derived from behaviourist theory, which holds that all learning is a formation of habits that are controlled through conditioning, stimulus and reinforcement (Skinner, 1974; Williams and Burden, 1997). The teacher's role is to create a classroom environment that stimulates desired behaviours by rewarding and discouraging undesired behaviours through punishment (Belkin and Gray, 1977). A teacher-centred classroom is described as one in which teachers are seen as the purveyors of knowledge who impart their information to learners. Rogers (1994) used the gloomy metaphor of 'jug and mug' to refer to this teaching method, in which the teacher, equipped with a jug full of knowledge, pours information into waiting students (mugs), who passively accept it. From this behavioural learning perspective, teachers hold the dominant role in making decisions regarding learning. Instructional methods such as lectures, guided discussion and demonstrations are often used in order for teachers to maintain authority and to cover content required by the curriculum. The TCA is content- driven; assessment emphasises a low-order of thinking, such as comprehending and remembering large amounts of knowledge; and it is primarily used to identify how much students learn instead of diagnosing learning to

help students improve their performance (Anderson *et al.*, 2001). The TCA was subject to heavy criticism due to its unintended consequences of producing passive learners who lack critical thinking skills and have a low tolerance for challenges (Howell, 2006). Moreover, research has also shown that such instructional methods are likely to restrain students' initiatives and motivations and jeopardise their potential to become autonomous and life-long learners (Campbell *et al.*, 2001). For instance, a recent study carried out by Smit *et al.* (2014) compared students' motivations in a learner-centred and a teacher-centred learning environment and found higher levels of perceived autonomy, competence, relatedness and motivation of students who were in a supportive learner-centred environment.

### **2.3 Learner-centred approach: Theoretical construct**

Learner-centred learning emerged from an understanding of the nature of learning and a need to develop a method that fosters more active learning (Cannon and Newble, 2000). The foundation of the LCA lies in constructivism, which contends that learning occurs when students actively associate new information with knowledge they already possess in socially and culturally meaningful interactions (Fosnot, 1996; Richardson, 1997; Crotty, 1998; Motschnig-Pitrik and Holzinger, 2002; Schunk, 2004). Learner-centred education is thus founded on philosophical and psychological foundations (Henson, 2003). The following section offers a review of these foundations, which is crucial for a deeper understanding of what the LCA involves.

#### **2.3.1 Philosophical foundation**

The origins of learner-centredness can be traced back to the work of philosophers such as Socrates who used strategic questioning to develop learners' knowledge (Henson, 2003). In the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the Western philosophy of child-centred education was influenced by Jean-Jacques Rousseau's novel, *Emile*, which emphasises the idea that children have their own way of 'seeing, thinking, and feeling' and, therefore, they should be allowed to discover things in the natural environment and arrive at their own understanding of the world instead of being taught to see the world as adults see, think or feel (Tabulawa, 2003). Rousseau was probably the first to highlight the mismatch between formal education and learners' nature, and he urged teachers to focus on drawing out learners' natural capacities rather than strictly follow curricula that do not conform to their nature. For Rousseau, the goal of education is to nurture children's innate abilities and promote happiness and liberty among individual learners.

Rousseau's views of learning were later echoed in the work of education theorists such as Froebel, Dewey, Piaget and Vygotsky, all of whom also advocated a greater focus on learners' needs, interests and hands-on learning. Inspired by Rousseau, Froebel postulated that '[the child] is placed in the centre of all things, and all things are seen only in relation to himself, to his life' (Froebel, 1826, p. 97). This implies that children's natural stages of development should be the driving force for an education system instead of the other way round. Among all theorists in the later development of the LCA, perhaps the most influential was the progressive educationist John Dewey. Similarly to Rousseau and Froebel, Dewey stressed that 'the child is the starting point, the centre, and the end' of education, rather than the curriculum (Dewey, 1956). He urged educators to:

Abandon the notion of subject-matter as something fixed and ready-made in itself, outside the child's experience; cease thinking of the child's experience as also something hard and fast; see it as something fluent, embryonic, vital; and realise that the child and the curriculum are simply two limits which define a single process. (p.9)

However, unlike Rousseau, who saw a child's education in an isolated environment devoid of social relationships (Entwistle, 1970), Dewey recognised that social interaction also plays a crucial part in children's development. For him, each child has both psychological and social dimensions and learning would be more effective if a child's abilities, interests and habits were appropriately directed in a social setting (Henson, 2003). Teachers, therefore, take on the role of activity organisers who create a social environment to mediate students to become active agents in constructing their own understanding of knowledge. Rousseau and Dewey's views could be regarded as the cornerstone of subsequent notions of learner-centred education. The central tenet of their concept lies in the recognition in the value of children's natural development stages, differences and interests which can prosper when they are engaged in meaningful learning that draws on their experiences.

### ***2.3.2 Psychological foundation***

Alongside the philosophical foundation discussed above, the formation of learner-centred education was also built upon the psychological development of learning and teaching. During the twentieth century, learner-centred education was influenced by a number of schools of thought, such as cognitive theory, humanist theory and constructivist theory (Tudor, 1996). Among them, constructivism appears to be most influential in the foundation of learner-centred education (Tabulawa, 2003). There are two main variations which are central to the discussion of constructivism (Vadeboncoeur, 1997; Cohen, 2010).

The first is *cognitive constructivism*, which believes that learners actively discover knowledge by building new meaning and understanding upon their existing knowledge. This belief draws insights from the prominent theorist Jean Piaget, whose cognitive theory argues that individual learners acquire new understandings of knowledge and make it personal through experience and reflection, not by imitation or memorisation (Piaget, 1968). Piaget claimed that learning occurs through an interplay between two mental activities: assimilation and accommodation. Assimilation is when learners incorporate new information with their pre-existing knowledge, and accommodation occurs when learners adapt their existing knowledge to fit new information (Fosnot, 1996). From a cognitive constructivist point of view, learners are active agents who make learning happen by building their own coherent and organised knowledge (Mayer, 2004). The role of the teacher, therefore, is no longer to transfer knowledge but to provide thought-provoking learning that is meaningful to learner's current cognitive level and to facilitate learners in constructing their own interpretations of various experiences (McInerney and McInerney, 2006).

The second key variation of constructivism is *social constructivism*, which incorporates the role of social interactions within the process of learners' cognitive development. According to Vygotsky, the pioneer of this view of learning, meaning and knowledge, while taking place in individual minds, are actively and collaboratively constructed through communication and interactions with others (Vygotsky, 1978). Social constructivism places emphasis on the use of social engagement as a resource to mediate learners in reaching their own understanding of knowledge. Put it simply, it believes that learners acquire knowledge through interactions with people around them including peers, teachers as well as other adults (Pritchard, 2010). Vygotsky's most influential concept in the sociocultural theory of learning is the "zone of proximal development" (ZPD), described as the discrepancy between what a learner can achieve independently and what the learner can accomplish with guidance of more capable peers or teachers (Vygotsky, 1962). With the ZPD, Vygotsky visualised a learner who first observes, listens and learns from more capable or knowledgeable people in a social activity and then subsequently becomes more competent by internalising new concepts or knowledge that he/she may not be able to achieve alone (Pritchard, 2010). Social constructivism significantly informs the LCA in terms of how educational activities should be organised. If interactions with others can potentially increase learners' opportunities to attain a higher level of learning, it is of paramount importance that teachers organise classroom activities that allow learners to actively and collaboratively learn in such a way that their current understanding of a topic is enhanced through the support of peers and the teacher (Schunk, 2004).

Since constructivism is believed to be informed by both cognitive constructivism and social constructivism, it can be concluded that constructivism regards learners as active constructors of knowledge who use their prior experience and knowledge to create their new understanding of the world through social interactions (Henson, 2003). This highlights the change in the learners' role in the learning process in the classroom. Knowledge is no longer 'out there' for learners to simply memorise. Instead, they are required to get involved in meaningful social activities that will help them connect new knowledge to their current understanding of the world. The concept of constructivism has become a powerful platform for a shift in the theory of learning. It has been the primary driver in the shift in instructional approach from teacher-centred to learner-centred (Schiller, 2009).

#### **2.4 Learner-centredness: Practices**

In the previous section, the theoretical development of the LCA were presented. The following sections attempt to identify what it is to make teaching and learning more learner-centred. The literature regarding the LCA is extensive and the term learner-centred learning has been used interchangeably with several other terminologies including student-centred, child-centred, learning-centred, learner-directed, active learning and student-oriented learning (Sparkes, 1999). Although different wording is used in the definitions of learner-centred learning, there are some common attributes that can be identified. In this research, the term learner-centred approach is used throughout for the purpose of consistency. For this study, the LCA is defined as a pedagogical approach that gives students the opportunities to become actively engaged in their own learning process. It is a teaching and learning approach that respects learners' needs, interests, prior experience and knowledge and allows them to make choices regarding their learning management to encourage greater degree of responsibility. Teaching focuses on guiding and supporting students while they learn to construct their own understanding of knowledge through active and collaborative participation with peers and the teacher.

The interpretations of the LCA have been continuously developed, refined and there are several variations of how various theorists and educators see the approach. Several educators have tried to translate philosophical theories, definitions and research evidence surrounding learner-centred education into practice. One of the most widely mentioned models in the conversation around learner-centred education is from Weimer (2002) who identified five key practical changes that occur when a move towards learner-centred teaching is made. Drawing on her own

experiences and on extensive literature, she distinguished the differences between the practices of the LCA with those of the behavioural view of the TCA. These differences are: balance of power, function of content, role of the teacher, responsibility for learning and purpose and processes of evaluation.

As previously discussed in section 1.2.2 that a consensus on operational details in the shift to learner-centred education has not been explicitly delineated by the Ministry of Education of Thailand, for this study, Weimer's components of the LCA were selected as a framework to explore students' views of learner-centred teaching and learning for a number of reasons. First, Weimer's five premises are grounded in constructivism, which is the foundational philosophy of the LCA, and they are based on extensive research regarding active teaching and learner-centred teaching. Second, all five learner-centred tenets clearly illustrate a striking contrast to the traditional teacher-centred teaching practice which has long been prevalent in Thai classrooms. Third, Weimer's five learner-centred components have been recognised as one of the most comprehensive contributions to the field (Alexandra, 2013). Finally, the five tenets have been referred to and used as a framework to explore teaching and learning in several studies (Harpe and Phipps, 2008; Wohlfarth *et al.*, 2008; Schiller, 2009; Verst, 2010; Wright, 2011; Çam and Oruç, 2014). Weimer's five key components of the learner-centred practices are presented in the following sections.

#### ***2.4.1 The balance of power***

Weimer's first tenet of the LCA is the power dimension in the classroom. The word 'power' here refers to involvement in making decisions pertaining the course, which usually include those regarding content, assignments, course policies and evaluation. Traditionally, classroom power structure is determined by the instructor who makes most, if not all, the decisions regarding the course. Students have little choice and make little contribution to the decisions that directly affect their learning experiences. While such practice is generally expected by students, it often results in learners who are passive, dependent and lack motivation for learning (Weimer, 2002; Alexandra, 2013).

Consequently, advocates for LCA called for a more democratic and hospitable classroom environment and experience in which students are empowered by being actively involved in choosing and planning key decisions in their learning, including content, activities, assignments, deadlines, assessments and classroom management. (Brandes and Ginnis 1992; Gibbs, 1992; Nunan, 1995; Weimer, 2002; Lea *et al.*, 2003; Blumberg, 2009; Wolk, 2010;

Massouleh and Jooneghani, 2012). One of the first people to mention students' input was Nunan (1988, p. 93) who asserted that 'in a learner-centred classroom, key decisions about what will be taught, how it will be taught, when it will be taught, and how it will be assessed will be made with reference to the learner'. Similarly, Dupin-Bryant (2004, p. 42) see the LCA as 'a style of instruction that is responsive, collaborative, problem-centred and democratic in which both students and the instructor decide how, what and when learning occurs'. They clearly recognise the need to incorporate students' needs and interests into the planning of courses, as opposed to what the teacher thinks should be learnt.

It is believed that involving students in making learning decisions that directly impact their learning helps increase their motivation and sense of responsibility (Brandes and Ginnis 1992; Weimer, 2002; Patall *et al.*, 2010). Additionally, students are able to claim ownership of learning when they are allowed to exert some control over learning processes that directly affect them (Flowerday and Schraw, 2000; Harris and Cullen, 2008). According to Brandes and Ginnis (1992), taking ownership of something also means accepting full responsibility for it. Therefore, when students are permitted to make their own learning choices, 'they will not only *feel* responsible but actually *be* responsible for the situation, being allowed to enjoy or suffer the consequences of their own decisions and actions' (Brandes and Ginnis 1992, p. 166, original emphasis).

Nevertheless, both Nunan (2013) and Weimer (2003) caution that this does not mean handing over all decisions to students. Rather, it means that power is shared between teacher and students. Teachers continue to provide leadership in the classroom but the authority to make choices regarding learning is no longer *solely* in their hands (Verst, 2010).

#### ***2.4.2 The function of content***

In teacher-centred learning, there is a common need to cover the content of the course, which may lead to teachers cramming knowledge in lectures and students resorting to a 'binge and purge' approach where they memorise as much content as possible in order to pass the exams (Wright, 2011, p. 93). Learner-centred education, in contrast, puts the emphasis on learners and values their prior knowledge, experiences, needs and interests, as opposed to the teacher or content (Pillay, 2002). Learning is aimed for a qualitative change in how students, as contributing members in the classroom, experience, understand and conceptualise knowledge in collaborative activities with peers and the teacher, instead of aiming at the amount of knowledge students can memorise (Ramsden, 1988; Hara, 1995; Cannon and Newble, 2000;

Meece, 2003; Cornelius-White and Harbaugh, 2009; Mehdinezhad, 2011). Similarly, Weimer (2002) urged that, in order to be more learner-centred, content should be used not just to build a knowledge base but to help students develop learning skills that promote critical thinking and life-long learning. Therefore, rather than relying solely on lectures, teachers should incorporate teaching methods such as problem-based learning, collaborative and/or cooperative learning activities, small/large group work or discussion to engage students with the content and give them the opportunities to think, ask questions and link new information with their existing knowledge.

#### ***2.4.3 The role of the teacher***

Since the LCA essentially shifts the focus from teachers' teaching to students' learning, the change in the learners' role means that the teachers' role also inevitably needs to be redefined. In learner-centred classrooms, teachers are no longer 'the sage on the stage' but assume various roles to involve learners in their own learning process in a meaningful way. To elaborate, learner-centred teachers take on the role of an activity designer who create learning activities that enhance students' intellectual development. They are facilitators, coaches or guides who help students while they engage in learning activities to make sense of new knowledge for themselves through interaction with others (Richards and Rodgers, 2001). Learner-centred teachers also act as assessors who evaluate how students react to activities and use the input to adjust teaching and learning accordingly (Allybokus, 2015). Consequently, it can be said that, contrary to the common misconception that the role of teachers is lessened in the LCA, learner-centred teachers still make crucial contributions at every step of learning to enhance students' learning opportunities (Weimer, 2002).

#### ***2.4.4 The responsibility for learning***

Teachers' complete control in the TCA has taken for granted that students are also capable of making significant contributions to their own learning. To be more learner-centred, Weimer (2002) proposed that the responsibility be returned to learners so as to enhance their awareness of their learning strengths and weaknesses and allow them to be autonomous and self-directed in their intellectual journey. In order to encourage students to feel a sense of responsibility, teachers should create a positive learning atmosphere in which students feel safe and connected with the teacher (Alexandra, 2013). This can be achieved through active involvement from students in making learning choices and participating in collaborative learning with teachers acting as facilitators (Felder and Brent, 1996; Slunt and Giancarlo, 2004). According to

McCombs and Whisler (1997), ‘learning occurs best in an environment that contains positive interpersonal relationships and interactions and in which the learner feels appreciated, acknowledged, respected, and admired.’ For Weimer (2002), letting students experience the consequences of their actions, for example of their laziness, lack of discipline or bad decisions, is another way to trigger them to assume responsibility as they will feel accountable for their actions. It is believed that when students learn to accept more responsibility for their own learning, they will gradually become more autonomous, self-regulated and self-motivated in their learning endeavours, something which will persist into their post-graduation lives (Weimer, 2002; Verst, 2010).

#### ***2.4.5 The purpose and processes of evaluation***

In teacher-centred learning environments, learning is often geared towards acquiring good grades which are evaluated entirely by the teacher. Recognising that assessment can determine how students learn, Weimer (2002) perceptively proposed that evaluation should not be merely about generating grades but also about promoting learning. Formative assessments should then be integrated so that students do not learn only to earn grades at the end of the course. Students who are given formative assessment have the opportunity to identify their weaknesses and adjust accordingly during learning. According to Nicol and Macfarlane-Dick (2006), constructive assessment can promote the development of capacities and attitudes used in life-long learning.

Also important in the LCA evaluation is students’ opportunities to assess their own and others’ work during learning so that they learn to assess themselves and their peers and ask critical questions in a constructive manner (Weimer, 2002). It is believed that peer and self-assessment gives students control and responsibility, and thereby increases their autonomy, a key component of the LCA (O’Neill, 1991). Table 2.1 provides a comparison between TCA and LCA with regard to these five learner-centred components by Weimer (2002).

	<b>Teacher-centred practices</b>	<b>Learner-centred practices</b>	<b>Examples of possible practices</b>
<b>1. The balance of power</b>	Teacher makes all decisions regarding learning (e.g. content, course policies, activities, assessment, and deadlines).	Teacher values students' input and shares decisions regarding learning with students.	Students' input and decisions are included in <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- course policies</li> <li>- course content</li> <li>- learning methods</li> <li>- assessment methods</li> <li>- deadlines</li> </ul>
<b>2. The function of content</b>	Content is used mainly to build a knowledge base and normally focuses on lower-order of thinking or recalling of information.	Content is used not only as a tool to develop a knowledge base but also to develop higher-order of thinking and learning skills.	The content is used to : <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) allow students to use learning skills such as critical thinking and problem solving.</li> <li>2) develop students' self-awareness of learning by reflecting on why they need to learn the content.</li> </ol>
<b>3. The role of the teacher</b>	Teacher is the source of all knowledge and is the sole authority in all classroom decisions.	Teacher facilitates students in discovering knowledge and learning from one another.	Teacher uses various teaching and learning methods to accommodate different learning styles and engage students in interaction with the material, the teacher and one another.
<b>4. The responsibility of learning</b>	Teacher assumes all responsibility by directing all learning for students.	The responsibility for learning is returned to students as they have more involvement in directing their own learning.	Teacher provides students with opportunities to assume responsibility by <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- making students aware of their learning ability.</li> <li>- encouraging students to assess themselves</li> </ul>
<b>5. The purpose and processes of evaluation</b>	Assessment focuses merely on generating marks and grades. Teacher exclusively assigns grades.	Assessment is used not only to assign grades but also as tool to provide constructive feedback so that students can improve during learning.	Teacher consistently <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- uses formative assessment</li> <li>- encourage students to use peer and self-assessment.</li> </ul>

**Table 2.1** Comparison of the TCA and the LCA and possible practices (Adapted from Blumberg, 2009)

## 2.5 The learner-centred approach in language learning

As the global focus of language learning has shifted from linguistic competence to communicative competence, the LCA in language learning, described as ‘an offspring’ of communicative language teaching (CLT) by Nunan (1988, p. 179), has gradually been promoted with the goal of increasing learners’ ability to use language effectively in meaningful communication. To achieve this goal, Littlewood (1981) and Kumaravadivelu (2006b) believe that students in a learner-centred classroom should learn a language through natural processes in which they can practice linguistic forms and communicative functions of the language through meaningful communication with others. The active role of learners in assimilating and accommodating knowledge in meaning-focused activities has been emphasised by scholars, such as Nunan (1996), Liu and Littlewood (1997) and Anton (1999), who have all noted that as communicators, students learn to negotiate meanings by expressing themselves and sharing ideas and opinions through collaborative learning strategies. For Nunan (1988), in particular, learners’ active involvement further extends to their involvement in curricular decisions which take into consideration learners’ different needs and interests. Similarly, Tudor (1996) suggested that the LCA comprises learner training and learner involvement, defined as:

*Learner training* involves the initiation of learners into the process of language study, and *learner involvement* refers to the direct participation of learner in shaping of their study programmer at any level from the provision of material for a specific learning task to negotiation of assessment procedures or study mode (p. 28, original emphasis)

Through these processes of interaction, participation and negotiation, it is believed that learning opportunities in the second language classroom are created (van Lier, 1991). The role of the teacher in these process is to create a supportive learning environment that prompts students to accept learning responsibility and become self-regulated learners and to provide guidance during learning activities (Brandes and Ginnis 1992; Nunan, 1992; Lambert and McCombs, 1997).

Applying learner-centred education in language classrooms shares similar challenges with implementing the LCA in general:

1. The continuing dominance of teacher-centred methods, which may be due to teachers’ language proficiency in the target language, preferred teaching styles,

insufficient training and inadequate resources and support (Lea *et al.*, 2003; Prapaisit de Segovia and Hardison, 2009; Vavrus, 2009; Cheewakaroon, 2011).

2. The clash between focusing on individual interests and the needs of the whole class (Breen, 1987; O'Neill and McMahon, 2005)
3. Teachers' feeling of loss of control in class (Tabulawa, 2003; Prapaisit de Segovia and Hardison, 2009; Degago, 2015)

Alongside these concerns, additional issues unique to language learning are mentioned by Al-Mekhlafi and Nagaratnam (2012). The first is student neglect, which occurs when teachers fail to provide accurate models of language use or to correct students' linguistic errors because they mistakenly interpret teacher talk as wasteful in learner-centred teaching where students should be encouraged to take the floor. Another concern is the difficulty in meeting diverse needs and interests of heterogeneous groups of students who may inhabit different linguistic cultures and varieties of preferred learning styles (Holliday, 1994; Tabulawa, 2003; Chorrojprasert, 2005).

In summary, it can be said that the foundational ideas that surround learner-centred education, as discussed in section 2.3, also shape the LCA in language teaching and learning. The notions of learner involvement, active learning and self-directed learning influenced by cognitive and social constructivism are also present in the discourse of learner-centred education in language learning. However, applying the approach with language learners in different contexts may produce particular challenges. In the following section, concerns regarding the LCA in the Southeast Asian and Thai contexts are discussed.

## **2.6 Issues regarding the learner-centred approach in the Asian contexts**

### ***2.6.1 Prevalence of the teacher-centred approach***

It is widely acknowledged that the adoption of the LCA in different settings has been riddled with contextual and cultural challenges. While practical constraints, such as resources, class size and curricula, have been cited as common practical hindrances to a smooth implementation of the LCA in Southeast Asian countries (Gow and Kember, 1993; Sikoyo, 2010; Osman *et al.*, 2015), more persistent impediment is the continuing domination of the didactic approach, which is still largely present due to teachers and students' inadequate understandings of and unfamiliarity with the LCA (Felder and Brent, 1996; Barr, 1998; De Mesa and De Guzman, 2006; Nonkukhetkhong *et al.*, 2006; Mtika and Gates, 2010; Sikoyo, 2010). It has been reported

that teachers do not have an adequate understanding of the learner-centred concept and have a misconception that their role in the learner-centred classroom has been minimised and become somehow negligible (Thamraksa, 2003; Zhong, 2010; Cheewakaroon, 2011; Schweisfurth, 2011; Al-Mekhlafi and Nagaratnam, 2012). It is possible that such negative perceptions can influence the extent to which teachers adopt the approach in their teaching.

Students, too, seem reluctant to take on a greater role (Weimer, 2002; Onger, 2009; Aslan and Reigeluth, 2015). Studies have reported that Asian students generally hold the view of learning as an acquisition of knowledge transmitted to them from knowledgeable teachers and, therefore, they may feel uneasy that the support they have been familiar with will be withdrawn in the LCA. An example of this can be seen from the research conducted by Hamzah *et al.* (2013). Using questionnaires, they found that an overwhelming 92 percent of Malaysian students in the study viewed giving knowledge as the sole responsibility of the teacher and, therefore, they felt comfortable in a learning environment that mainly involved lectures and required little or no active participation from them. It can be said that students' familiarity with traditional learning has made it difficult for them to change their mindset to a more active learning environment (Aslan and Reigeluth, 2015).

### ***2.6.2 The cultural impact on learner-centred approach in Asia***

#### **Social hierarchy**

The obstacles in adopting the LCA mentioned above are prevalent in many Southeast Asian countries including Thailand. Superficially, it may appear that the problem largely lies in the unfamiliarity with or reluctance to change to the new learning paradigm by the main stakeholders: teachers and students. However, a critical analysis suggests a deeper layer of barriers which hinder the implementation of the paradigm shift. The tension between learner-centred principles and local cultural traditions and beliefs regarding learning is a debated factor that may impact the application of learner-centred practices in culturally different contexts. The following section discusses the ongoing discussion surrounding the adaptation of the LCA in SE Asian, including Thai, settings. Nevertheless, it should be noted that by identifying Asian and Western cultures, this is by no means to suggest that these cultures are hermetically sealed and internally homogeneous from each other. The purpose of making the distinction between the two cultures is illustrative rather than representative.

It has been well established in a variety of studies that the way in which students approach learning can vary from one national culture to another (Richardson, 1994; Biggs, 1996a; Liu,

1998; Littlewood, 2000). In the literature, learner-centred learning has been depicted as a Western model of teaching and learning which is less applicable to Asian settings as beliefs and practices regarding learning in the two parts of the world are seen as different (Baker, 2008; Jersabek, 2010). This is to say, much Western teaching focuses on developing students' independence and higher order thinking abilities such as reasoning, analysis and evaluation while much Asian education tends to favour memorisation and transmission of knowledge. These lower-order thinking processes are believed to be influenced by the belief that the teacher is a sole content expert whose duty is to pass on a substantial amount of knowledge to learners (Atkinson, 1997; Manalo *et al.*, 2013). Such beliefs have resulted in dependent students who adopt a surface approach to learning and accept knowledge from teachers as the truth without question, instead of believing that knowledge is something that can be constructed between oneself and others (Kennedy, 2002; Thanh-Pham, 2010). Similarly, Thai society, in particular, tends to traditionally value hierarchy and Thais instinctively assess their interactions with others in terms of the 'senior/junior' relationship, which is accepted as the natural order of life and a basis for social interactions (Baker, 2008; Wangkijchinda, 2011; Rungwaraphong, 2012). A person's power is normally attached to his/her title, rank, age, status and achievement. Thai people tend to defer to their seniors and there is a pervasive rule of this hierarchical system that higher-status people are not to be argued with by those who are in the lower status (Burnard, 1999; Wangkijchinda, 2011; Khuvasanond, 2013).

The system also carries over to the Thai learning environment, where teachers are placed in a position that comes with great respect and power. Not only do Thai teachers act as the fronts of wisdom and knowledge but they also teach students morals and mold them to be good citizens (Khuvasanond, 2013). Influenced by Buddhism, the official religion in Thailand, the teacher's role is emphasised as being 'a role model for students by being a 'moral parent' who is patient, cares for and protects students from the unknown, wants students to be in the norm, knows and recommends the right way of living' (Wallace, 2003, p. 20). This, therefore, leads to teachers being regarded as second parents who are always superior and right. Consequently, it is expected that students be respectful and grateful for teachers' knowledge and guidance (Raktham, 2008). This gratitude, or *bun khun* in Thai, is an added attribute to why Thai students highly respect their teachers and feel they cannot question or challenge the ones who are nurturing and educating them. Therefore, Thai learners adopt, either consciously or unconsciously, the role of passive listeners. Even when Thai students do not understand or agree with what the teacher says, they are more likely to remain silent since asking questions can be interpreted as a display of stupidity, disrespect or disruption (Hallinger and Kantamara, 2000).

Since this unequal status in Thai classrooms cultivates student passivity, Thai students hold the notion that the teacher is the giver and assume that they do not have any contribution to learning as knowledge should be provided by the teacher (Rungwaraphong, 2012). In contrast, students in the LCA are expected to actively contribute and take greater responsibility of their own learning. They are encouraged to interact in collaborative learning, such as through pair work and group work. This also requires students to be more autonomous and self-directed in their own learning. However, it has been found that this learning method is not fully appreciated since a large number of learners still believe in rote learning and reproduction of learned material as the best way to increase their academic achievement (Thanh-Pham, 2011). In this case, Little (1990) rightly stated that seeking autonomy may be the last thing students want since their primary interest is to do well in the exam and they have a firm belief that it is the teacher's job to help them achieve that goal.

### **Social harmony**

The orientation to maintain a positive relationship and avoid disagreement is another dominant cultural value that can be posited as an impediment to the successful implementation of the LCA in SE Asia. Asian students are often characterised as being shy and quiet in class when, in fact, they are reluctant to express personal ideas for fear of challenging and being disrespectful to the ideas of the teacher or other classmates (Biggs, 1996b; Chaidaroon, 2003; Wangkijchinda, 2011; Raktham, 2012). The evidence of this can be clearly seen in a recent study by Frambach *et al.* (2014) who compared discussion behaviours and skills of students from East Asia, Western Europe and the Middle East. They found that the Middle East and East Asian students placed a strong value on maintaining positive group relations which inhibited them from speaking up, asking questions and challenging their peers. Such beliefs are in contrast with the learner-centred principles that assume active participation in discussions to achieve collaborative construction of knowledge among the teacher and students. Many scholars have cautioned that students' beliefs and values can impact their perceptions about learning and forcing pedagogical change on these values can run the risk of students rejecting any proposed changes (Pillay, 2002; Al-Mekhlafi and Nagaratnam, 2012).

The orientation to maintain harmonious relationships is also a common Thai cultural value. Thais place the performance of the group higher than that of the individual, which means that Thais tend to behave according to the norms of the group rather than acting on personal choice or preferences (Triandis, 1995; Raktham, 2008). For most Thais, 'fear of not meeting the expectations of one's peers takes precedence over fear of personal failure' (Hallinger and

Kantamara, 2001, p. 12). Such a norm contrasts markedly with societies, such as the United States, the UK and Australia, where individuality is encouraged and discussion and criticism are acceptable and even considered to vital elements of social life (Hallinger and Kantamara, 2001; Raktham, 2008).

Additionally, maintaining harmonious, non-threatening social relations is also highly crucial for Thai people and, therefore, Thais are always consider others' feelings and deliberately avoid creating conflict or discomfort at all costs. Being utterly considerate of others' feelings is a national characteristic of Thai people, commonly known as being '*kreng jai*' in Thai. The concept of '*kreng jai*' is succinctly defined by Raktham (2008, p. 24) as 'an attitude whereby an individual tries to restrain his/her interest or desire in situations where there is the potential for discomfort or conflict, and when there is a need to maintain a pleasant and cooperative relationship'. Typical behaviours that display the feeling of *kreng jai* as described by Holmes and Tangtongtavy (1996) is when one:

- complies with others' requests or wishes.
- restrains from showing one's displeasure or anger to avoid discomfort to others.
- avoids asserting one's opinions or needs.
- is reluctant to disturb or interrupt others.
- is unwilling to ask questions even when one has not understood someone/something.

The effect of '*kreng jai*', which literally means 'awe heart', is immense. It serves to conceal a person's true feelings in the face of discomfort or confrontation, which then permeates a compliant culture in Thai society. For instance, coupled with a hierarchical structure, a younger member of staff may refrain from asserting contrasting ideas in a meeting because he/she feels *kreng jai* or afraid to upset an older or higher-ranking colleague who has already spoken. A person may feel obliged to accept an invitation to a party even though he/she does not want to go because declining would disappoint or appear ungrateful to the person giving the invitation. A job supervisor may find it hard to openly give an honest feedback on a colleague's performance in a meeting as it is important for Thai to avoid the risk of losing face or making others lose face and criticism should not be directly revealed (Komin, 1990a; Wangkijchinda, 2011).

The concept of *kreng jai* can also pose a serious threat to constructing knowledge when students feel that asking questions when they do not understand or expressing doubts about what the teacher says could be seen as a disruptive and inappropriate act (Adamson, 2003; Burn and Thongprasert, 2005; Foley, 2005). Moreover, even when students do not agree with their peers, they are more incline to remain silent rather than speak their minds and offer opinions to avoid

offending others and standing out. It seems that every interaction among Thai people is aimed at seeking harmony and avoiding conflicts. Thus, it can be said that individuality is culturally suppressed and skills such as creative or critical thinking may not be commonly cultivated in Thai classrooms (Atkinson, 1997; Nisbett, 2003; Dhanarattigannon, 2008).

The LCA in Thailand is considered novel as the method radically changes the teaching and environment for Thai learners. That is to say, students are required to take initiatives in the classroom, something which they have rarely done before (Kantamara *et al.*, 2006; Raktham, 2008). Given the above discussion, it seems logical to assume that some characteristics of Thai culture could further complicate students' adaptation to the new approach. As many scholars have cautioned, students' cultural beliefs and values can impact their perceptions about learning and forcing pedagogical change on these values can run the risk of students rejecting the reforms (Pillay, 2002; Al-Mekhlafi and Nagaratnam, 2012). Consequently, it would be beneficial to a future adaptation of the LCA in Thailand if cultural factors that can affect students' perceptions and behaviours were identified.

However, a growing body of literature has been challenging the assumption that Asian learners are uncritical and rely on rote learning as a result of cultural differences (Biggs, 1996b; Kember, 2000; Littlewood, 2000; Littlewood, 2001; Baker, 2008). Biggs (1998) and Thanh-Pham (2010) made the perceptive observation that there are Asian learners who can successfully learn in western institutions and some even outperform their western counterparts. Thus, stereotyping of Asian students as docile rote learners may not be accurate. It has been explained that the rigorous manner of memorising content by Asian learners is merely because they perceive it as essential for building a strong foundation which will then lead to deep learning and future application of knowledge (Kember, 2000; Hu, 2002; Wang, 2006). Further evidence from a survey of Japanese students confirmed that they were able to express critical and contradictory opinions (Stapleton, 2002). The author concluded that individual differences may have played more role in critical thinking than socio-cultural factors while Hongladarom (1998) and Paton (2005) insightfully argued that critical thinking is actually ingrained in Asian traditions but it may be suppressed by other values such as social harmony. The view coincides with Biggs (1994), who concluded that Asian students tend to develop higher level of cognitive ability through consulting their peers which requires waiting time as opposed to the immediate responses expected in western educational institutions.

### ***2.6.3 The learner-centred approach in Thailand***

As this research was conducted in the Thai context, where educational reform to implement the LCA has been promoted, it is important to explore the existing cultural beliefs regarding learning among Thai students. The next section briefly explores the aims of Thailand's education reform and examines the cultural effects that may complicate the proposed transition to the LCA in Thailand.

In the 1999 National Education Act, section 22 of Chapter 4, which is considered the essence of the reform, specifies that:

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. (Office of the National Education Commission, 1999, p. 10)

Apparent in the above statements is the assumption that all learners possess learning potential and all educational endeavours should then be centred on learners so as to help them develop themselves according to their potential. Section 24 further describes that, in order to move towards learner-centredness, educational institutions and agencies should organise learning that takes into account learners' interests, aptitudes and individual differences as well as promoting students' thinking ability, especially critical thinking, drawing on authentic experiences and encouraging lifelong learning by helping students to learn at all times and in all places. Implied in this section is the constructivist perspectives that learning should be built on learners' ZPD and knowledge should be actively constructed by learners who are provided with learning activities that are related to real life situations.

However, despite the Thai government's continuous efforts to restructure the Thai education system, several attempts to incorporate the LCA in Thai classrooms have been patchy and sporadic. The profound shift in the learning process causes a stir in the dynamic of the norm in Thai classrooms since it contrasts with the dominant exam-based didactic pedagogic practices. Transition to LCA requires that both teachers and students modify their thinking and behaviours to learning, and hence confusion and uncertainty were so rife among teachers and learners that some referred to the method as a *kwai*-centred approach (Atagi, 2002; Thamraksa, 2003; Kantamara *et al.*, 2006). *Kwai* means buffalo in Thai, but the word is also metaphorically used as an insulting term to call people or ideas that are considered stupid. The replacement of learner or child with *kwai* possibly reflects the view that Thai students were seen as incapable or too dumb, like buffaloes, to construct their own knowledge according to learner-centred principles

(Chaumklang, 2013). This is exemplified in a recent work by Rungwaraphong (2012) who explored the promotion of learner autonomy in Thailand among 297 university language lecturers. The result showed that lecturers' low confidence in their students to be autonomous learners prevented them from allowing their students to take charge of their own learning despite their strong beliefs in the benefits of and the need for learner autonomy.

## **2.7 Research on students' perceptions of the learner-centred approach**

From the early 1990s, many countries have been committed to the improvement of education quality by introducing curriculum reforms with the aim of encouraging inquiry and promoting active and life-long learning among students. Learner-centred instruction has emerged as an antidote to the prevalent teacher-centred instruction in national education policies in a number of countries. In the literature, there is a wealth of studies on teachers' understanding, perceptions and implementation of the learner-centred education (Schweisfurth, 2011). Ironically, however, research regarding students' perceptions of the approach is scant. It has been stated that students' beliefs and attitudes can influence their learning receptiveness and behaviours (Cotterall, 1995). For example, previous learning experiences and passive conceptions of learning have been found to contribute to Asian students adopting a surface approach to learning (Kember and Wong, 2000). Thus, there is a need to consider complexities, such as learners' social and personal learning beliefs and attitudes influenced by their socialisation and prior educational experiences (Nunan, 1989; Tudor, 1996; Lea, 2003). As Richards and Lockhart (1996) pointed out, students bring to class their own beliefs, goals, attitudes and decisions, which influence how they approach learning and it is through the eye of students that we can understand the impact of learning upon them.

A number of studies have investigated students' perceptions of the LCA, covering different groups of learners in varying contexts, such as the United States (Howell, 2002; Harpe and Phipps, 2008; Wohlfarth *et al.*, 2008; Lee, 2009; Parisi, 2009; Peters, 2010; Gomez, 2015), the United Kingdom (Warburton and Whitehouse, 1998; Lea *et al.*, 2003), Canada (Kalbani, 2012), Papua New Guinea (Bugave, 2005), Indonesia (Lestari and Widjajakusumah, 2009), Korea (Jambor, 2007), Malaysia (Neo and Kian, 2003; Osman *et al.*, 2015), China (Zhong, 2010) and Thailand (McDonough and Chaikitmongkol, 2007; Anuyahong, 2011). Upon closer inspection of the findings of these studies, it seems that students from the Western countries (America, United Kingdom and Canada) generally hold positive attitudes towards the LCA even though some initially feel anxious and doubtful towards the concept. For example, in an investigation of graduate students' perceptions of their experiences in a classroom that implemented key

premises of the LCA, Wohlfarth *et al.* (2008) found that even though some students felt unease and struggled to adjust in the beginning of the course, they viewed the LCA as a positive shift from the TCA as it helped them develop essential learning skills. Similarly, a year-long case study of secondary students in the US reported that students expressed satisfactory, became adept at learning in a learner-centred science classroom and were able to move from following explicit instructions to constructing their own investigations (Peters, 2010). It seems that despite initial struggle with a new structure of learning, students from Western countries tend to appreciate and learn to adapt the LCA.

In Asian countries where cultural attitudes are described as being inconsistent with the fundamental assumptions underpinning the LCA, students' views of the approach are mixed. Favourable attitudes were found in the study of Neo and Kian (2003), who used group projects to allow students to collaboratively take charge of their own learning process in order to create a learner-centred learning atmosphere. It was found that such learning environments empowered the 46 Malaysian students in the study to become more active and enthusiastic. The students showed very positive attitudes towards working in teams and enjoyed exercising their creative and critical thinking skills. Similar findings were found in the studies of Klunklin *et al.* (2011) and Sovajassatakul *et al.* (2011), whose studies investigated problem-based learning and task-based learning, both of which are inherently learner-centred. Their studies reported that even though Thai students expressed some initial reservations, confusion and concern of their ability required in a learner-centred classroom, they agreed that they benefited from the experience and the learning skills, such as critical thinking and problem solving, that they received in the class.

In contrast to these rather positive results, negative attitudes towards the LCA were found in other studies conducted in Hong Kong (Chung and Chow, 2004), Korea (Jambor, 2007) and Indonesia (Lestari and Widjajakusumah, 2009). A study of Indonesian medical students conducted by Lestari and Widjajakusumah revealed that more than half of the students (66.8 percent) had negative perception of the LCA. This finding was deemed important since it was also shown that students who had positive attitudes towards the LCA were more likely to practice good learner-centred behaviour. In a similar vein, an MA dissertation by Jambor (2007) suggested that the LCA was not welcomed by Korean university students despite the fact that their communication skills were improved through a learner-centred course. The researcher made speculated that this could be a result of the students' attachment to the conventional teacher-centred education used in Korean classrooms. However, in the absence of any supporting evidence, the validity of this claim can be questioned.

While findings from these previous studies provide interesting insights into how the LCA is perceived by students in different settings, a review of recent literature suggests a need to investigate students' views on the LCA. Firstly, there is still an urgent need for research on the views of students in developing countries towards the approach, which has been limited compared to studies on in-service or pre-service teachers' perceptions, education and preparation for the approach. As noted by Ng (2009), Chiang *et al.* (2010) and Schweisfurth (2011), the voice of students within learner-centred education should be heard as they may provide considerable influences on the transitional process of the paradigm change. The primary aim of the study, therefore, is to uncover Thai tertiary students' attitudes towards the LCA.

The second limitation found in the previous studies lies in the fact that they only captured students' attitudes either before or after students have been exposed to a learner-centred course. It would be interesting to investigate students' existing attitudes before and after they have experienced learner-centred practices. Thus, this study gathered students' views on the LCA both before the module started and after the module ended in order to see whether there were any notable shifts in their attitudes as a result of their experience in a learner-centred classroom.

Thirdly, few of the previously cited studies had their limitations as they addressed only one particular aspect of the LCA while ignoring others. For example, problem-based learning (PBL) received particular attention in the medical discipline, as can be found in the studies by Chung and Chow (2004) and Klunklin *et al.* (2011). Similarly, team-based learning (TBL) was highlighted in the study by Sovajassatakul *et al.*, (2011). While PBL and TBL are recognised teaching techniques in the LCA, there are a number of other strategies that are also associated with the learner-centred teaching and learning, such as self-directed learning, collaborative learning, autonomy and formative evaluation (Brandes and Ginnis 1992; Thompson, 2013). As a result, instead of examining a particular aspect of learner-centred education, this study investigates students' views of the five key learner-centred premises outlined by Weimer (2002) (see section 2.4) in an attempt to address all aspects related to the approach. In doing so, a holistic assessment of students' experiences of the LCA can be achieved in a single study, instead of separate consideration of individual elements within several aspects of learner-centred education.

Fourthly, little is known about factors affecting students' attitudes of learner-centred education, especially those that are negative. The studies that did provide some explanations, such as those of Hamzah *et al.* (2013) and Jambor (2007) relied exclusively on questionnaires as the primary

means of data collection and offered only speculation that the students' resistance and negative attitudes towards the LCA may result from their prior learning experiences in teacher-centred classrooms, combined with their socio-cultural orientations. Their claims would have been more convincing had they been obtained through self-reported methods such as interviews or focus groups. The current study combined the use of both quantitative and qualitative data collection methods, which did not only ensure the validity of the findings (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2007) but also enriched our understanding of how students viewed their experiences of learner-centred practices.

Finally, there is an assumption in the literature that learner-centred education is a western-constructed pedagogical theory and its adaptation in other contexts may not be readily applicable to all cultures (Hallinger, 2001b; Schweisfurth, 2011). However, existing studies that have examined how cultural backgrounds affect students' perceptions of the approach remains scarce. As previously discussed, there are some aspects of local culture that may be inconsistent with the assumptions underpinning the LCA. Thus, in this study, the reasons behind the students' perceptions of the approach were also examined to see whether they reflected any socio-cultural beliefs.

## **2.8 Chapter Summary**

Learner-centredness is the latest buzzword that has dominated the literature in teaching and learning in recent years. This chapter has provided an overview of the origin and the theoretical foundations of learner-centred education, which was derived from a better understating of how people learn. The five key characteristics of learner-centred teaching and learning were outlined so as to illustrate changes in practices that occur when educational policy transitions towards the LCA. One of the key players in this change is the student and experts acknowledge that gaining insights into how students view the approach can provide useful information for teachers not only to understand how students approach learning but also to identify possible factors that can facilitate or impede their learning (Daniels and Perry, 2003). The importance of this study lies in the fact that it will enrich our understanding of the adoption of the learner-centred education from the students' point of view since they are, indisputably, those who are mostly affected by pedagogical change.

## **Chapter 3. Methodology**

### **3.1 Introduction**

This chapter describes the paradigmatic orientation, the methodological choice and research design procedures used in this study. The chapter begins with a discussion of the varied paradigmatic assumptions surrounding social sciences research. An exploratory multiple methods research design, which follows a pragmatic approach adopted in this study, is then presented with a supporting explanation as to why it was deemed appropriate. Following that, an account of research settings, selection of participants and research tools is provided. The chapter concludes with a discussion of ethical issues and the validity and reliability of the research.

### **3.2 Research questions**

This study aims to explore how Thai students perceive the LCA and what factors influence their perceptions of the approach. The study also intends to determine whether socio-cultural perspectives play any parts in how the LCA is perceived by Thai students. The research questions formulated for this study were:

- 1) What are Thai university students' perceptions with regard to the LCA and what are the reasons for their perceptions of the approach?
- 2) Are there any differences in the students' perceptions before and after their learning experience in a course that adopted the LCA?
- 3) Are there any cultural factors influencing their perceptions of the LCA?

### **3.3 Research paradigm**

#### **3.3.1 *What is a paradigm***

A research paradigm is 'a comprehensive belief system, world view, or framework that guides research and practice in a field' (Willis, 2007, p. 8). According to Guba and Lincoln (2000), a paradigm is characterised through an ideology concerning the nature of reality (ontology), a

view regarding the nature of knowing (epistemology) and various techniques or methods used to generate knowledge (methodology). Crotty (1998) and Mertens (2005) noted that these three perspectives form an interrelated thinking and practice that influenced the decisions made during the process of the research design and the way knowledge is studied and interpreted. In other words, a researcher's ontological assumptions imply the epistemological stance, which, in turn, informs the choice of methodology used to discover knowledge. Over the past century, two broad research paradigms have evolved, positivism and interpretivism.

### ***3.3.2 Positivist paradigm***

Positivism is underpinned by an objective ontological perspective that looks at reality as having an external existence independent of the cognitive efforts of social actors. Therefore, positivists claim that objectivity is possible and that reality is 'out there' waiting to be discovered and established through direct observation and robust measurement (Gill and Johnson, 1997). They believe that the findings of such measurements should be generalisable to similar situations and settings. The methodology that is often associated with this research perspective is a quantitative approach, which involve numerical measurement and statistical analysis.

### ***3.3.3 Interpretivist paradigm***

Unlike positivism which holds the view that there is a single objective reality, proponents of interpretivism adopt a subjective ontological perspective. They share the view that reality exists inside one's mind and is shaped by one's perceptions of it. Accordingly, reality is subject to varied experiences, attitudes, judgements and interpretations of both the observer and the observed before arriving at an understanding of its meaning (Guba and Lincoln, 2000; Gill and Johnson, 2002). Interpretivists recognise that there are multiple realities that are socially constructed by the context and the perspectives of each individual and, therefore, generalisation to a wider population is neither desirable nor possible (Guba, 1990). In essence, the focus of interpretivism is to understand what is happening in a given setting rather than measuring it (Patton, 1990). Interpretivism employs qualitative methods, such as interviews or participant observations to explore individuals' experiences, opinions and beliefs.

### ***3.3.4 The pragmatic paradigm***

Following the above, positivist researchers are more likely to investigate a phenomenon using large samples and produce objective quantitative data that are described in a way that is measurable and generalisable to a wider population. An interpretivist researcher, in contrast,

is likely to employ small samples to explore different perceptions of a phenomenon and produce rich and subjective qualitative data which may be repeated in other, similar situations. A researcher's choice of methods, therefore, inherently implies a certain allegiance to a particular research paradigm.

Although a quantitative approach may generate statistically reliable, objective and generalisable results, it is perceived as superficial and insensitive to individual differences (Bryman, 1993; Ernest, 1994). On the other hand, qualitative approaches, while addressing individuals' perspectives within the context of their lives, may lack the ability to produce generalisable data (Bryman, 1993). Consequently, a number of research scholars have suggested that instead of dividing the two core paradigms as contrasting and separate groups ('either/or'), they should be presented as falling on a research continuum with varying philosophical positions aligned between them (Burrell and Morgan, 1979; Newman and Benz, 1998). As a result, a range of alternative approaches and philosophical base to research have been developed and refined (Teddlie and Tashakkori, 2009; Creswell and Plano Clark, 2011). One of the alternative views is the 'pragmatic paradigm' which emerged as a third research paradigm, nesting in the middle of the paradigm continuum (Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004).

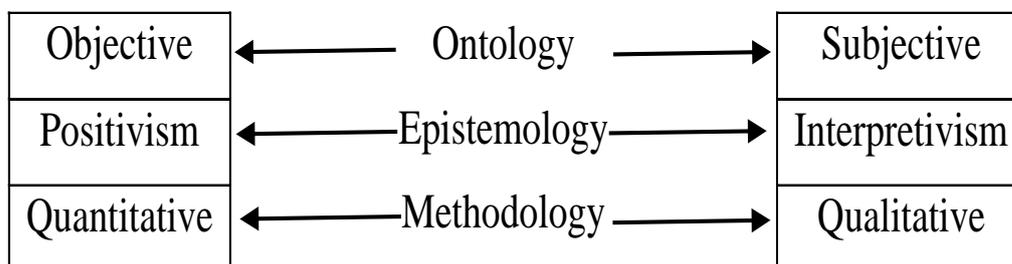


Figure 3.1 The paradigm continuum

Advocates of pragmatism are interested in 'what works' to get research questions answered (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2011). A pragmatic approach to research, therefore, adopts the position of methodological eclecticism, allowing the researcher to start from selecting appropriate research tools from a myriad of quantitative and qualitative methods and mixing those instruments to best answer the set research question(s), rather than driving forward from the paradigmatic assumptions underlying the research method (Tashakkori and Teddlie, 1988; Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004). Pragmatic researchers consider the choice of methods from a practical standpoint and afford little attention to 'the conceptual straitjacket of the disciplines' (Horlick-Jones and Sime, 2004, p. 453). This notion of combining methods has become increasingly common and a number of research scholars have shown their support for

pragmatism, which is commonly associated with mixed methods and multiple method research (Tashakkori and Teddlie, 1988; Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004). This position is built on the premise that the strengths of different research methods should be combined in a single study in order to improve the quality of research and build a better understanding of a social phenomenon (Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004; Bryman, 2006). Therefore, the pragmatic approach was adopted for this study as it was considered crucial to base the choice of research methods on the practical suitability in relation to the purpose of the research questions rather than ‘be the prisoner of a particular method or technique’ (Robson, 1993, p. 291) which follows from adopting a particular philosophical worldview.

### **3.4 Methodology**

#### ***3.4.1 Research method***

According to Silverman (2000, p. 110), ‘a methodology defines how one will go about studying any phenomenon’. This study takes a pragmatic view and, therefore, exploratory multiple method research was the chosen methodology. It was recognised that an exploration of students’ attitudes towards pedagogical transition in their natural settings requires a combination of research methods in order to gain deeper understanding of the phenomenon. Findings from quantitative approach could be supported with those from qualitative approaches to allow similarities and dissimilarities to emerge (Bryman, 1993). A multiple method research was developed in order to provide a more complimentary and holistic description of the students’ perceptions of the LCA as data from multiple sources could be triangulated to establish the validity and reliability of the study (Denzin, 1989).

#### ***3.4.2 Research process***

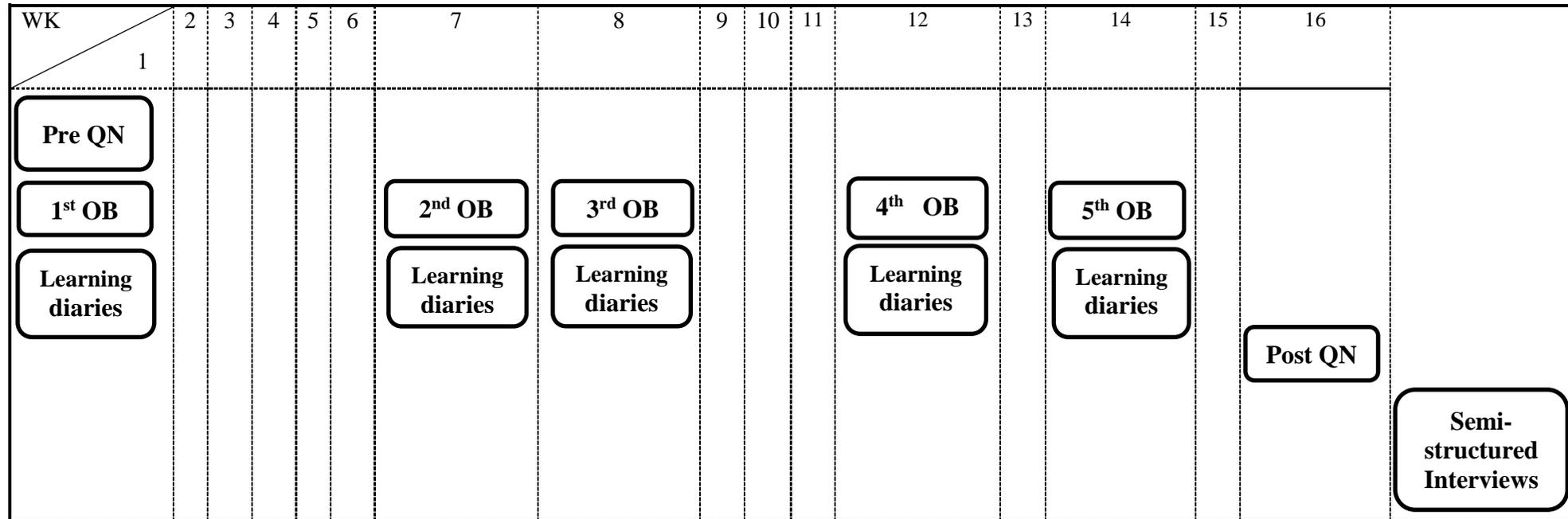
This study started with a pre-questionnaire which was administered to the students on the first lesson of the module. As the module progressed, the students were asked to write learning diaries of the five observed lessons throughout the module. The post-questionnaire was administered to the same students on the last day of the module and 20 volunteer students were asked to participate in semi-structured interviews the week after the semester had ended.

Bearing in mind that this study adopts a multiple method approach, after the quantitative and qualitative data were analysed independently, findings from both strands were connected at the

report of findings and the interpretation stage. The factors affecting the students' views towards the LCA collected from the observations, learning diaries and interviews were then triangulated to clarify and enhance the interpretation, meaningfulness and validity of the students' overall perceptions collected from the questionnaire (Greene *et al.*, 1989; Hanson *et al.*, 2005; Creswell, 2014). Figure 3.2 delineates the steps involved in the study's data collection.

*Semester starts*

*Semester ends*



Results of the quantitative and the qualitative data were firstly analysed separately.



The results from both strands were triangulated to report findings and draw conclusions

Figure 3.2 Data collection procedures

### **3.5 Study setting and participants**

#### ***3.5.1 The context of this study***

This section gives a detailed description of the classroom context from which the data for this study were collected. The study was conducted at a Rajabhat university (universities which were formerly known as teacher training colleges) in the eastern region of Thailand where English is regarded as a foreign language. The university offers both undergraduate and postgraduate programmes in various disciplines such as Education (B.Ed), Science (B.Sc.), and Liberal Arts (B.A.). As with the other 167 government and private higher education institutions throughout Thailand (Ministry of Education, 2008), the university where the data was collected aims to promote the LCA and life-long education as part of the educational reform. Theoretical and practical trainings, workshops and seminars have been provided for teachers, both on-site and outside the university in order to strengthen their ability to incorporate the LCA into classroom practice.

#### ***3.5.2 Description of the course***

The classroom from which the data were taken was an Introduction to English Literature module in the first semester of the 2014 academic year. The semester comprised 16 weeks and the class met for 2 hours every Friday throughout the entire semester. The module was delivered by a teacher who was known to apply learner-centred principles to her teaching. According to the module description, the main aim of the module was to introduce students to various forms of English literature, including poetry, short stories and novels. Students were encouraged to explore the basic structure and vocabulary associated with literature. Specifically, this module focused on equipping students with the tools to be able to: (1) read literary texts with comprehension, (2) correctly use the vocabulary related to literary studies (3) identify the structural elements of poetry, short stories and novels, and (4) articulate their own interpretation of literary texts, in both in-class discussion and written forms. This module was deemed suitable for this research because it was designed to exemplify the LCA to teaching and learning. Students taking the module were encouraged to take more responsibility for their own learning by being involved in making decisions concerning course design and constructing their own knowledge when engaging in individual and group activities, with the teacher acting as a learning facilitator. The module utilised a variety of learning and teaching methods such as lectures, group work, projects and student presentations. Collaborative learning was also

integrated throughout the course to increase interaction among peers and to allow the students to explore the content and contribute productively through group activities.

### ***3.5.3 Research participants***

A convenience sampling method was adopted to select participants who were accessible and willing to participate in the study (Creswell, 2014). According to Bryman (2008) and Cohen *et al.* (2011), accessibility is a crucial consideration when it comes to selecting research sample. Researchers need to ensure that access to the sample is both permitted and practicable (Cohen *et al.*, 2011). Collecting data from students from various universities around Thailand would be ideal but impossible due to limited time frame and accessibility. Fortunately, due to a period of previous employment as a lecturer at the university in question, contact was easily established with the Dean at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, who subsequently made the decision regarding the permission. I then provided the teacher who delivered the module with clear objectives, a timeline and resource requirements for consideration prior to the commencement of the semester. She agreed to allow me to conduct the research in her Introduction to English Literature module. There is little doubt that previous employment at this university secured access to both the university and also to the department and module. Had this not been the case, I may have been denied access due to scepticism about the role of an outsider.

The students enrolled on the Introduction to English Literature module were 37 second-year undergraduate students registered on a BA in English. As part of their curriculum, they were required to take the module in the first semester of their second year. Similar to most situations in many universities where English-majored students are normally comprised overwhelmingly of female students, of 37 students in this study, 29 were females and only 8 were males, leading to a contrasting percentage of 78.4 versus 21.6. The participants were aged between 18 and 23 had a mean age of 19. The full age breakdown was: 18 were at 20 years old (48.6%), 12 were 19 years old (32.4%), three were 22 years old (8.1%), two were 21 years old (5.4%), and the final two students were 18 (2.7%) and 23 (2.7) years old.

Ideally, for a study that uses questionnaires as research instrument, the larger the sample, the better. However, as in all educational settings, the number of students or their characteristics cannot be predetermined. When the semester started, there were 37 students in the class. Nevertheless, the minimum number of 30 participants is generally held as sufficient for applying some form of statistical analysis (Cohen *et al.*, 2011). Additionally, Crowl (1996) and

Bryman (2008) claimed that a larger sample does not necessarily mean better, and emphasis on obtaining a high response rates is instead encouraged. With the number of students and the method of administrating the questionnaire, this study was able to achieve a 100% response rate.

### 3.6 Data collection methods and analysis

#### 3.6.1 Overview of data collection methods and analysis

The following section describes the quantitative and qualitative methods used in this research. The rationales, designs, collection procedures and analysis of each tool are discussed. Table 3.1 shows the instruments used to collect the data in accordance with the research questions, collection time and analysis methods.

Research question	Collection time			Data source	Research instrument	Analysis method
	Before of module	During module	After module			
1. What are Thai university students' perceptions of the LCA and what are the reasons for these perceptions?	✓	✓	✓	Whole class (37 students)	➤ Pre- and post-questionnaires	SPSS using descriptive analysis
					➤ Classroom observations	Transcripts were analysed for evidence of LCA based on questionnaire items
					➤ Learning diaries	Thematic analysis
				20 students	➤ Semi-structured interviews	
2. Are there any differences in the students' perceptions before and after their learning experience in a course that adopted LCA?	✓		✓	Whole class	➤ Pre- and post-questionnaires	SPSS using paired t-test to compare the results from pre- and post-questionnaires.
3. Are there any cultural factors influencing their perceptions of the LCA?		✓	✓	Whole class	➤ Classroom observations	Transcripts were analysed for evidence of LCA based on questionnaire items
					➤ Learning diaries	

				20 students	➤ Semi-structured interviews	Thematic analysis
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Table 3.1 An overview of data collection and analysis methods

### 3.6.2 Quantitative approach:

#### *Questionnaire, rationale, and design*

A questionnaire was used to identify students' perceptions in relation to the LCA and to see whether there were any changes in their attitudes after they had attended a learner-centred course. An attitude scale using the five-point Likert scale was employed in the questionnaire. According to Bohner and Wanke (2002), the simplest way to assess a person's attitude is by asking a single question about his/her evaluation of the attitude object and to have him/her respond along a numeric response scale. The questionnaire comprised two main sections (See Appendix A and B for the English and Thai version). The first section emphasised the participants' perceptions of the LCA based on Weimer's (2002) five key components of learner-centred education (see section 2.6). The participants' demographic information, namely age and gender, was purposefully collected in the second section of the questionnaire to minimise the effect of respondent fatigue as this section generally requires less concentration to complete and, thus, allows participants to focus their attention and energy on the first section of the questionnaire (Krosnick and Presser, 2010).

The questions about participants' perceptions towards the LCA were adopted from a survey by Verst (2010). Her questionnaire contained 64 questions which were developed based on Weimer's (2002) five key premises of the LCA to investigate the level of outstanding teachers' agreement to statements concerning learner-centred teaching practices. The first 35 statements of the 64 questions on Verst's survey were revised for this study. Unlike Verst's study, which investigated outstanding teachers' practices of the LCA, this study investigated *students'* perceptions. The statements on Verst's survey were, therefore, refined to make them applicable and comprehensible for students. The modifications included:

(1) Rewording each statement to represent student viewpoint. For example, Verst's survey 'I encourage the students in my course to express alternative perspectives where appropriate', was changed to 'I enjoy expressing my alternative perspectives where appropriate';

(2) Clarifying a number of statements to provide better understanding for students by providing examples (items 9, 12, 13) and brief explanations of a concept that may be unfamiliar to students (items 25 and 26);

(3) Deleting some items that were context-specific to the original study.

The revised questionnaire for this study, therefore, contains 32 statements across all five of Weimer's (2002) components of the LCA. Learner-centred practice regarding the balance of power framed item one through nine on the questionnaire, while items ten to 15 concerned the function of content. Items 16 -20 focused on the role of the teacher while items 21-26 centred on the responsibility of students. Finally, the purpose and process of evaluation framed items 27-32. Students were asked to rate their agreement and disagreement with these statements on a five-point Likert scale. According to Anderson and Arsenault (1998), Likert scales can be a simple and effective tool for obtaining opinions and attitudes as they can elicit a great deal of information in a short period of time, and a five-point scale is the most practical for most common purposes.

The questionnaire was first designed in English and was subsequently translated into Thai by myself as the researcher. The Thai version of the questionnaire was necessary to minimise linguistic difficulties for the participants when answering the questions and to enhance their understanding of the items. Following that, the questionnaires, both in English and Thai, were sent to three bilingual experts who hold doctoral degrees in education to evaluate the 'redundancy, content, validity, clarity and readability' of the questionnaire (Dörnyei, 2003). Based on their recommendations, some modifications were made to the questionnaire items. For example, the Thai versions of items 5, 24 and 29 were commented on as ambiguous and it was recommended they be reworded. Moreover, it was advised that the words 'facilitator' and 'assignments' in the original translated version be replaced by semantic equivalences that are commonly used in the field of education in the Thai context. Table 3.2 illustrates the modifications made to the questionnaire based on expert recommendations.

Feedback		Modifications
General	Details	
<i>Sentence Rewording</i>	The ‘negotiate’ in item 6 was not reflected in the Thai version.	It was added.
<i>Deleting Redundant Words or Phrases</i>	The Thai word ‘perspectives’ in item 2 and ‘input’ in items 3 and 4 were redundant.	They were shortened to make them more precise.

Table 3.2 Modification made to the questionnaire

### ***Piloting the questionnaire***

The questionnaire was piloted with the hope that it would help me to refine ambiguous questionnaire items and develop a more reliable instrument. It has been suggested that a pilot study can enhance the validity and practicability of the questionnaire (Oppenheim, 1992; Cohen *et al.*, 2011). The purposes of a pilot study include, 1) to seek feedback from respondents concerning the clarity of the instructions and items (Creswell, 2002); 2) to identify words or phrases that may be ambiguous to the respondents (Liu, 2002); 3) to determine the average time required for completing the questionnaire; and, 4) to receive comments on the questionnaire layout.

Thirty non-participating students whose characteristics were similar to the participants of the research project were randomly selected to pilot the questionnaire. They were tertiary students whose age ranged from 19 to 24. Thirty percent of the pilot participants were females. They were informed of the purpose of the pilot study and upon the completion of the questionnaire, they were asked about their general impressions and any problems they might have encountered in the process of completing the questionnaire.

The feedback from the pilot study proved to be very useful in refining the questionnaire. In general, the participants found the questionnaire comprehensible and the number of questions appropriate. However, there were some areas that needed to be addressed. Table 3.3 summarises the modifications based on the results of the piloting.

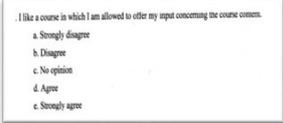
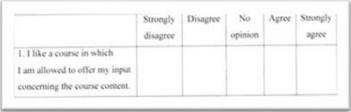
Feedback		Modifications
General	Details	
<i>Item clarity</i>	The term ‘management policies’ in item6 and ‘feedback’ in item 28 were unclear.	The term ‘management policies’ was changed to ‘classroom rules’. Transliteration was provided in brackets for the word ‘feedback’ as it is commonly known to Thai speakers.
<i>Required time</i>	The average time spent on completing the questionnaire was 9 minutes.	The administration time was set to 15 minutes.
<i>Layout</i>	Students commented that they were unfamiliar with the multiple-choice layout when answering a questionnaire with rating scales. For example, 	The layout was changed to 5-point traditional Likert scale. 

Table 3.3 The modifications made based from the pilot study

**Data collection procedure and analysis**

As one of the research questions of this study was to ascertain whether there were any changes in participants’ perceptions of the LCA, the questionnaire was administered twice. The pre-questionnaire was distributed to the participants on the first day of the semester, before the course commenced. As soon as the course was completed, the participants were asked to complete the same questionnaire. Both pre- and post-questionnaires, which were identical, were distributed in the presence of the researcher and were both completed by all 37 participants. The data collected from both questionnaires were analysed for descriptive statistics (means, percentages of responses in different sections) using the statistical analysis software SPSS version 21. On the 5-point Likert scale, the participants rated the degree of their agreement with each statement and numerical values were assigned to each of the responses for analysis purposes. The score ratings were as follows:

Rate of agreement	Score
Strongly disagree	1
Disagree	2
No opinion	3
Agree	4
Strongly agree	5

The means of these scores, which fell between 1-2.49, would indicate a negative view, the means between 2.5-3.49 would indicate no opinion, and the means which reached above 3.5- 5 would indicate a positive attitude. At the end of the semester, a paired-samples t-test was subsequently conducted to determine whether there were any statistically significant differences in the participants' perceptions towards the LCA between before and after they attended the module. According to Larson-Hall (2010), a paired-samples t-test should be used when the information for both scores comes from the same participants.

### ***Reliability and validity of the questionnaire***

While a questionnaire is undoubtedly a popular research instrument for data collection with the function of measurement, it is crucial that the researcher address the issues of validity and reliability when designing a questionnaire so that it can withstand a quality test (Patton, 2002). The content validity of the questionnaires in this study was first achieved by extensive literature review to ensure that all items were relevant to the LCA. Subsequently, the English questionnaire was sent to two supervisors who guided this research for its suitability in assessing students' perceptions of the approach. Some amendments were made at this point before the questionnaire was translated into Thai. After that, both English and Thai questionnaires were sent to three experts in the field of education for review on the content and clarity (Crowl, 1996; Gass and Mackey, 2007; Cohen *et al.*, 2011). Several amendments were made as discussed above. Therefore, it can be said that the content validity of the questionnaires was ensured.

To ensure the reliability of the questionnaire, a pilot study was carried out with thirty participants whose characteristics were similar to the participants who would be in the main study. After the pilot study, a small number of amendments were made and reliability analysis of the questionnaire was carried out using SPSS software (Version 21). Cronbach's alpha is normally performed to indicate a measure of reliability and the results in this study showed an overall reliability of 0.92, which meets the generally accepted level of adequate reliability of greater than 0.70 (George and Mallery, 2011).

### ***3.6.3 Qualitative approach***

As noted above, while the questionnaire is a quick and effective way to gain the opinions of all 37 students before and after their experiences of the module in a short period of time, its limitation lies in the fact that the students' responses were restricted to closed questions (Cohen *et al.*, 2011). For this reason, qualitative approaches, which enable the participants to elaborate

on their perceptions and feelings, were incorporated in this study. The objective of this section is to describe the qualitative methods used in this study.

### *Semi-structured interviews, rationale, and purpose*

This study employed semi-structured interviews, in which the researcher prepares a list of questions as a framework in advance to ensure that similar information can be obtained from each respondent (Patton, 1990) while, at the same time, there is scope for seeking clarification, probing for greater details and discussing issues as and when necessary (Gilbert, 2008). For the purpose of this study, semi-structured interviews were employed to gain a better understanding of students' perceptions of their experiences after attending a course that incorporated the LCA, to elicit the underlying factors affecting their perceptions and to determine whether these factors are associated with any socio-cultural perspectives. This study utilised the distinct advantage of the interview, which is a 'powerful way in helping people to make explicit things that have hitherto been implicit - to articulate their tacit perceptions, feelings and understanding' (Arksey and Knight, 1999, p. 32). Another advantage of the interview is that it is interactive and, therefore, allows the elicitation of additional information where initial answers are vague, incomplete, off-topic or lacking in detail (Mackey and Gass, 2005). Likewise, the respondents were also able to ask for clarification, should they encounter any unclear issues during the interview.

### *Design*

A semi-structured interview protocol was designed containing seven main sections with 20 questions (see Appendix C). The first section was intended to activate the participants' experience of the module and their existing understanding of the LCA. Sections 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 of the protocol explored the students' perceptions regarding the balance of power, the function of content, the role of teacher, the responsibility for learning and the purpose and process of evaluation, respectively. The last section aimed to elicit what the students thought they had gained from the module. It should be pointed out that the interview protocol was used as a guideline for the discussion rather than as a procedure to be followed rigidly. Not every question listed may have been asked, there may have been some changes to the wording of some questions, and new questions may have been added to probe and seek clarification if needed. Examples of questions seeking further clarification or more detail are, 'What do you mean when you say...?', 'Could you give an example?', and 'Could you elaborate more on ...?'

The interview protocol was examined by my supervisor, who guided this research, and the same experts who reviewed the questionnaires. Following that, the interview protocol was piloted with three students who did not participate in the actual study to enhance the validity and reliability of the interview questions (Cohen *et al.*, 2011). Overall, the three students reported that they did not have any difficulties understanding or answering the questions except for question 10: ‘Did you enjoy the activities in which you could interact with fellow students, the teacher and the material?’ They commented that they were not sure what ‘interacting with the material’ meant. As a result, I decided to give a brief explanation to the participants in the actual interviews that an example of interacting with the material was when they read, interpreted, imagined and linked the course materials with their real life.

Initially, it was planned that students who showed either positive or negative perceptions towards each of the five main components would be selected for the interviews. However, data from the pre-questionnaire and the learning diaries collected during the semester tend to suggest that the majority of the students felt positive towards the approach. Deliberately selecting students who felt either positive or negative may not have been feasible. After consulting with my supervisor, it was decided that volunteer sampling would be applied for selecting the interview samples for this study. Volunteer sampling was employed in the hope that students would be more committed and willing to provide greater insight since they self-selected to take part and, at the end of the semester, twenty out of 37 students volunteered to participate in the interviews.

### ***Data collection and analysis***

At the end of the module, twenty students voluntarily participated in the interviews, which were conducted at a place and time which had been agreed on in advance by all participants. Before the interviews began, each interviewee was greeted in a friendly manner so as to create a relaxed atmosphere. The interviewee was reminded and assured that the data they provided would be dealt with confidentially and that they had the right to withdraw from the interview at any time (Berg, 2009). The average length of the interviews was 27.25 minutes. All interviews were audio-recorded with the permission of all participants. The interviews were conducted in Thai so as to allow the participants to communicate fluently and effectively.

The interview data were transcribed verbatim and translated into English by the researcher. The English transcriptions were then e-mailed to an independent translator for back translation to confirm the accuracy of the translation. To identify recurring themes in the responses, the data

from the interviews were analysed using thematic analysis (TA), a method for searching, analysing and reporting themes that emerge as being important within data (Boyatzis, 1998; Braun and Clarke, 2006; Fereday and Muir-Cochrane, 2006). TA was chosen for this study because, unlike narrative analysis or conversational analysis, ‘thematic analysis is not wedded to any pre-existing theoretical framework, and therefore it can be used within different theoretical frameworks’ (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p. 81). This theoretical flexibility also means there are no clear rules regarding how TA should be undertaken.

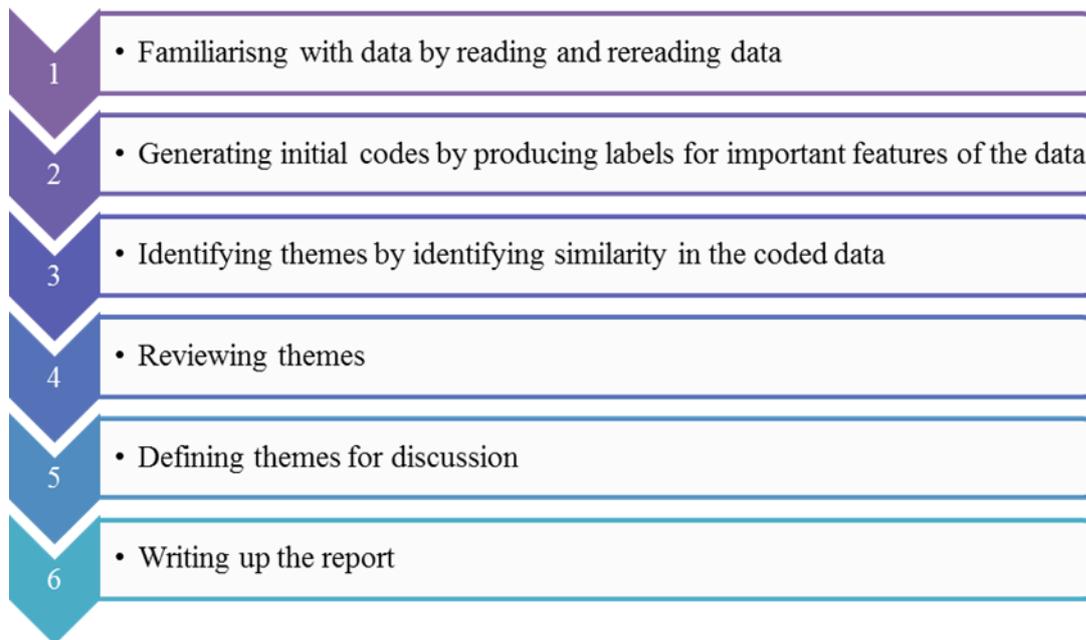


Figure 3.3 The six phases of thematic analysis

For the analysis of the interview data, the 6 comprehensive analysis process in applying TA proposed by Braun and Clarke (ibid.) were adhered to (Figure 3.3). A sample of how the analysis was undertaken is given below.

- 1) *Familiarisation with the data*: I began analysing qualitative data by reading each transcript several times in order to ‘intimately familiar with those data’ (Marshall and Rossman, 2011, p. 158) and to ‘obtain a general sense’ (Creswell, 2014, p. 234).
- 2) *Coding*: I identified key phrases or ideas in the students’ responses that were relevant or addressed the research questions. I labelled them by writing a word in the margins.

<b>Question:</b> How do feel when the teacher gave you the opportunities to make decisions regarding the course?	
<b>Students' responses</b>	<b>Categories</b>
I like it because ... the teacher <b>respected</b> me as a student. Respect here means both <b>parties have equal rights</b> . The teacher didn't not just make all these decisions; she asked us if we should do something. The teacher didn't just make orders. Sometimes we had to take our ability into account. (003)	Feel equal and respected
I like it ...I like that I could offer input when it should be handed it because learning, there were six modules in one semester. I have many modules. So I <b>could determine</b> today I would do this module and this module. So I can <b>manage the time</b> to do the work for every module. (022)	Able to plan learning
I liked it because it made me feel <b>involved</b> ... more than the teacher just told us when to hand in. We <b>were allowed to reason</b> with her when to hand in... 'teacher can we submit that day, can we postpone this' ... there were opinions exchanges .(048)	Feel involved
That was good, it allowed me to choose which... choose the ones that I was <b>interested in</b> which made me <b>pay more attention</b> in class. (035)	Feel interested so want to make more effort

Table 3.4 Coding sample

3) *Searching for themes:* I reviewed all the codes established in phase two and looked for similarities between them in order to group them into categories. For example, I had a number of codes that were related to how the students felt when they were allowed to make decisions regarding the module. I collated them into an initial theme called Affective factors and codes that impacted students' behaviour were collated in to Behavioural factors.

<b>Theme:</b> Emotional responses	<b>Theme:</b> Behavioural responses
Codes:  Feel equal and respected  Feel involved	Codes:  Able to plan learning  Feel interested so want to make more effort

Table 3.5 Identifying theme sample

- 4) *Reviewing themes*: I checked the preliminary themes identified in step 3 by considering whether the data in each theme were cohere together in a meaningful way and whether there were clear and identifiable distinctions between individual themes (Clarke and Braun, 2013).
- 5) *Defining and naming themes*: Each category was named and defined to 'identify the essence of what each theme is about' (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p. 92). For the emotional reactions the students had for their learner-centred experiences, I organised them into affective factors and defined it as emotional reactions or feelings the students had as a result of their experiences of the LCA.
- 6) *Writing up*: Finally, I reported the analysis in the finding chapter.

### ***Challenges with interviews***

Undertaking research by use of interviews is not without limitations and challenges. Interviews are interactively co-constructed between the interviewer and the interviewee and, therefore, the success of an interview can be said to rely heavily on both parties (Kvale, 1996; Berg, 2009; Mann, 2011). The quality and richness of data obtained in this study relied greatly on my role to gather data. A healthy and productive rapport and an environment of trust with the student interviewees was quickly established. Before each interview started, the purpose of the interview was explained, the interviewees were encouraged to be honest and, they were assured that the informative they gave would be kept confidential. Consequently, the interviewees were able to freely share their thoughts about their experiences of the LCA. Moreover, they did not appear to be giving socially acceptable responses since the interview was conducted confidentially (i.e. one-to-one). Sufficient lengthy responses were elicited from the questions in the interview protocol. However, upon listening to the audio recordings, it was discovered that there were areas that could have been probed further to generate deeper insights. Consequently, despite the preparations outlined above, it has become clear that the proficiency in the ability to make a 'snap' decision as to which responses could be followed up and which are less necessary to probe is very much an 'acquired skill' which will take practice.

### ***Learning diary, rationale, and purpose***

In order to provide additional triangulation to the study, students were asked to keep a learning diary describing or reflecting on their experience and feelings in the five lessons that were observed. The primary benefit of diaries for this study was that they allowed students to write freely and provide additional information about their learning experiences that may not be obtained by other means, such as questionnaire or interviews (Allwright and Bailey, 1991;

Corti, 1993; Mackey and Gass, 2005). Diaries, written at a time and place of one's choosing, also provide students with a less pressured environment (compared to the urgency inherent in face-to-face interviews) to reflect at some leisure and with more collected thoughts on their feelings regarding learning (Corti, 1993).

### ***Design***

While diaries are recognised as a tool that provide participants the freedom to show what is significant to them, the volume of data they produce may potentially be vast and at times random (Gass and Mackey, 2007; Cohen *et al.*, 2011). To tackle this drawback, a template with set spacing was provided (Appendix E). The template contained four guideline questions which asked students to: 1) indicate and provide reasons for what they liked in the observed lesson; 2) indicate and provide reasons for what they did not like in the observed lesson; 3) what they would like the teacher to do more; and, 4) what they would like to share about the lesson. The four questions in the diaries played an important role in making the analysis more manageable. Before the actual study, the supervisory team and the same experts who reviewed the questionnaire were also asked to comment on the questions and structure of the diary, and no alternations were made to the diary.

### ***Data collection procedure and analysis***

On the first day of the module, the purpose and the use of the diary were clearly described to the students, who were assured that the information given would be confidential and that their honest feedback would have no impact on their grades. Learning diaries were provided for the participants in each observed lesson and there was no word limit for the diary. To maximise the quality and accuracy of the information given, the students were informed that Thai should be the language used for the diaries but if any student would like to write in English, they were welcome to do so without having to worry about making mistakes. Additionally, the students were prompted to reflect on both teaching and learning and to try to support their account with examples. Since the module timetable was scheduled for every Friday, the students were asked to return the diary of each observed lesson the following Monday.

A total of 170 diaries from five lessons, excluding absences, was gathered over the course of a semester. All diary entries were translated into English in a manner which allowed the lexical distinctions and structure of the original writing to be preserved as much as possible. Translating, it goes without saying, is not an easy task since it requires linguistics, cultural, technological and professional knowledge. The texts were revisited several times to improve

the translation and translated data were back translated by an independent translator to ensure the validity of the data. As with the analysis of the interview, Braun and Clark's (2006) thematic analysis process was applied to all the transcripts to establish descriptive categories of the learning diary data based on the guided questions. Once the themes derived from the learning diaries and interviews had been established, they were examined to ascertain whether they reflected any socio-cultural perspectives to answer RQ 3 (*'Are there any cultural factors influencing their perceptions of the LCA?'*)

### ***Challenges with the learning diaries***

As Gass and Mackey (2007) insightfully observe:

Although diary research is undoubtedly able to produce valuable information when undertaken conscientiously, one of the main concerns in this area is the fact that keeping a diary requires commitment of the participants to provide frequent and detailed accounts of their thoughts about learning. This can be a significant burden. (p.50)

The main challenge in using learning diaries in the study revolved around the extra commitment the students were willing to make to provide a sufficient account of their learning experience. Since it was recognised the students may have other commitments which would take priority, such as homework, part-time jobs or family, the students were asked to write only the diary of the five observed lessons instead of every lesson for the whole semester. However, after the third observation, it became apparent that their answers had become too succinct and less articulate. For instance, a number of them simply wrote, 'I like group work', without providing reasons. While none of the participants formally withdrew from the study, the burden of keeping a diary did result in less detailed entries. To overcome this, the purpose of the study and the diary was reiterated to the entire class again and the students were asked to be more expressive and give reasons and examples in their writing.

### ***Classroom observations, rationale, and purpose***

Classroom observations were employed in this study to gain a comprehensive picture of key teaching and learning events with special attention to students' interactions and reactions to learner-centred features applied in the classroom. For example, students' behaviours were noted when the teacher invited their input concerning the module or when they were asked to assess their peers. Additionally, observational information was used to make sense of what the students discussed or wrote about in the interviews or in the learning diaries. Therefore, the observation data in this study facilitated an understanding of the context, provided evidence of actual classroom practice to cross-reference the findings from other research tools, revealed

things that participants might not be willing to discuss in interview situations and provided data that was not only self-report information garnered from the participants (Patton, 2002; Cohen *et al.*, 2011).

### ***Observation procedure***

Non-participant observation, in which the researcher does not participate directly in the interaction of the observed situations, was adopted in this study (Fraenkel and Wallen, 1993). This approach allows the study of the participants and the activities from their natural setting without controlling or manipulating anything in the situation (Gay, 1990). Non-participant classroom observation was conducted in five lessons throughout the 16-week period. The observed lessons were decided by the teacher based on the activities and content in each week and were all scheduled in advance. The observation schedules are shown in table 3.4.

Observation	Date (2014)	Duration	No. of students present	Content covered
1 <sup>st</sup>	15 August	95	37	Course orientation A short poem
2 <sup>nd</sup>	26 September	88	33	Important poems in English and American literature
3 <sup>rd</sup>	3 October	102	33	Inspirational poems
4 <sup>th</sup>	31 October	92	35	Short stories: The Upturned Face
5 <sup>th</sup>	14 November	79	32	Novel: Student presentation of To Kill a Mocking Bird

Table 3.6 Observation schedules

### ***Data collection and analysis***

Video-recordings, which ran continuously from the beginning until the end of the lesson, were used to record classroom activities. The use of video recordings helped capture all events that happened during the observations, provided the context and allowed me to search for the interaction between the teacher and the students. In terms of analysing data, recording on video undoubtedly offers the appeal of endless retrieval and provides what Edwards and Westgate (1987) refer to as ‘retrospective analysis’. This means that video recordings enables the researcher to repeatedly revisit and analyse the data after class and in greater depth in order to check and clarify. All video recordings were made with the permission of both the teacher and the student participants, and they were clearly informed of the purpose of the observations.

In addition to the videos, observation notes were kept to support and complete the observations. For this study, field notes were used to record teacher-student behaviours and interaction during

the observed lessons and were also used as a reference source of classroom events during the transcribing and analysing of the video recordings. Before the module commenced, a test of the recording equipment was carried out so as to ensure familiarisation with the tools.

For analysis, each of the five observed lessons was then transcribed to provide a detailed picture of how the lessons went. All lesson transcripts were then transformed into formatted tables with indications of stages, teacher-students activities, length of time and my observation comments from the field notes (see Appendix G for examples). As the aim of the observations was to gain an understanding of the implementation of the LCA in the classroom, codes for features of the LCA into these formatted tables using the items on the questionnaire as a guide were identified and applied (see Appendix H). The justification for using the questionnaire items to examine the observation data was to cross reference findings from different sources. Despite this precaution, the data were approached with an open mind and analysed using an inductive approach to allow frequent or significant themes to emerge from the raw data without predetermined frameworks or categories (Edwards and Westgate, 1987; Punch, 2014).

### ***Challenges in observations***

No matter how well they are designed, there are issues that need to be address when conducting observations. One of the challenges regarding observations is the Hawthorne effect, which occurs when individuals alter their behaviour as a result of knowing that they are being observed (Richards, 2003). Although there was no direct participation in classroom activities, it was inevitable in this study that the presence of an outsider (in addition to the recording equipment) might trigger behaviour change during the observation. Minimising the impact of this was tackled in three ways. Firstly, before the module commenced, the purpose and procedures were clearly stated to all participants and they were encouraged to behave as normally as possible. Moreover, the participants were assured that their identities would be fully protected and their names would not be linked to recordings in any presentations or publications that may be released from the research.

Secondly, a position at the back of the room as to be far away as far away as possible from the students should be chosen by the observer. However, the room was small for the number of students (37) with the last row sitting with their backs next to the wall, leaving no space behind the students. Consequently, a position in the last row of students was chosen, with only a vacant chair between myself and a student on the back row. Rapport was established so as to come

across as less of an outsider. The Hawthorne effect seemed to be short lived since the students' behaviours soon appeared to be unaffected by my presence in the subsequent observations.

Thirdly, the participants may perceive the video recording equipment to be intrusive. In order to tackle this, the two video cameras were set up well in advance of the commencement of the class to ensure the students were minimally aware of its presence (Pirie, 1996). Despite these steps, it is apparent from the recording of the first observation that a number of students were aware of the cameras because they occasionally looked directly into them. However, over the five recordings throughout the semester, the students gradually became familiar with the cameras, and their presence seemed to become less of an issue. The teacher did not appear to be affected by the recording devices as she seemed comfortable and the recorders, positioned in the front and rear corners of the room, did not in any way obstruct her path if she wanted to walk around the class and monitor.

### **3.7 Limitations of the study**

A number of words of caution are pertinent when interpreting the findings of this study.

1. As the study was conducted with a limited number of participants, the results may be not generalisable. A further study with more participants is necessary to confirm, expand, or refute the current research's findings.
2. The study was conducted with Thai university students who were majoring in English. Unlike most similar research to date, this study was intended to explore the students' views of their experiences in a learner-centred classroom over a whole semester (4 months). The study was time-consuming in terms of collecting and analyzing data. Consequently, the study was conducted at one university although similar educational environments may exist in other Thai universities.
3. This study utilised pre- and post-questionnaires to statistically compare the students' views on learner-centred principles before and after their experience of the module. A semi-structured interview to probe into the causes of their perceptions was only conducted at the end of the semester due to time limitation. The findings from this study would have been richer if the students had been interviewed at the beginning of the semester so that factors affecting their views before and after their experience of the module could be compared.

4. Two translation processes occurred in this study. First, the data collection instruments used in this study were constructed initially in English and approved by the research supervisors and experts. The instruments were then translated into Thai by myself so that they could be administered to the participants. Second, the participants responded in all of the instruments in Thai, which were then translated into English by myself. Although all translations were carefully done to accurately reflect the original versions, it should be cautioned that there might be slight differences in the sense and meanings between the English and Thai versions of the research instruments and the participants' responses.

5. In any research, researchers are expected to be as objective as possible. However, it is recognised that the selection of topics can be influenced by the researchers' social, professional or personal background or interests and ,therefore, 'research is seldom, if ever, really value neutral' (Berg, 2009, p. 155). A researcher cannot be separated from the social world he/she studies (Punch, 2014). Thus, it is important for researchers 'to make the relationship between and the influence of the researcher and the participants explicit' (Jootun *et al.*, 2009, p. 45). For this reason, although throughout the research process I remained as objective as possible, it may be possible that my previous position as a lecturer in the university has influenced the students' responses. That is to say, while my former position may facilitate me in creating rapport and gaining trust and cooperation from the students, it is possible that they may have given me responses that they thought I would like to hear or that are socially desirable even though I had never taught the students before (Marshall and Rossman, 2011). To undermine potential influences, I openly discussed my position as an independent researcher with the students at the beginning of the data collection. I explained to them the purpose, data collection methods, stages and processes of the study and assured them that their responses would be treated strictly confidentially.

Apart from my previous connection with the university, my insights gained from the review of the literature in the field of learner-centred learning may also influence the data collection and analysis. Instead of attempting to undertake research with a mind devoid of knowledge of the field, it is suggested that the researcher use their knowledge and experience to inform the research at a conceptual level rather than at the data level (Corbin and Strauss, 2008). With this in mind, I used the reading to guide the formulation of questionnaire and interview questions to ensure that they were within the scope of learner-centred learning. However, when it came to eliciting responses from the students, I encouraged the students to express their views of their learning experiences freely. I gave them adequate time to think about their responses and encouraged them to provide clarification and examples. I had to make myself constantly alert

that I did not ignore or overemphasise certain responses due to my knowledge from the field. At the analysis process, I read and re-read the transcripts several times to allow themes to emerge from the data, instead approaching it with a set of theoretical codes in mind. Additionally, triangulation of data from multiple methods of data collections were employed to help ensure the trustworthiness and reliability of the research.

### **3.8 Ethical considerations**

Educational research is usually conducted with human participants within institutional contexts and, therefore, attention to protecting and respecting individuals is paramount (Cohen *et al.*, 2011). As the study mainly involved collecting data from university students, there were a number of ethical issues to be considered.

Firstly, gaining informed consent is critical for ethically valid research. As a result, before the first day of class, the teacher and students were asked for their consent to take part in the study (see Appendix I). To aid their decision making, the objectives and nature of the study were outlined clearly to them and all student participants were informed of their role in the research, which included taking pre- and post-questionnaires of their perceptions, keeping a learning diaries, being observed and videotaped in five observations and being interviewed. The consent form also stated that each participant acknowledged that his/her participation was optional and they had the right to withdraw at any point in the research process without any repercussions for their marks or grades in class (Kvale, 1996). An information sheet with my and my supervisor's contact details was provided, should any participant decide not to take part or withdraw. All participants were also debriefed at the end of their participation on how the data would be used in the analysis. At the start of each interview, the participants were also given information about the aims of the interview and were again asked for their permission to be audio recorded. They were assured that their identities would be protected in all the recordings and transcripts by the use of pseudonyms.

The second issue to consider concerning ethics in research is the protection of the participants' anonymity and confidentiality. The distinction between anonymity and confidentiality is that the former means that neither the researchers nor the readers are able to identify a respondent from a given response while the latter means the researcher is able to link a given response with a particular respondent but guarantees not to reveal his/her identity (Babbie, 2004). While it was acknowledged that respondents in the learning diaries and interviews may not be anonymous to me during the data collection, the anonymity of the participants was protected

by the use of coding numbers to questionnaires and pseudonyms were assigned for use in the reporting of the results. In terms of confidentiality, the participants were assured that their data would be treated with full confidentiality, and, if published, it would not be identifiable as belonging to them.

### **3.9 Validity in multiple method research**

Appraising the quality of methodological research is a fundamental and crucial practice for ensuring an effective study. Generally, the issue of validity is routinely associated with the quality assurance of quantitative research while trustworthiness, credibility plausibility and dependability are the terms used by qualitative researchers. As for multiple methods research, there is a plethora of terms available to describe the evaluation criteria. Teddlie and Tashakkori (2009), for example, offered the term *inference quality*, along with six issues of concern, to describe how to ensure quality in multiple methods research. Onwuegbuzie and Johnson (2006) added *legitimation* to the nomenclature of assessing validity in multiple methods research. They went on to create a typology of nine legitimation types that could be used in multiple methods studies.

As for this study, the term *legitimation* was employed because it is considered an ‘alternative word that is more acceptable to both quantitative and qualitative researchers’ (Onwuegbuzie and Johnson, 2006, p. 55). Additionally, unlike Teddlie and Tashakkori (2003) who failed to include the issue of sampling in their six issues of concern in multiple methods research (Collins *et al.*, 2007), the nine legitimation types offered by Onwuegbuzie and Johnson (2006) adequately address the different steps of the research process ranging from research design, sampling techniques to data analysis and interpretations. Table 3.7 addresses the seven legitimations (from the nine) that are relevant to this study.

<b>Legitimation type</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Method</b>
<b>Sample Integration</b>	The extent to which the relationship between the quantitative and qualitative sampling designs yields quality meta-inferences	The participants involved in the qualitative components represented a smaller subset of the same participants involved in the questionnaire so that inferences stemmed from both approaches could be combined.
<b>Inside-outside</b>	The extent to which the researcher accurately presents and appropriately utilises the insider's view and the observer's view.	A scholar who holds a PhD in education, and a lecturer who holds a PhD in statistics were asked to examine the interpretation to obtain a justified etic viewpoint. For a justified emic viewpoint, a number of participants were asked to review the accuracy of the findings based on their perceptions.
<b>Weakness Minimization</b>	The extent to which the weakness from one approach is compensated for by the strengths from the other approach(es)	The lack of explanatory data in the participants' views of the LCA from the questionnaires was compensated by the qualitative data, which provided descriptive responses of thoughts, feeling and behaviours to complement the quantitative outcome.
<b>Paradigmatic Mixing</b>	The extent to which the researcher's epistemological, ontological, axiological, methodological and rhetorical beliefs that underlie the quantitative and qualitative approaches are successfully (a) combined or (b) blended into a usable package.	As spelled out in 3.3.4, pragmatism was adopted for this study as it is believed that the strengths of different research methods could be integrated to draw a better understanding of a social phenomenon. This legitimation was enhanced by an extensive literature review and undergoing all essential steps of a multiple method research process.

<b>Commensurability</b>	The extent to which the meta-inferences made reflect a mixed worldview based on the cognitive process of Gestalt switching and integration.	The results from the questionnaires and qualitative approaches were merged to provide a complete picture of how the participants viewed the LCA. Findings and interpretations were made based on mixing quantitative and qualitative studies to achieve meta-inferences.
<b>Multiple Validities</b>	The extent to which addressing legitimation of the quantitative and qualitative components of the study result from the use of quantitative, qualitative, and mixed validity types, yielding high quality meta-inferences	Thick description of procedure, sound instrument with reliability test and details of statistical analysis procedure were provided to ensure the reliability of quantitative data. Triangulation of data, supervision, inter-rater reliability checks were used to ensure the credibility of qualitative data.
<b>Political</b>	The extent to which the consumers of multiple method research value the meta-inferences stemming from both the quantitative and qualitative components of a study.	This was enhanced by a rigorous multiple method research design, as described in 3.4.

Table 3.7 Relevant legitimation in this study

### 3.10 Chapter summary

This chapter began with a discussion of the ontological and epistemological stances adopted in the study. This research took a pragmatic view to research, focusing on ‘what works’ in getting research questions answered (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2011). This led to the adoption of multiple methods with the use of 1) pre- and post-questionnaires, 2) semi-structured interviews, 3) learning diaries, and 4) classroom observations. The analysis methods of the data regarding 37 Thai university students’ perceptions of a learner-centred classroom were provided, along with a discussion of ethical considerations. Finally, the chapter addressed the methods used to ensure the research quality of this study.

## Chapter 4. Findings

### 4.1 Introduction

The chapter presents findings to address the questions- what are Thai university students' perceptions of the LCA and what factors affect their perceptions? Data collected from the interviews, the learning diaries, and the observations were analysed inductively to identify key patterns of the students' perceptions and behaviours after attending a course that integrated learner-centred principles. Quantitative and qualitative data were subsequently compared to triangulate the findings and highlight any agreements or discrepancies in the students' perceptions. The presentation of the findings is organised according to research questions. Findings for research question 1 and 2 were presented in relation to Weimer's (2002) theoretical model of five learner-centred practices and findings for research question 3 were derived from emerging data from the qualitative approaches. The findings from different sources were collated wherever relevant and possible. This allowed the triangulation of findings, the identification of congruence or incongruence between the quantitative and qualitative findings, and to guarantee of the quality of the results.

In each of the five learner-centred components, the questionnaire results were presented first and were then triangulated with findings from qualitative data. For instance, quotes and excerpts from the observations, learning diaries and the interviews are used as evidence to support the claims that are made on the basis of the findings from the questionnaire data. Students in the study were randomly assigned numbers and quotations from students' interviews or learning diaries were distinguished by using I for interviews and LD for learning diaries. Learning diaries from the first to the fifth observation are identified by LD1-LD5. To illustrate, a quotation from the interview of Student 1 will be identified as I-S1 and a quotation from as learning diary 3 of Student 2 will be identified as LD3- S2.

The quotes displayed in this study were selected as they were representative of the research findings in each topic. Direct quotations not only serve as evidence to support the researcher's claim but also allow readers to make their own judgment about the accuracy of the analysis so as to strengthen the credibility of the research (Corden and Sainsbury, 2006).

## **4.2 Research question 1: What are Thai university students' perceptions with regard to the LCA and what are the reasons for their perceptions of the approach?**

### ***4.2.1 Balance of power***

The first component of the LCA proposed by Weimer (2002) discusses the reallocation of power in the classroom. The imbalance in the teacher-student relationship in the traditional classroom is redressed by empowering students to share responsibility, thereby involving them in decision-making in the learning process (Weimer, 2002). In the class where the data was collected, it was evident that the teacher attempted to give the students some control within the module. Student's involvement was welcomed in the very first lesson of the semester when they were invited to give their thoughts on portion of marks, attendance marks and how the students wanted to work (individually, in pair or in groups). The students seemed to be paying attention when the teacher asked their input concerning the course as they answered her questions enthusiastically, even though some students did not seem to have thought the answer through. The majority of appeared eager to contribute their input by saying out loud of what they wanted and they appeared to be enjoying it. The scene is rarely seen in a traditional classroom where course syllabuses pre-determined by the teacher is normally handed out to students who obediently accept it without questions. Throughout the semester, the teacher continued to offer the students choice in the classroom. This includes asking them whether or not to work in group, which story they would like to discuss or when they wanted to o submit an assignments.

In the questionnaire, the first nine items represented Weimer's (2002) balance of power dimension. The 37 Thai students in this study were asked to rate their agreement or disagreement on a five-point Likert scale in relation to their perceptions when they were invited to express alternative perspectives and make decisions regarding the course (e.g. content, assignment, deadlines, classroom management policies, assessment methods). Numerical values were assigned to each of the responses for purposes of analysis, i.e., 'strongly disagree' has a score of 1, 'disagree' has a score of 2, and 'strongly agree' has the highest score of 5. The means of these scores which fell between 1-2.49 would indicate a negative view, the means between 2.5-3.49 would indicate no opinion, and the means which reached above 3.5-5 would indicate a positive attitude. These interpretations were applied to all the questionnaire data. Table 4.1 shows the means in students' responses from the pre and post questionnaires on the balance of power.

Questionnaire item	Pre QN means	Post QN means	Sig.
1. I like a course in which I am allowed to offer my input to the content.	3.78	4.13	.041
2. I enjoy expressing my alternative perspectives where appropriate.	3.56	3.97	.038
3. I like offering my input on assignment.	3.56	4	.014
4. I like offering my input on how much weight the assignments are worth.	3.45	3.97	.035
5. I prefer assignments that are open-ended (e.g. projects) and/or allow for more than one right answer.	3.86	4.16	.140
6. I like a course in which I am allowed to negotiate classroom rules with the teacher.	3.91	4.05	.491
7. I like a course in which I am allowed to negotiate assessment methods with the teacher.	3.78	4.13	.146
8. I like a course in which I am allowed to negotiate assignment deadlines with the teacher.	4.27	4.37	.524
9. I feel I have more control of my own learning if I am involved in making decision regarding the course (e.g. content, deadlines, and assessment).	3.18	3.83	.022
<b>Overall mean</b> (Note: $p \leq .05$ )	3.71	4.07	.011

Table 4.1 A comparison of means scores on the balance of power

Generally, the students appeared to be in favour of the balance of power both before and after their experience in the module. There are nine questions in total regarding the balance of power in the classroom. The overall mean score to the nine questions in the pre-questionnaire indicates that, prior to the start of the module, students desired to be given the opportunities to offer their input regarding their learning (means= 3.71). The highest mean was found in the item concerning negotiating how much an assignment should be worth, implying that the students perceived this as important to them and would prefer to have a voice on the matter. However, the overall mean score of item 9 concerning the students' feeling of having control when they are involved in making course decisions fell below the positive level. It appears that the majority of students did not have any opinions regarding this matter before the module commenced.

The findings from the post-questionnaire showed that the students maintained a positive attitude when allowed to express their opinions concerning the module with a high level of agreement (overall mean = 4.07). Again, the item concerning input on assignment deadlines presented the highest mean in the post questionnaire. The questionnaire results regarding the balance of power were confirmed by the evidence from the observation, the learning diaries and the interview of 20 students at the end of the module. From the observations, the students appeared enthusiastic as they actively voiced their opinions concerning the course syllabus and expressed their appreciation of being invited to offer input in the learner diaries and the interview. It was found

that sharing power in the classroom with the teacher positively affected the students' experiences of the module, which can be described in three main aspects: affective, behavioural and interpersonal impacts (Table 4.2).

<b>Affective factor</b>	<b>Behavioural factor</b>	<b>Interpersonal factor</b>
<b>1. Sense of belonging</b> <i>Feeling respected</i> <i>Feeling important</i>	<b>1. Managing learning</b> <i>Self-monitoring of own learning process</i>	<b>1. Approachable teacher</b>
<b>2. Feeling involved</b>		
<b>3. Eagerness to learn</b> <i>Feeling motivated</i>		

Table 4.2 Factors contributing to students' perceived satisfaction regarding the balance of power

### *Affective factors*

Emotional reactions or feelings the students had as a result of their experiences of the LCA were categorised as affective factors. From the interviews, the majority of students reported enjoying offering input with the teacher as it made them feel valued and respected as students. As one student put it:

I, personally, liked it because the teacher respected me as students. The teacher did not see herself as having the absolute authority to determine everything... absolute rights of the teacher. Like in the beginning, I remembered, the teacher asked our opinions about the portions of marks, what we wanted, how much for exams, how much for assignments. I think the teacher was nice because it's not like I [teacher] want this, this and this and you have no rights to offer your opinions. I think it's good (I-S33).

Similar to the interviews results, fourteen of the 37 participants wrote in their learning diaries that they appreciated being invited to share their input concerning the course syllabus. One student said:

Today the teacher gave us the syllabus and we went through it. The teacher asked us about our thoughts on the content, marks, and other things, which was different from other modules. Normally we are just given the syllabus. I

really liked it because I felt a part of the module instead of being just ‘a student’. (LD1 -S33)

I like that the teacher invited us to share our thoughts on attendance, learning methods, deadlines, content, assignments and marks because it will help me be more interested in learning and I wouldn’t feel the pressure of doing what the teacher has decided. (LD1-S14)

The comments above demonstrate that being allowed to share their views and decisions about the course positively presents students with a sense of ownership of their own learning. They realised that they too had a role and responsibility for this class, rather than just being there and having learning done to them. Additionally, the students’ increased power in the classroom also contributed to their motivation to learn since it created a classroom climate in which they felt they were a part and wanted to engage with the learning process. For example, one student said:

I feel better with this module because normally I don’t like literature. When I was allowed to make decisions about the content, rules, it made me want to learn more. Maybe not a lot but I felt more positive with the module because I don’t normally like literature or history. When I could negotiate, I could choose, choose stories I liked, I felt more positive with the module (I-S20).

The above excerpt exemplifies the notion that a classroom that fosters openness and freedom can be conducive to student motivations to learn. Furthermore, the classroom environment the teacher created also contributed to the students’ engagement with the lesson. Interestingly, eight students mentioned in their learning diaries that they liked the relaxed and friendly atmosphere of the lesson which made ‘*the lesson easy to understand*’ (LD1-S27).

### ***Behavioural factors***

In addition to students’ positive feelings about sharing classroom power with the teacher, another major factor of the positive views on the balance of power reported from the interviews concerned students’ behaviour. There was a shared feeling that the students could better manage their learning when they became active in customising their learning. For instance, one student explained how their input on assigning course marks helped them manage their learning:

I’ve always had modules for which the teacher determined portions of marks for students, how many scores each part should have, and this would affect our overall marks. For instance, if... supposed my class was good at taking exams, and most people were lazy or had little responsibility, if we put more scores for exams, we knew that we could do well, then we had better scores from the exams and eventually better grades. (I-S8)

Similar opinions were also found in the learning diaries. Another student wrote in the diary that:

I liked when the teacher asked my opinions about marks and content, things like that, because it allowed me the freedom to think and I could choose what was appropriate for me. (LD1-S15)

### ***Interpersonal factors***

The final category of the students' perceptions concerning the balance of power relates to interaction between teacher and students. It appears that allowing students a voice in their learning can have a positive impact on the way Thai students see their teachers. The image that is traditionally assigned to Thai teachers is that of a righteous guru who has great knowledge and, therefore, for students to ask questions or assert a different point of views is considered inappropriate (Knutson *et al.*, 2003). However, one student's comment below demonstrates that providing opportunities for students' voice can build rapport between teachers and students, which in turn leads to students feeling that teachers are approachable. Students feel safe to come to their teacher with issues or questions, which was generally unknown under the didactic teaching orientation.

I felt like... this... like this word 'learner-centred' because students could negotiate and determine scores, deadlines and when we had problems or questions, we felt more comfortable to ask the teacher [*who welcomed students' input*] more than a teacher who determines everything... A teacher who determines everything is, like, indirectly controlling us because the teacher arrives at class, assigns us work and gives us a deadline without allowing us to say anything, it means that we don't have the right to say anything, just the right to do what we are told. Asking us like this [*this module*] was good because it's like I had a voice. (I-S8)

### ***4.2.2 Function of content***

In the TCA, there appears to be pressure for teachers to cover course materials, and there is an assumption that the more content, the better so that students can pass examinations in which memorisation is commonly the primary method of assessing knowledge (Israsena, 2007). However, the function of content in the LCA is directed towards helping students develop their knowledge and important skills, such as critical thinking and self-awareness of learning, instead of focusing on covering the content, which often results in students employing only lower order thinking skills (Weimer, 2002). In the lessons that were observed, it was seen that the teacher merely employed lecturing to either recap the previous lesson or to introduce students to the topic of that particular lesson in the beginning of a lesson. After that, she mostly employed activities that the students could be actively involved with the learning process such as discussing and the lesson topic as a whole class or in groups. Consistent with social constructivism theory, group works or group discussions were used in this module as a means

to allow the students to jointly construct understanding from sharing their views with peers. During group discussions, each student was given the opportunity to explore the content through listening to their peers, relating the topic of discussion with their own experience, and contributing to the group. It was evidence that the primary use of the content in this module was to help the students acquire knowledge and develop various leaning skills such as communication and think skills.

The questionnaire items 10-15 asked students to rate their enjoyment concerning the use of content to promote deeper thinking and learning. The findings in table 4.3 shows that mean scores to all five questions are above 3.5, suggesting that the students had an overall positive attitude towards content that required them to perform a deeper level of thinking before the module commenced. The highest mean was found in item 15, which implied that the students believed they would be able to integrate their knowledge across subjects.

The mean score for these questions in the post questionnaire are slightly higher than those in the pre-questionnaire, indicating that the students remained positive on how the content was used.

<b>Questionnaire item</b>	<b>Pre QN means</b>	<b>Post QN means</b>	<b>Sig.</b>
10. I like course content that allows me to practice using inquiry or ways of thinking instead of only memorising it for examinations.	3.86	3.97	0.60
11. I enjoy the content more when I understand why I have to learn it.	3.72	3.75	0.87
12. I like the course content that allows me to build discipline-specific learning methodologies. (e. g., how to interpret a written passage)	3.72	3.81	0.64
13. I like the course content that allows me to develop other learning skills (e.g. critical thinking, communication, presentations).	3.94	4.10	0.26
14. I enjoy creating new knowledge by connecting new information from the course content to my prior experiences.	3.70	3.72	0.86
15. I believe I can apply the course content to other subjects or content in the future.	4	4.05	0.76
<b>Overall mean</b> (Note: $p \leq .05$ )	3.82	3.90	0.46

Table 4.3 A comparison of means score on the function of content

### ***1. The use of a higher level of thinking***

The analysis of the qualitative data is consistent with the questionnaire results. It suggests that the majority of the students were positive about content that required thinking in the module. The students explained their favourable views in the interviews and learning diaries that they felt they had longer retention of knowledge and were given the opportunity to utilise higher order level thinking. Unlike relying on memory, as they were used to, the students made the point that the content in the module required them to think, analyse the story, compare and reflect on their own experience and culture. They also showed their recognition that memorising content did not offer longer retention of knowledge and appreciated having to think and analyse the content. This indicates that the students were striving to make sense of new information by relating it to prior knowledge and giving clues that they could and would like to do more than just remember their course content.

When I think, I also automatically internalise it because I have to analyse each part. If I use only memorising, I just remember it and then one day I forget. Memorising is only for exams, memorising is only for class, when time passes, I forget. But this is, this module is like a constant practice of thinking process. There was thinking and when you read another story, I can still think about it. It's like I know the principle of thinking for each chapter. (I-S29)

The students' comments concerning the way the content was used reflected the constructivist view of learning. The students were assigned a considerable amount of collaborative work throughout the semester, in the form of group discussions, presentations or group reports.

### ***2. Active role in learning***

The following comments illustrated a broadly shared notion that collaborative activities such as group discussions allowed the students to assume an active role in knowledge sharing and learning. They appreciated group discussions as opportunities to improve their communication skills and familiarise themselves with multiple perspectives on a topic from their peers, who came from different backgrounds.

When we worked in groups, everyone definitely had to exchange their thoughts ... your and my opinions on characters. Different thinking ... four friends had different answers, I could apply their answers to come up with new answers, instead of the old memorising way. This way, I could use 'you said you didn't like that because ...' I could apply that as guidance. (I-S25)

I liked that [group discussion] because working in teams is like exchanging our opinions, exchanging perspective and widen it, not just stick to my

standpoint. Sometimes the stance I take may be wrong. But if I listen to my friends and discuss, it can lead to unity. (I-S15)

Many students compared their experience of pair and group work with sitting in lectures. They appreciated that they were allowed to use content to actively learn through thinking and interacting with peers instead of merely listening to the lecturers, in which they '*don't get to speak, don't get to think*' (I-S33). The student's feedback below implied their dissatisfaction with the passive learning they had experienced for years and showed their realisation that they could learn more if they assumed a more interactive role in their own learning process.

It's fun, and it went through thinking process more. Err, teacher giving lectures with the students doing nothing is like the teacher's just sowing seeds. Those who are keen or clever can grasp more seeds but for those who are less clever, there's nobody to help them. (I-S8)

Sometimes when I listened to lectures, I had to interpret it on my own, but when working in groups, thoughts from people of the same age would show and I could ask 'what?' and 'why?' We could talk more because sometimes I didn't dare ask questions when listening to the teacher's lecture. (I-S12)

### ***3. Shared responsibility***

Group work was incorporated in the module as a means to get the students to think about the content rather than memorising it. From observations 3 and 4, it can be seen that the teacher adopted a technique known as literature circles to engage the students in cooperative activities. Literature circles are reading groups in which students read the same story and each takes on a specific role, such as a group discussion leader, a summariser, or a translator (Daniels, 2002). Since group work required students to complete a task as a group, it also fostered a sense of responsibility. Some students acknowledged that by having a specific role in the group, each member had their own share of responsibility and the interdependence of each role among group members created a teamwork spirit in order to finish a task. The Thai cultural concept of *kreng jai*, that is, being considerate of others at all times, also influenced the students' behaviours as they felt that they each had made an important contribution to the group's success and they had to be socially responsible so as not to let their group mates down. As a number of students explained:

Today's lesson was like learning together. Students were in groups of four and then each member in each group gave a presentation according to their individual roles. I liked today's lesson a lot because there were both learning together within a group and learning from outside a group when each group gave the presentation. It was a good way of sharing opinions, there were both similarities and differences. I also like dividing roles into four roles which were interrelated and created unity within groups. (LD3-S6)

I think having a role in a group was good because everyone had to be responsible for their role. No one could have 'a free ride'. (LD3-S16)

#### ***4.2.3 Role of the teacher***

The shift in the focus from the teacher to the students in the LCA not only impacts the role of the student but also that of the teacher. Teachers no longer assume a didactic role in the learning process. Instead, they take on a facilitative role organising and guiding students along their intellectual development journey in the LCA (Biggs, 2003; Wright, 2011). From the observations and the students' account of the teacher's role, it was evident that the teacher assumed a facilitator role rather than authoritative role as often found in a traditional classroom. At the beginning of a lesson, she would prepare the students for a task by talking about and framing the content before allowing them to work in groups. For instance, she began a lesson by showing the students a video clip of a news report about Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP) which proposes that appropriate use of language would enable human to recode the way brain responds to stimuli and manifest better behaviours (The Best You Corporation Limited, 2013). She then stimulated the students to think and reason whether they agreed or disagreed with the news report before asking them to discuss in a group of four on a poem 'Don't give up' and related their own experience with the poem. During such collaborative learning, the teacher was seen monitoring the student progress and giving guidance. She often sat down with each group and facilitated their discussion, such as by giving clarification or examples or encouraging discussion by generating more questions. Using this method of teaching, the students were allowed to be intellectually and socially involved in their learning process, instead of being passive receivers of knowledge as normally seen in a traditional classroom.

Questionnaire items 16- 20 sought the students' views on the role of the teacher (Table 4.4). Prior to the start of the module, the overall mean of this component showed the highest level of agreement among the five key components of the LCA, with a mean of 4.23, while the overall means in the other four components were all below 4.00. These responses indicated that, even before their experiencing in a learner-centred learning environment, the students would like a teacher who creates a classroom environment that makes them want to learn and who allows them to be active, take charge and claim ownership of their own learning.

At the end of the semester, the students remained markedly positive in their responses to the role of the teacher, and although there was a slight decrease in the overall mean in the post-questionnaire, this drop was not statistically significant. This indicates that the students appreciated the facilitative role the teacher took and also enjoyed taking more responsibility

and an active role in their learning after their experience in the module. Comparison of each item in this component between pre- and post-questionnaires indicates that item 16 (Table 4.4) showed the only statistically significant decrease. However, this decrease remained consistent with the overall mean at the end which was still in the highly positive level. This means that although some students felt less favourable towards a teacher who provide a classroom atmosphere that encourages learning at the end of the semester, the majority of the students still generally felt positive concerning this matter.

Questionnaire item	Pre QN means	Post QN means	Sig.
16. I like a teacher who creates an environment that makes me want to learn.	4.62	4.32	0.05
17. I prefer a teacher who acts as a facilitator and allows me to play an active and inquiring role to one who acts like the sole expert in the class.	4	4.29	0.19
18. I like a teacher who creates an environment that motivates students to accept responsibility for their own learning.	4.37	4.18	0.18
19. I enjoy activities in which I can interact with the material, teacher, and fellow students.	4.13	4.21	0.67
20. I like being inspired and encouraged to take ownership of my own learning.	4.05	4.08	0.88
<b>Overall mean</b> (Note: $p \leq .05$ )	4.23	4.22	0.88

Table 4.4 A comparison of means score on the role of the teacher

### ***1. Active role in learning***

The analysis of the learner diaries and the interviews showed an overall cohort view that is similar to the view expressed in the questionnaire. On the whole, there is a general consensus that the students played a greater part in the learning process while the teacher monitored and assisted them in achieving what they needed to learn. The majority of the students who were interviewed also had a complementary view. They showed appreciation for a more participatory role in group tasks and discussions in which they were required to think and exchange their opinions with their group mates. They felt that the purpose of this collaborative learning was to use their background knowledge to discuss the subject matter, and did not feel that their knowledge was being tested:

It's like we got to talk, share our experience about how we felt about the stories we read. How much I understand .... if my friends understood it in one way and I understood in another way, why didn't we get the same thing? Then we had to see where the difference was. (I-S33)

I like that I could share my experience with group mates. I don't have to be clever to discuss because it comes from my own experience. (LD4-S11)

## ***2. The construction of knowledge***

Similarly, other students implied that they had come to realise that knowledge can be actively created with others rather than passively acquired from the teacher. The feedback below indicated that the students enjoyed making meaning of their learning through connecting their real-life experiences with that of peers and the teacher.

The students got the chance to exchange their views, that is, the content was presented to the students to think by helping each other and sharing opinions until we got the answer. (LD3-S17)

I liked it because these days, class content and real life story can be linked ... for example, poems, they are taken from real life and for us to learn and let us interpret how they are different or similar. (I-S23)

During the interactions in this module, the students described the role the teacher as a facilitator who provided advice and support. From the classroom observations, it was clear that the teacher often took a step back to allow the students to take on a greater role in their knowledge discovery. The students were often given the opportunity to participate in group discussions. During such activities, the teacher was seen walking around to each group to ask how they were getting on with the discussion and offer additional explanation if needed. Some students noticed the role of the teacher as a facilitator when they said:

The teacher monitored, monitored the time so that we could manage ourselves easily and gave guidance, sometimes not directly but giving hints 'you should do something like this' but as she suggested us to a direction, there were also alternative directions we could choose, there was no fixed direction (I-S19)

When we don't understand, we can ask for opinions and reasons from the teacher. She won't directly give us answers but she will provide clues so that we can think and find the answer within our group. (LD2-S12)

Another student expressed his/her appreciation when the teacher allowed them greater role in the learning process:

It's like this module relies greatly on my thinking ... relies on my own skills. She ... she... the teacher played the role in terms of ... if you don't understand something, you can ask her. But in the classroom, she let us to take the role fully in expressing opinions.... It's like I felt really important in that class. (I-S25)

### ***Interpersonal factors***

The students expressed favourable perceptions of the change in their interaction with peers, the teacher and the materials in the module. They realised that listening passively to lectures may no longer contribute to learning. Instead, they learned to take charge of their own learning through the increased involvement and interaction they were allowed in this module. This was evident from one student's interview:

I liked it because I know more from that [*interaction*]. Yes, I listen and I have more knowledge but if I actually do it then it's the kind of knowledge that stays with me forever because I've read it...I've done it, not just having worksheets in my hands and reading them. Like when the teacher asked us to find out why a state was called New England... let us search for the answer and build the habit of learning, which is not just doing it for the sake of learning. But it combines other things such as English and American literature, the teacher only talked about who discovered it. But if you read more, you'll know there is a lot more to it. I liked it that I learned that by myself. (I-S1)

#### ***4.2.4 Responsibility for learning***

It has been pointed out that the traditional TCA has produced passive students who 'lack confidence of themselves as learners and do not make responsible learning decisions' (Weimer, 2002, p. 95). In order to counter this, it has been suggested that teachers place more learning responsibility in the hands of students so that they become more independent and autonomous. This may include sharing learning responsibilities with students, pointing out the value and necessity of learning, making them aware of their current abilities and helping them to develop desirable skills for future learning. The teacher in the study used different strategies to enhance the students' sense of responsibility. For example, she invited their input on various aspects of the course so that they saw the class as belonging to them. Exposing them to the consequences of their actions was another method used to motivate their responsibility (rejection of late assignment submission or unprepared presentation). Using these strategies, the classroom atmosphere in which students are held responsible for their learning was created.

Table 4.5 presents the findings of questionnaire items 21- 26 on the students' views towards their responsibility for learning. Generally, the students were positive towards the notion of taking greater control of their own learning before the semester started with an overall mean score of 3.78. They expressed the highest preference for a teacher who helps them to develop skills for future learning (e.g., the ability to work in groups) (item 22) prior to the start of the module, implying that the students may realise that such skills are important for their own development.

The post-questionnaire results again showed a positive attitude and a higher level of agreement in the responses, though the rise was not statistically significant. This outcome indicated that more students generally enjoyed sharing responsibilities and taking charge of their learning after they had experienced it in the module. Item 22 remained the highest rated item in the post-questionnaire. However, the only statistically significant increase found was in item 21, which concerned the share of responsibilities between the teacher and students.

Questionnaire item	Pre QN means	Post QN means	Sig.
21. I prefer a course on which the teacher and I share responsibility for achieving stated learning objectives to a course on which the teacher takes all the responsibility.	3.67	4.21	0.00
22. I like a teacher who helps me develop skills for future learning (e.g., the ability to work in groups).	4.24	4.27	0.86
23. I like being encouraged to become a self-directed, life-long learner.	3.64	4	0.10
24. I like being made aware of my abilities to learn.	3.91	4.02	0.50
25. I enjoy assessing my own learning (knowing how much I've learned and what else I need to learn)	3.72	3.97	0.26
26. I like taking charge of my own learning (knowing how to manage your own learning needs, activities and goals)	3.48	3.72	0.35
<b>Overall mean (Item)</b> (Note: $p \leq .05$ )	3.78	4.03	0.07

Table 4.5 A comparison of means score on the responsibility for learning

### 1. *Thinking about their learning approach*

When asked about what they thought was their learning responsibility, the analysis of the interviews shows that the most common themes were coming to class, paying attention and submitting assignments on time. Only one student talked about preparing for class and a few students mentioned fulfilling their roles in group work as their learning responsibility. None of the students mentioned monitoring learning or setting goals which would have shown an awareness of a self-directed learner, according to Zimmerman (2000). However, it appeared that the students gradually learned to take control of their learning through various strategies the teacher used in the module. One technique was encouraging students to think about the way they learned. In observation 3, the teacher played a video clip which talks about how thinking can cause chemical changes in the brain (Chaivoot, 2013). Positive thinking programmes the brain's cells to receive more positive peptides. The teacher briefly asked if the students agreed with the video and then linked it to a poem entitled 'Don't give up,' in the same lesson. This strategy seemed to have some effect as many students commented that they had become more responsible when the teacher made them think about the way they currently learned. One student said:

The teacher encouraged just by saying 'you did it like this and the marks will have an effect on you'... I could not say anything. If I didn't make an effort in the work, the marks I'd get wouldn't be good. She encouraged us ... she said that and everyone was afraid of failure. Everyone was afraid of getting

low marks. It made me more eager, 'I have to do it well, I have to do it well'  
(I-S1)

## ***2. Classroom environments that encourage student responsibility***

The classroom conditions the teacher set also played a major part in driving students to be more responsible and autonomous. The students learned the hard way that their lack of discipline and lethargy could cost them in terms of grades. From the observation, it can be seen that the teacher set a class rule that she would only collect assigned work at the beginning of the class and that late submission would not be accepted.

When she said the assignments had to be handed to her at the beginning of the next lesson and that if we didn't, she wouldn't accept any assignments anymore and you wouldn't get any marks, this encouraged the students to be a lot more responsible about it. (I-S34)

Moreover, students who were unprepared to give project presentations on the agreed date would not receive any marks for that part. This significantly exposed the student to the consequences of their actions and decisions as they accepted that they were '*in the wrong*' (I-S23) and learned from their mistakes.

The teacher always told us in advance of when we would have presentations or when we would have to do tasks to earn marks... 'submit your assignment in this lesson because after this lesson, you can't. The students then were active to have it done in time. (I-S29)

### ***4.2.5 Purpose and processes of evaluation***

The last dimension of Weimer's changes in the LCA centres on the additional use of evaluation as a way to promote learning instead of merely generating grades at the end of the course. In the module, diagnostic formative assessment and self and peer assessment were incorporated. Regular constructive feedback was given so that the students were given the opportunity to improve during the course. For example, after the presentations in the fifth observation, the teacher gave the students constructive feedback that on each group's performance, though she tended to focus mostly on what they did not do well such as lack of introduction or organisation. The students were also engaged in evaluating their own and others' performance. The students were not asked to assess themselves and peers without any introductions. They were given the purpose and the criteria of the self- and peer assessment so they understood why it was used and had some directions on what they had to consider and what kind of point is appropriate for various performances.

Questionnaire items 27-32 set out to measure the students' views on the evaluation process employed in the module (Table 4.6). At the start of the module, the overall mean suggested that, the students had positive attitudes towards assessment methods that were recommended in the LCA. The results in each item all fell above the mean of 3.5, showing their preference for a course that allowed mistakes and integrated formative assessment, self and peer assessment. The outcome of the responses of item 29, which showed the highest mean, reveals that most students would appreciate being allowed to learn from their mistakes.

After participating in the module, the students maintained their positive perceptions regarding the module's evaluation process. The results generated from the post questionnaire revealed a composite mean score of 3.98, which slightly increased but was not statistically significant. Moreover, there was an interesting shift in the highest-mean item between the pre- and post-questionnaire. At the end of the module, the students gave the highest rating on item 32, which concerned their preference for being allowed to justify their answers when they do not agree with the teacher's. The change in their views regarding the matter was found statistically significant, indicating that significantly more students found this more important after they had attended the module.

Questionnaire item	Pre QN means	Post QN means	Sig.
27. I prefer a course that integrates student assessment within the learning processes to a course on which student assessment happens only in examinations at the end of the course.	3.86	3.91	0.75
28. I prefer formative assessment with constructive feedback from the teacher throughout the course	3.70	4	0.10
29. I find it useful if I am given multiple opportunities to learn from my mistakes during the course.	4.13	4.08	0.74
30. I enjoy engaging in self-assessment.	3.54	3.86	0.11
31. I enjoy engaging in peer assessment. .	3.78	3.94	0.41
32. I prefer a course that encourages students to justify their answers when they don't agree with the teacher's answers.	3.59	4.10	0.01
<b>Overall mean</b> (Note: $p \leq .05$ )	3.77	3.98	0.11

Table 4.6 A comparison of means score on purpose and process of evaluation

The qualitative data for this component, however, provided slightly more complicated results. While the students were satisfied with the formative feedback received throughout the semester, their views on the use of self and peer assessment were rather mixed.

### ***Perceptions of formative feedback***

The students indicated that they favoured feedback that helped them manage their learning and feedback that identifies their strengths and weaknesses such as through group work and presentations. The majority of the students appreciated that the teacher '*pointed out*' (I-S9) what they could improve on and recognised that the feedback given was '*for their own good*' (I-S12). A number of students further elaborated that feedback helped him/her identify areas for improvement (LD4-S35) in comparison with getting marks only (I-S23).

I liked that the teacher used assessment during learning and gave feedback because by assessing students' activities and giving feedback, students can use the feedback to improve and develop themselves. (LD4-S35)

If [*feedback is*] given in marks, I wouldn't know what I did wrong, how I earned these marks or why I earned only these? But if teachers give comments, ah, OK, I can accept the marks given because I see I didn't do something well or where I actually did wrong. (I-S23)

### ***Perceptions of self and peer assessment***

There were mixed perceptions regarding the use of self and peer assessment employed in the module.

### ***Favourable perceptions***

Almost half of the students liked that they had the opportunity to reflect on their own ability and responsibility from evaluating their own performance and from peers' feedback. They reported using these opportunities to identify their learning strengths and weaknesses so that they can improve other modules or in real life.

I liked that the teacher encouraged evaluation by friends because this allows me to know my performance in my friends' eyes, my strengths and weaknesses and what I should improve. (LD4-S33)

Another student talked about how she learned to be honest about herself through self-assessment:

It prevented me from lying to myself ...it made me face the truth... what I was actually like, how responsible I was. Once I saw the scores, I could see how bad or good I was. There were scores to compare. (I-S25)

### *Unfavourable perceptions*

However, almost half of the students interviewed also expressed some reservations regarding self and peer assessment. They repeatedly voiced doubts about their ability to evaluate and to be impartial in conducting self and peer assessments:

*[It's] difficult to assess myself. There were...sometimes in my eye I was not good, I didn't do well but my friends said it was OK. I, in the end, though, it was good but I couldn't decide... In the end I still gave myself low marks so as to remind myself not to do it again. (I-S15)*

To be honest, for some friends I gave scores truthfully but for others ... if I see the scores were low, I may add more for them. This is the first module that uses both teacher's and students' assessment. In my experience, there has been only teacher assessment, how each student did, there was no self and peer assessment like this. (I-S4)

Despite being provided with the assessment criteria, the students felt unqualified to award marks fairly. The comments above suggest concerns about their ability to make accurate and valid judgments.

### **4.3 Research question 2: Are there any differences in the students' perceptions before and after their learning experience in a course that adopted the LCA?**

To answer the research question two, the same questionnaire was administered twice, once at the start and then again at the end of the module. A paired sample t-test was conducted to measure the differences in the students' perceptions in the pre-and post-questionnaires. The following sections report whether there was a statistically significant difference in the students' perceptions in the pre- and post-questionnaires according to each component.

#### **4.3.1 Balance of power**

The overall means with regard to the balance of power in both questionnaires is above 3.5 and showed a statistically significant increase in their responses at the .01 level when the  $p$  value is 0.5 or less, indicating that significantly more students found sharing power with the teacher favorable after their experience in the module (Pre QN = 3.71, Post QN = 4.07,  $p$  value = 0.01). Specifically, statistically significant results in items 1, 2, 3, 4, and 9 indicated that the students liked the notion of being allowed to offer input concerning content and assignments after they had actually experienced it.

In addition to an overall positive feedback to the balance of power both before and after their experience in the module, comparison of the percentage of students' views in each of the responding categories in the pre- and post- questionnaires shows some interesting movement between the categories (Table 4.7). When looking at the students' responses in percentage, it appears that while the overall results suggested positive perceptions regarding the balance of power both prior to and after the module, there was considerable movement in individual students' perceptions prior to and after the module. The data revealed that more students chose 'agree' and 'strongly agree' after their experience in the module, resulting in the percentage of over 70 % in all of the items (Table 4.7). An interesting point was found in the 'no opinion' option. There was a marked movement of individual students who preferred not to express an opinion at the start and the end of the module. The number of students who chose to express no opinion in the pre-questionnaire decreased in all items in the post questionnaire. In particular, more than 40% of the students who initially showed no opinion in the items 3, 4 and 9 changed their views at the end of the semester, and the number of those who had no opinion dropped to just 10.8-18.9 %. This indicates that the students became more critical and evaluative once they had had experience of the LCA in the module.

Item	Strongly disagree	Disagree	No opinion	Agree	Strongly agree
1. I like a course in which I am allowed to offer my input to the content.	0 (0) <b>0 (0)</b>	10.8 (4) <b>0 (0)</b>	18.9 (7) <b>2.7 (1)</b>	51.4 (19) <b>81.1 (30)</b>	18.9 (7) <b>16.2 (6)</b>
2. I enjoy expressing my alternative perspectives where appropriate.	2.7 (1) <b>0 (0)</b>	8.1 (3) <b>8.1 (3)</b>	21.6 (8) <b>5.4 (2)</b>	64.9 (24) <b>67.6 (25)</b>	2.7 (1) <b>18.9 (7)</b>
3. I like offering my input on assignment.	0 (0) <b>0 (0)</b>	8.1 (3) <b>2.7 (1)</b>	40.5 (15) <b>10.8 (4)</b>	37.8 (14) <b>70.3 (26)</b>	13.5 (5) <b>16.2 (6)</b>
4. I like offering my input on how much weight the assignments are worth.	0 (0) <b>0 (0)</b>	8.1 (3) <b>8.1 (3)</b>	40.5 (15) <b>18.9 (7)</b>	37.8 (14) <b>40.5 (15)</b>	13.5 (5) <b>32.4 (12)</b>
5. I prefer assignments that are open-ended (e.g. projects) and/or allow for more than one right answer.	0 (0) <b>2.7 (1)</b>	5.4 (2) <b>2.7 (1)</b>	21.6 (8) <b>8.1 (3)</b>	54.1 (20) <b>48.6 (18)</b>	18.9 (7) <b>37.8 (14)</b>
6. I like a course in which I am allowed to negotiate classroom management policies with the teacher.	0 (0) <b>0 (0)</b>	5.4 (2) <b>2.7 (1)</b>	21.6 (8) <b>10.8 (4)</b>	48.6 (18) <b>64.9 (24)</b>	24.3 (9) <b>21.6 (8)</b>
7. I like a course in which I am allowed to negotiate assessment methods with the teacher.	0 (0) <b>0 (0)</b>	8.1(3) <b>5.4 (2)</b>	32.4 (12) <b>13.5 (5)</b>	32.4 (12) <b>43.2 (16)</b>	27 (10) <b>37.8 (14)</b>
8. I like a course in which I am allowed to negotiate assignment deadlines with the teacher.	0 (0) <b>0 (0)</b>	2.7 (1) <b>0 (0)</b>	8.1 (3) <b>2.7 (1)</b>	48.6 (18) <b>56.8 (21)</b>	40.5 (15) <b>40.5 (15)</b>

9. I feel I have more control of my own learning if I am involved in making decision regarding the course (e.g. content, deadlines, and assessment).	13.5 (5) <b>2.7 (1)</b>	2.7 (1) <b>10.8 (4)</b>	40.5 (15) <b>10.8 (4)</b>	37.8 (14) <b>51.4 (19)</b>	5.4 (2) <b>24.3 (9)</b>
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*\*Note: Post-questionnaire scores are shown in **bold**. The number of students is shown in brackets.*

Table 4.7 A comparison of percentage regarding responses to balance of power (n=37)

### 4.3.2 Function of content

A paired samples t-test revealed that the mean value of the post-questionnaire was not significantly higher than that of the pre-questionnaire (Pre QN = 3.82, Post QN = 3.90,  $p$  value = 0.46). Therefore, no statistically significant differences were found in any of the items in this component as the  $p$  values were higher than .05. However, a close look at the highest rated items of the pre- and post-questionnaires reveals that while most participants favoured applying the content to other subjects in the pre-questionnaire, they were more interested in the content that allowed them to develop other skills by the end of the module.

An examination of the results in percentages (Table 4.8) shows movements towards positive attitudes in all items by the end of the module. An increase of 10.8 % was found in items 12, 13 and 14, which means that four more students agreed with these items in the post-questionnaire. This indicates that at least 28 students out of 37 had positive perceptions towards using content to develop learning skills and relating their background knowledge with the new content. Three more students showed their preference for content that required thinking and agreed that they enjoyed learning more if they knew why they had to learn the content (items 10 and 11). Although the number of students who agreed with item 15 remained the same in the pre- and post-questionnaire, this item has the highest percentage of agreement both before and after the module. This percentage translated to 31 students agreeing they could make use of the content in the future.

Similar to the balance of power, the number of students who expressed no opinion in the pre-questionnaire dropped in all items in the post questionnaire. This could mean that more students who did not have any views on these matters became more evaluative after their experience of the course. However, it is also interesting to note that while the students were generally in favour of the way the content was used in the module, there was an increase in the number of students who showed their disagreement after the course in all of the items except items 10 and

13 where the number remained the same. For example, four more students felt that knowing why the content was learnt would not make them appreciate it more (item 11).

Item	Strongly disagree	Disagree	No opinion	Agree	Strongly agree
10. I like course content that allows me to practice using inquiry or ways of thinking instead of only memorising it for examinations.	0 (0) <b>2.7 (1)</b>	8.1(3) <b>8.1(3)</b>	16.2(6) <b>5.4 (2)</b>	56.8 (21) <b>56.8 (21)</b>	18.9 (7) <b>27 (10)</b>
11. I enjoy the content more when I understand why I have to learn it.	0 (0) <b>0 (0)</b>	0 (0) <b>10.8 (4)</b>	35.1 (13) <b>16.2 (6)</b>	56.8 (21) <b>59.5 (22)</b>	8.1 (3) <b>13.5 (5)</b>
12. I like the course content that allows me to build discipline-specific learning methodologies. (e. g., how to interpret a written passage)	0 (0) <b>2.7 (1)</b>	5.4 (2) <b>10.8 (4)</b>	29.7 (11) <b>10.8 (4)</b>	51.4 (19) <b>54.1 (20)</b>	13.5 (5) <b>21.6 (8)</b>
13. I like the course content that allows me to develop other learning skills (e.g. critical thinking, communication, presentations).	0 (0) <b>0 (0)</b>	2.7 (1) <b>2.7 (1)</b>	13.5 (5) <b>10.8 (4)</b>	70.3 (26) <b>59.5 (22)</b>	13.5 (5) <b>27 (10)</b>
14. I enjoy creating new knowledge by connecting new information from the course content to my prior experiences.	0 (0) <b>0 (0)</b>	2.7 (1) <b>10.8 (4)</b>	29.7 (11) <b>10.8 (4)</b>	62.2 (23) <b>73 (27)</b>	5.4 (2) <b>5.4 (2)</b>
15. I believe I can apply the course content to other subjects or content in the future.	0 (0) <b>0 (0)</b>	0 (0) <b>5.4 (2)</b>	16.2 (6) <b>10.8 (4)</b>	67.6 (25) <b>56.8 (21)</b>	16.2 (6) <b>27 (10)</b>

*\*Note: Post-questionnaire scores are shown in bold. The number of students is shown in brackets.*

Table 4.8 A comparison of percentage regarding function of content

### 4.3.3 Role of the teacher

The means value in both questionnaires for the role of the teacher are highly positive at 4.23 for the prequestionnaire and 4.22 for the post-questionnaire. However, no statistically significant difference was found in this component ( $p$  value = 0.88). The movement shown in the percentage of the students' views regarding the role of the teacher started off with highly positive attitudes even before the module commenced (Table 4.9). More than 75% of the students expressed their preference for a teacher who acts as a facilitator in the learning process instead a traditional authoritarian teacher (item 16). Additionally, almost all of the respondents (94.6%) reported liking a teacher who provides a learning environment that motivates them to learn and take more responsibility for their learning (items 16 and 18). After their exposure to LCA principles in the module, nearly all of the students showed even higher positivity towards the role of the teacher, with a percentage of above 86% in all items.

Item	Strongly disagree	Disagree	No opinion	Agree	Strongly agree
16. I like a teacher who creates an environment that makes me want to learn.	0 (0) <b>0 (0)</b>	0 (0) <b>2.7 (1)</b>	5.4 (2) <b>2.7 (1)</b>	27 (10) <b>54.1 (20)</b>	67.6 (25) <b>40.5 (15)</b>
17. I prefer a teacher who acts as a facilitator and allows me to play an active and inquiring role to one who acts like the sole expert in the class.	2.7 (1) <b>0 (0)</b>	8.1 (3) <b>0 (0)</b>	13.5 (5) <b>5.4 (2)</b>	37.8 (14) <b>59.5 (22)</b>	37.8 (14) <b>35.1 (13)</b>
18. I like a teacher who creates an environment that motivates students to accept responsibility for their own learning.	0 (0) <b>0 (0)</b>	0 (0) <b>5.4 (2)</b>	5.4 (2) <b>2.7 (1)</b>	51.4 (19) <b>59.5 (22)</b>	43.2 (16) <b>32.4 (12)</b>
19. I enjoy activities in which I can interact with the material, teacher, and fellow students.	0 (0) <b>2.7 (1)</b>	5.4 (2) <b>0 (0)</b>	5.4 (2) <b>2.7 (1)</b>	59.5 (22) <b>62.2 (23)</b>	29.7 (11) <b>32.4 (12)</b>
20. I like being inspired and encouraged to take ownership of my own learning.	0 (0) <b>2.7 (1)</b>	0 (0) <b>2.7 (1)</b>	18.9 (7) <b>8.1 (3)</b>	56.8 (21) <b>56.8 (21)</b>	24.3 (9) <b>29.7 (11)</b>

*\*Note: Post-questionnaire scores are shown in **bold**. The number of students is shown in brackets.*

Table 4.9 A comparison of percentage regarding role of the teacher

#### 4.3.4 Responsibility for learning

A paired samples t-test revealed that there is no significant difference in the mean value of the pre- and post-questionnaire in this component (Pre QN = 3.78, Post QN = 4.03,  $p$  value = 0.07). Examining the data in percentages, there appears some interesting movement in the students' views of their responsibilities of learning (Table 4.10). The number of students who were in favour of sharing responsibilities with the teacher (item 21) had significantly risen by almost 30% by the end of the module. It seems that 11 students who initially held negative views or had no opinion on the matter changed their minds and found their experience of sharing responsibilities with the teacher to be of value. With regard to the students' perceptions of self-assessment (item 25), it is revealed that five out of ten students who expressed no opinion of this matter in the pre-questionnaire had changed their minds by the end of the module. Four students enjoyed assessing their own learning while one student decided that it was not for him/her. This result, again, suggests that the students were more able to say whether they liked a teaching and learning strategy if they had experienced it.

Little movement was detected in the students' perspectives regarding their preference for being made aware of their abilities to learn (item 24). The majority of the participants maintained their agreement on the matter and there was only a small increase of 5.4% in the results at the

end of the module. This indicates that the students already valued being aware of their abilities to learn and therefore there was little change after their experience in the module.

Item	Strongly disagree	Disagree	No opinion	Agree	Strongly agree
21. I prefer a course on which the teacher and I share responsibility for achieving stated learning objectives to a course that the teacher takes all the responsibility.	2.7 (1) <b>0 (0)</b>	5.4 (2) <b>0 (0)</b>	29.7 (11) <b>8.1 (3)</b>	45.9 (17) <b>62.2 (23)</b>	16.2 (6) <b>29.7 (11)</b>
22. I like a teacher who helps me develop skills for future learning (e.g., the ability to work in groups).	0 (0) <b>0(0)</b>	0 (0) <b>5.4 (2)</b>	8.1(3) <b>2.7 (1)</b>	59.5 (22) <b>51.4 (19)</b>	32.4 (12) <b>40.5 (15)</b>
23. I like being encouraged to become a self-directed, life-long learner.	0 (0) <b>2.7 (1)</b>	13.5 (5) <b>0 (0)</b>	21.6 (8) <b>10.8 (4)</b>	51.4 (19) <b>67.6 (25)</b>	13.5 (5) <b>18.9 (7)</b>
24. I like being made aware of my abilities to learn.	0 (0) <b>0 (0)</b>	2.7 (1) <b>2.7 (1)</b>	16.2 (6) <b>10.8 (4)</b>	67.6 (25) <b>67.6 (25)</b>	13.5 (5) <b>18.9 (7)</b>
25. I enjoy assessing my own learning (knowing how much I've learned and what else I need to learn)	2.7 (1) <b>0 (0)</b>	2.7 (1) <b>8.1 (3)</b>	27 (10) <b>13.5 (5)</b>	54.1 (20) <b>51.4 (19)</b>	13.5 (5) <b>27 (10)</b>
26. I like taking charge of my own learning (knowing how to manage your own learning needs, activities and goals)	5.4 (2) <b>5.4 (2)</b>	10.8 (4) <b>5.4 (2)</b>	21.6 (8) <b>13.5 (5)</b>	54.1 (20) <b>62.2 (23)</b>	8.1 (3) <b>13.5 (5)</b>

*\*Note: Post-questionnaire scores are shown in bold. The number of students is shown in brackets.*

Table 4.10 A comparison of percentage regarding responsibility for learning

#### 4.3.5 Purpose and process of evaluation

A paired samples t-test in this component revealed that the mean value of the post-questionnaire was not significantly higher than that of the pre-questionnaire (Pre QN = 3.77, Post QN = 3.98,  $p$  value = 0.11). When considering the percentages for the results (Table 4.11), there is a clear upward trend in most of the items concerning the evaluation processes in the module. Interestingly, by the end of the semester, the biggest change in students' views occurred with regard to the notion of being able to justify their answers with the teacher (item32). The number of students who were in favour of this matter jumped from 20 to 30 after their exposure to the approach (an increase of 27.3%). This could reflect the fact that a lot more students perceived that they would like to be allowed to give reasons for their disagreement with the teacher.

However, contrary to other items in the same components, there was a slight drop in the students' positive views on whether they found it useful to learn from their mistakes (item 29). It appears that four students who originally expressed no opinion or had positive attitudes had

moved in a negative direction by the end of the semester. A possible explanation to this could be that these students were not yet convinced that mistakes could also be beneficial to their learning.

Item	Strongly disagree	Disagree	No opinion	Agree	Strongly agree
27. I prefer a course that integrates student assessment within the learning processes to a course on which student assessment happens only in examinations at the end of the course.	0 (0) <b>0 (0)</b>	2.7 (1) <b>5.4 (2)</b>	24.3 (9) <b>13.5 (5)</b>	56.8 (21) <b>64.9 (24)</b>	16.2 (6) <b>16.2 (6)</b>
28. I prefer formative assessment with constructive feedback from the teacher throughout the course	0 (0) <b>0 (0)</b>	2.7 (1) <b>5.4 (2)</b>	35.1 (13) <b>10.8 (4)</b>	51.4 (19) <b>62.2 (23)</b>	10.8 (4) <b>21.6 (8)</b>
29. I find it useful if I am given multiple opportunities to learn from my mistakes during the course.	0 (0) <b>0 (0)</b>	0 (0) <b>10.8 (4)</b>	16.2 (6) <b>8.1 (3)</b>	54.1 (20) <b>43.2 (16)</b>	29.7 (11) <b>37.8 (14)</b>
30. I enjoy engaging in self-assessment.	0 (0) <b>0 (0)</b>	13.5 (5) <b>8.1 (3)</b>	29.7 (11) <b>16.2 (6)</b>	45.9 (17) <b>56.8 (21)</b>	10.8 (4) <b>18.9 (7)</b>
31. I enjoy engaging in peer assessment.	0 (0) 0(0)	2.7 (1) <b>2.7 (1)</b>	29.7 (11) <b>21.6 (8)</b>	54.1 (20) <b>54.1 (20)</b>	13.5 (5) <b>21.6 (8)</b>
32. I prefer a course that encourages students to justify their answers when they don't agree with the teacher's answers.	0(0) <b>0 (0)</b>	2.7 (1) <b>8.1 (3)</b>	43.2 (16) <b>10.8 (4)</b>	45.9 (17) <b>43.2 (16)</b>	8.1 (3) <b>37.8 (14)</b>

*\*Note: Post-questionnaire scores are shown in bold. The number of students is shown in brackets.*

Table 4.11 A comparison of percentage regarding purpose and process of evaluation

To sum up, descriptive statistics of each component in the pre- and post-questionnaire results measured by a pair-sample t-test showed only one statistically significant result in the balance of power component despite the fact that the mean scores in all components in the post-questionnaire were higher than that of the pre questionnaire except in the role of the teacher where the mean score in the post-questionnaire was slightly lower, though still statistically insignificant at the .05 level. The result suggests that the students already held favourable attitudes towards the concept of the LCA before the module started and their overall perceptions remained the same throughout. However, it is noted that, even though the students' views of learner-centred practices did not significantly change, there was considerable movement in their no opinion option after exposure to the approach in the module. To elaborate, the numbers of students who chose to express no opinions before the module commenced notably decreased in all items in the post-questionnaire. For example, the number of students who began with no

opinion about the prospect of having a say in selecting assignments had reduced from 15 students to only 4 by the end of the semester (see Table 4.7).

#### **4.4 Research question 3: Are there any cultural factors influencing their perceptions of the LCA?**

Since it has been suggested that the principles of learner-centred education can cause tensions due to their not being consistent with local cultures (Frambach *et al.*, 2014), the students' elaboration of their perceptions of the LCA were analysed to find out whether they reflected any cultural influences. The following sections reports the cultural influences found in three of the five components: the balance of power, the function of content, and the purpose and processes of evaluation.

##### ***4.4.1 Cultural influences regarding the balance of power***

The first issue clustered around the balance of power was the teacher's perceived position in Thai education. Thai people place great emphasis on hierarchical relationships and authority. This can be seen in the educational realm, where teachers, who are believed to be of a much higher status than students, are regarded as the 'righteous guru' and are never to be questioned. As a result, students' new-found power to 'negotiate' their learning processes with teachers in the LCA may greatly contradict what Thai students believe is an appropriate behaviour of a good learner. This is reflected in a student's comment:

We have to accept [*what the teacher proposes*] because teachers are to be respected. We have to respect their rights as teachers. Well, teachers are ... those who give us knowledge. No matter what they want us to do, if it's a good thing, we should follow it. If the things teachers gave us is not being extreme in a particular way, we should accept what they offer. (I-S34)

Even when students were invited to negotiate with the teacher, some of them admitted not wanting to because:

I think she was the teacher, she must do it. This is just my opinion. She was the teacher; she had every right to insist on this matter. What she specified was already fine. I didn't want to negotiate. (I-S32)

Additionally, some students gave their explanation for not negotiating with the teacher as:

It's like, if I say too much, the teacher may be offended... like just 20% for exams and 80% for attendance? If I said what I really wanted, I'm afraid that the teacher may think that I don't care about the exam scores and want only scores that can be earned easily. (I-S21)

While the responses above illustrate the students' fear of upsetting the teacher, some students' resistance to take greater charge of their own learning was linked to their fear of creating conflict among friends. According to some students, they would prefer the teacher to decide everything for them. One student gave his/her reasons:

I think I prefer modules that have been decided for me that today this will be covered first. Teachers just tell me what will be covered today. If students get to choose, they cannot see eye to eye. It's better if teachers do it...Just give orders. If we choose ourselves, if there is something wrong, we will blame one another. If teachers just give orders, everyone can comply. (I-S9)

Such responses clearly reflected another deeply embedded value in Thai culture. Conflict avoidance is one of the predominant cultural characteristics of Thai people, who are willing to sacrifice their own voice for the sake of group harmony. Hence, it seems unsurprising why students may be more comfortable with a precise plan determined by the teacher.

#### ***4.4.2 Cultural influences regarding the function of content***

While the majority of the students expressed their delight in participating in group work as shown in 4.2.2, certain students showed some reservations about learning with and from peers. They were concerned of possible tensions among students if their opinions were different from that of the rest of the group.

Some people were afraid to share what they'd got because they were afraid that they'd got it wrong. (LD3-S1)

It's difficult because people think differently. Many people don't share the same thought. Sometimes I think like this, someone else will think differently. I don't know... sometimes I interpret what a particular character [in a story] wanted to say in one way but my friends thought another thing... People can think differently but when they are together that may create problems. (I-S18)

These students' views above can be linked to the Thai cultural concept of uncertainty avoidance, a typical characteristic of Thai people, who tend to avoid uncertain situations due to fear of losing face (Chaidaroon, 2003; Laopongharn and Sercombe, 2009). Years of lectures and memorisation have embedded in students the idea that there is only one right answer and,

therefore, expressing or challenging a different viewpoint could risk embarrassing oneself or creating conflict.

#### ***4.4.3 Cultural influences concerning purpose and processes of evaluation***

Friendship marking was also presented in this study as some students blatantly admitted that they arbitrarily distributed marks for themselves and peers.

*[Assessing] friends... friends, if evaluating without writing my name down is OK but when we had to write their names and if I gave them low marks, they may be mad or reproach me. I had to be considerate when marking them. They were not real scores. I had to fake scores. (I-S21)*

*There was pressure. If I gave too high or if I gave low scores, would they be upset? (I-S15)*

*Honestly, I didn't like it because I feel it's not my right to assess them. They have the right to assess themselves and then the teacher. ...I could watch and may not do what they did but to give them scores for what they did, I felt, was a bit too much for me (I-S19)*

The students' explanations of their predicament in assessing others could be linked to Thai national characteristics of conformity and hierarchical status in the classroom. Fear of creating conflict and confrontation or leading someone to lose face prompted the students to give 'fake scores'. Some students suggested peer assessment be done confidentially so that positive relationships between friends could be maintained, or by the teacher, whom they felt was in a higher position and had the right to exercise her legitimate authority.

### **4.5 Emerging issues**

While examining the students' perceptions of learner-centred principles to answer the research questions for this study, some interesting information also emerged from the data which revealed practical impediments the students encountered while adapting to a learner-centred classroom. These impediments are presented according to the component in the following sections.

#### ***4.5.1 Issues concerning the balance of power***

Despite a clear support in students' views of the share of power in the classroom, analysis of the qualitative data revealed some issues that occurred when students had a say in the class organisation: students' inability to make reasonable decisions, and the misuse of opportunities.

## Inability to negotiate reasonably

The students in this study showed their inability to negotiate reasonably. This was probably because such practice was new to them. It appears that some of the students who participated in the negotiation could not take the process seriously. Such an example can be seen in excerpt 4.1 below, when a number of students requested 25-50 marks out of 100 for merely coming to class. The request was followed by laughter from their classmates, indicating that they realised this was unrealistic. The teacher had to remind them to consider the marks left for the content and changed the question to the number of books they would like to read for outside study. A similar incident occurred when a number of students jokingly replied 'one', which was met with laughter from their classmates. Another student added that '*not sure if we can finish even just one novel*'.

### Excerpt 4.1

*Transcription system:*

*T=Teacher, Ss= students, [Laughter] = editor's comments/clarification*

T: Now what we need to do is to ... let's try to determine how marks should be collected, how examinations should be arranged. Should all 100 % contribute to the final examination?

Ss: Nahh/Ohh [indicating their disapproval].

T: 100% for exams? What should we do then? Should some marks be allocated for attendance?

Ss: Yes!

T: How much percent for attendance then?

Ss: 50/25 [Laughter from some students].

T: Attendance 50 marks, then what do we have left? We have to cover three main topics... what are they?... Poetry, short stories and novels. How many novels do you want to read this semester?

Ss: One [Laughter and talking to one other].

*(Observation 1, 15 August 2014)*

## Misuse of opportunities

Another perceived issue attracting several comments was abusing the opportunity when the teacher allowed the students to negotiate. Many students in the study admitted that while they

appreciated being asked for opinions, they felt that such opportunities had been misused. This was confirmed by the observation the students used their new-found power to negotiate a new deadline when they had not finished their assignment the week before. In the learning diaries and the interview, many students admitted feeling bad (LD2-S8) and worried about the teacher's feelings (LD2-S31) when the students asked to reschedule the deadline. One student commented that:

I liked it that the teacher gave us another chance to do assignments but sometimes when she gave us more chances, we took it for granted, which was our fault. I felt, that was not good. If I were the teacher, I would feel bad because she gave us opportunities to choose, let us make the choice, but when the time came, we still didn't turn in assignments. I felt bad. (I-S23)

It appears that the students did not correctly utilise the opportunities to optimise their learning. Instead, many students confessed that some took the advantage of the opportunities by negotiating the extension of a new deadline when they did not finish an assignment. Many students felt that their peers did not appropriately embrace their increased power in the classroom and were instead concerned that the teacher may have allowed too many chances.

#### ***4.5.2 Issues concerning the role of the teacher***

Although the students expressed their preference for active learning with others as shown in 4.2.3, they also acknowledged that the teacher is not indispensable. A student's response below illustrates that the students' active role in the construction of knowledge does not mean a diminishing role for the teacher. Instead, both students and teacher need to perform their respective duties in the process of knowledge building for learning to occur.

In terms of exchanging and thinking, ask if the teacher was importance, yes she was because if she wasn't there, we could not proceed but the teacher let us learn like this, it was like, helped us to be more confident in the things that we should be. Another thing is there is no right or wrong with what we express because it is our own thinking. (I-S34)

Another student showed a sign of his recognition of the teacher's knowledge when he said:

I'd like the teacher to expand on my friends' views so that they were clearer and perhaps share her own perspectives too. (LD3-S20)

From the above comments, it can be interpreted that although the students enjoyed learning with and from their classmates, with the teacher playing more of a supporting role, there still existed a certain degree of reliance on the teacher as an authoritative figure in the classroom who can step in when the students appear to be getting something wrong. They instinctively

sought the teacher's support and approval. This is also evident in the first observation when the students were asked to write poems they wrote collaboratively onto the blackboard. It was noticeable that, the students instinctively turned to the teacher to check on their work before broadcasting their product on the board although the teacher did not ask to see it and emphasised that there was no right or wrong answer for the task. Such behaviour clearly reflected a strong dependency on the teacher as an authoritative figure whose approval was still required as a rubber stamp of 'correctness'.

#### ***4.5.3 Issues concerning the responsibility for learning***

Despite the teacher's strategies to help the students become more responsible as illustrated in 4.2.4, when looking at the observational data, it seems that there were times that the students lacked the ability to do so even though they welcomed the idea of taking greater control of their learning. The following excerpt (Excerpt 4.2) from observation 2 illustrates how the students did not do their assignments the week before. When the teacher entered the room and asked for submission of last week's assignments, a few students handed in their homework while there was silence from most of them. Some students avoided looking at the teacher while others seemed to be copying homework. The teacher kept asking until the students had to admit they had left it until the last minute to do the assignment so they did not have time to ask for clarification when they did not understand the instructions.

#### *Excerpt 4.2*

*Transcription system:*

*T=Teacher, Ss= students, [Laughter] = editor's comments/clarification*

T: You just got home and tossed the material straightway, right? Hide it and you could not find it. You touched the material, before you started doing the assignment, when did you start? How many days before?

Ss: Not many days before. Three.

T: Three days ago? Had you started?

Ss: Yes/No

T: What was the day, three days ago?

Ss: Wednesday/Tuesday.

T: When did you start?

S1: I have a confession to make.

T: Pardon?

S1: I have a confession to make. Last night.

T: Ah, Confession... who started last night? Let's talk how you do your learning. Raise your hands, raise your hands

Ss: [Many of the students raised their hands]

T: What about the rest? You did it before that? When did you do it?

S2: Monday.

T: You did it on Monday. What did you do?

S2: Translated and summarised it.

T: Translated and summarised. What did you summarise?

S2: The bibliography of the authors.

T: You see the papers I gave you here? I didn't expect you to translate it... I don't want the translation. Ahhh, let's look at this together before we move to work in groups. Before reading activity [Referring to the 'before reading activity' on the worksheet], the first one is Shakespeare. OK, let's do this. Before we talk about this, please sit in groups of 4 ... groups of 4 in circles... arrange yourself... 5 is also fine ... here OK [Referring to a group on her right]. No more than 5, OK? Set the chairs to face one another.

*(Observation 2, 26 September 2014)*

#### **4.6 Chapter summary**

The integration of quantitative and qualitative results has demonstrated that considering both strands of results together allowed for a holistic interpretation and exploration of relationships in the data. Individual quotes from the students and descriptions from the observations were able to confirm and contextualise the quantitative data to develop an understanding of perceptions and issues influencing the perceptions of the students. On the whole, the implementation of learner-centred teaching yields a positive effect on the students as they valued the new experiences of learner-centred principles in the module. The students claimed that the LCA provided a different learning climate, one in which they felt more involved and accepted as an important part of the course. They could take ownership and become more motivated in learning when they were involved in making decisions regarding the issues that

directly affected their learning. They also learned to become more active learners through collaborative learning which encouraged them to use higher order thinking and construct and accumulate knowledge in social interactions.

However, moving to a more learner-centred approach to learning and teaching also represents a noticeable mismatch between its underlying principles and the social norms of Thai society that the students are accustomed to. This study has provided evidence from multiple sources- classroom observations, learner diaries and interviews- to illustrate that local cultural values may impact the implementation of pedagogical changes in the direction of the LCA. This research has revealed that salient Thai cultural characteristics, namely hierarchical relationships and the desire to maintain positive relationships, impacted the students' perceptions and behaviours in the learner-centred classroom. These two cultural influences will be further discussed in the next chapter.

## Chapter 5. Discussion

### 5.1 Introduction

This study has investigated Thai university students' perceptions with regard to the key pedagogical principles of the learner-centred teaching paradigm. In this chapter, the major findings of the research are interpreted and discussed. Section 5.2 offers the students' rationales for favorable perceptions of the LCA, which were related to previous studies in the same area. Following that, cultural and practical challenges arising from the students' experience of a classroom that incorporated learner-centred principles are presented in section 5.3 and 5.4, respectively. The final section of this chapter provides a summary of the discussion and proposed initial steps for teachers who wish to integrate the LCA in their classrooms.

### 5.2 Students' perception of the learner-centred approach

The results from both quantitative and qualitative data suggest that students had positive views towards the key principles of the approach. The following sections discuss the students' reasons for their perceptions of the LCA which serves as evidence to suggest that the students recognised the potential of the approach for their learning.

#### 5.2.1 *Increased sense of ownership*

The students in this study were given the chance to voice their needs and opinions regarding different aspects of the module and the findings suggested that the increase in their power over their own learning can impact their sense of ownership and motivation in their learning process. This illustrates a contrast to the traditional learning process in Thailand where the teacher is the sole content expert and the main decision maker, holding power in almost all aspects of the course (Cheewakaroon, 2011; Sovajassatakul *et al.*, 2011). Students are seldom asked what they think or want. This powerlessness inadvertently minimises their need for thinking and lack of responsibility for their own education (Manor *et al.*, 2010).

The students in the study, however, started to see the class as belonging to them and felt respected as a part of the learning process when their input was valued. As a result, they felt more motivated to make an effort (as shown in 4.2.1). It seems reasonable and logical to assume that the students felt more connected with learning as they felt the sense of control, confidence and competence when the decisions about the course were made with their input. Consistent

with self-determination theory, the provision of choice is one of the important determinants of feelings of autonomy and motivation since students will be more intrinsically motivated in activities that involve their personal choices (Deci and Ryan, 2000). Motivation has been universally recognised as an important element in education since it is a process that moves people to do something. Unlike the TCA, which often depends on extrinsic motivation in the form of rewards, points and grades, letting students make their own learning choices can possibly create intrinsic motivation because their actions will be driven by choices they have set for themselves (Massouleh and Jooneghani, 2012).

This finding confirms the assertion made by Hess (2008) and Weimer (2002), that students' contributions to decision-making can enhance their students' sense of belonging and the effort they put into learning. The most direct evidence of the value of increasing students' power in the classroom has been provided by Zhang and Head (2010). In their study, an evaluation at the end of their first year revealed that sixty Chinese students in an oral English course initially believed that they would benefit more from lectures and were reluctant to participate in interactive activities, such as discussions, role-plays and simulations. However, when they were involved in the design of their learning activities in their second year, they appeared more motivated and willing to invest more time and effort in class.

### ***5.2.2 Increased sense of responsibility***

One of the primary goals of learner-centred education is to strengthen students' sense of responsibility. Supporters of the LCA have suggested a number of ways to put responsibility in the hands of students, such as including them in the selection of course content, assignments classroom policy or assessment methods, raising awareness of their current abilities and value of learning and assisting them develop desirable skills for future learning (Felder and Brent, 1996; Slunt and Giancarlo, 2004; Garrett, 2008). It is believed that when students learn to be responsible for learning, they will develop the characteristic of life-long learners. In this study, the teacher periodically utilised various strategies to remind the students to take responsibility for their own learning throughout the semester such as allowing them to make choices in different aspects of their learning, letting them learn from the consequences of their actions and integrating formative feedback and self-and peer assessments.

The students associated having a say in the course management with self-perceived responsibility for themselves. The students in this study elaborated that their involvement in the design of certain learning components, such as choosing topics, divisions of assessment marks,

assignment deadlines, meant that they could tailor their learning to suit their interests and abilities and learn to be accountable for the choices they made. This reflects an important feature of the LCA which takes into account students' experiences, perspective, backgrounds, interests, capacities and needs (McCombs, 1993). As the decisions were made with their input, the students claimed that they came to class with an awareness of responsibility and commitment for their self-selected decisions. As Manor *et al.* (2010, p. 10) observed, 'great power means a greater ability to act and thus a greater sense of responsibility to do so. Similarly, less power (or worse, powerlessness) equates to less ability to act and less responsibility'. Data from this study paralleled previous studies by Sutphin (1992) and Abdelmalak and Trespalacios (2013), whose student participants reported that having a voice in making decisions about course content, classroom process and assignments gave them a sense of ownership and made them more committed to the course. In this study, the participants' views in sharing decisions with the teacher demonstrate the relationship between classroom power and responsibility and, thus, suggest that collaborative effort between the teacher and students on aspects of the course components should be embedded in teaching and learning in order to promote motivation and autonomy among students.

Additionally, students' experience of collaborative learning in a social setting can also contribute to their acceptance to play active roles in becoming more responsible for their learning, which is the basis of learner-centred education (see more information in 4.2.4). While the students considered working with others as an opportunity to broaden their understanding and develop their teamwork and interpersonal skills, additional benefits quoted by the students in this study were that they were aware of what Johnson (1987) referred to as 'individual accountability'. Individual accountability is described as the belief by each member of the group that she/he is accountable for her/his performance or contribution towards the joint success of the whole group (Johnson, *ibid*). In this study, the students commented that working in groups carried the weight of others' expectations and, consequently, their sense of responsibility was fostered when they felt that learning was no longer about them and the content. Instead, they felt responsibility to play their parts to achieve the group's goal.

The students' sense of responsibility was also enhanced by their exposure to the consequences of their own actions. Weimer (2002) shrewdly suggested that teachers use strategies that make students feel accountable for their actions. She gives an example of an instructor who put a homework assignment on the overhead projector at the very beginning of the class and took it down a few minutes after the class commenced. Using this tactic, students who arrived late would miss the assignment and would have to get it from someone else or the instructor himself.

The lack of discipline incurred additional effort for the late-arriving students as they now had to find out about the homework. Similarly, the teacher in this study made it known that she would accept homework submissions at the beginning of the class and late submissions would be rejected (for more details, see section in 4.2.4). Through personal communication, the teacher revealed that she used this strategy to, 1) persuade the students to come to class early, and 2) prevent them from copying homework during the lesson. The approach seemed effective as some students admitted that they had changed their learning behaviour after the rule was put in place. Moreover, the students also considered their unpreparedness for group presentations as an important learning moment as they were not given a second chance at the presentation, as had previously been the case in other courses. From the interviews, a number of students talked how the outcomes of their mistakes prompted them to be more self-regulated and responsible for their learning.

Finally, the students' learning responsibility was also encouraged through formative feedback and self- and peer assessment they were exposed to in the classroom. The students in this study expressed their appreciation that their strengths and weaknesses were identified in the form of comments instead of numbers (grades) which did not inform them of where they had gone right or wrong (section 4.2.5). Providing formative evaluation can be associated with Vygotsky's (1978) 'zone of proximal development' in the sense that the teacher starts from where students are and points out the area that students can reach, which they may not be able to see for themselves. The students' positive perceptions imply a legitimate place for a formative form of evaluation in learner-centred learning in which the role of the teacher as a coach can be emphasised. Moreover, many of the students also showed their recognition of perceived benefits of self and peer assessments as an opportunity to diagnose their performance when acting as both the assessed and the assessor. They reported that they learned to make judgement or give value on their own and others' work and become more responsible for their learning through seeing from their mistakes or weaknesses (section 4.2.5). This coincides with a number of researchers who claim that the provision of self and peer assessment can facilitate students' responsibility, motivation, autonomy and learning skills such as reflective and critical thinking skills (Sambell and McDowell, 1998; Cotterall and Murray, 2009; Black and Wiliam, 2010; Wanner and Palmer, 2018).

It has been asserted that a classroom environment which makes learners feel empowered, comfortable and engaged can be conducive to their willingness to assume responsibility (McCombs and Whistler, 1997). In this study, a number of methods were used by the teacher to remind the students to take charge of their own learning. The students' feedback showed

their recognition that they also had to take some responsibility and take action for their own learning instead of relying on the teacher to tell them what to do.

### ***5.2.3 Enhanced participation in active learning***

Despite the fact that Thai students are known to have been accustomed to a traditional learning environment where little contribution or involvement is expected of them, the students in this study expressed their satisfaction towards activities that allowed them to actively explore the content through collaborative learning activities, such as pair work, group discussions and presentations (as presented in 4.2.2). They reasoned that they had a chance to practice other cognitive skills beyond merely remembering, while engaging in classroom interaction with their teacher and peers. A large number of students in this study referred to how group discussions gave them opportunity to use their background knowledge and experience related to the topic to share with their fellow group mates, exposed them to multiple perspectives from their group members and allowed them to synthesise the information to come up with their renewed interpretation of the subject, all of which, they claimed, offered them longer retention of knowledge. This can be an indication that their knowledge was co-constructed ‘not just cooperatively, but interdependently’ (Cross, 1998, p. 5), and the classroom had become ‘a learning community that constructs shared understanding’ (Brophy, 1999, p. 49). Teaching strategies, such as collaborative learning, presentations, discussions, group work and problem-based learning, are grounded in constructivism which believes that individuals build new knowledge on the foundation of previous learning and interaction with others (Brandes and Ginnis 1992; O’Neill and McMahon, 2005). According to Vye *et al.* (1998), learners can benefit from a learning environment that promotes working collaboratively, sharing thoughts and helping one another in metacognitive processes. Other benefits when students work together in a comfortable and supportive learning environment include:

- promoting retention of knowledge;
- enhancing their interpersonal communication skills;
- developing positive interdependence;
- valuing diverse intellectual contributions from different social and cultural backgrounds; and
- preparing students for the needs of work places where team work and collaboration are a necessity (Li and Campbell, 2008).

The shift from being mere listeners to becoming active learners in collaborative learning also raise the students’ awareness of individual differences as they listened to their groupmates’

diverse experience and opinions and felt that they could express themselves freely as there were no right or wrong answers to the discussion topics. Unlike in a traditional learning environment where learners are expected to and are often tested on providing correct answers, the students in this study did not feel that they were being judged on how much they knew when they participated in collaborative learning that required the use of higher thinking skills, such as analysing or reasoning, to share with their peers (see more description in 4.2.2).

It appears that, when given the opportunity, the students were able to adapt to a more active learning through content that requires more than memorising but rather reinforces construction of knowledge through interaction with the teacher and with peers. Their responses suggest their recognition that knowledge can be constructed within and among themselves, which is in line with Vygotskian sociocultural theory (1978). According to Vygotsky (1978, p. xxiii), 'education is realised through the student's own experience, which is wholly determined by the environment'. This result is consistent with the findings of Asian students in a New Zealand university conducted by Li and Campbell (2008). By using semi-structured interviews, they found that twenty-two Asian students in the study highly valued classroom discussions even though it was predicted that they would struggle when interacting with peers from different cultures and ethnic backgrounds. In a more recent study conducted with Malaysian students, Arumugam *et al.* (2013) investigated how group work impacted university students' writing skill and found that group work benefited them both cognitively and affectively. Significant academic improvement was found between pre- and post-tests and the students commented that group discussion helped them understand the concepts better.

#### ***5.2.4 Facilitative role of the teacher***

A transition to learner-centred education redefines the conventional role of the teacher as a knowledge transmitter and a classroom manager to a facilitator who is less dominant but not less important. The central role of learner-centred teachers is to engage students in a supportive learning environment which is conducive to deeper learning and acquisition of knowledge (Motschnig-Pitrik and Holzinger, 2002; Elen *et al.*, 2007; Gilis *et al.*, 2008; Brackenbury, 2012). Learner-centred teachers are required to organise learning activities that involve students in a meaningful way as well as manage and provide them with optimal support during those activities. This shift in the role of the teacher will directly affect students' experiences within the learning environment (Kember and Gow, 1994).

When asked to describe the role of the teacher in this study, the students in this study acknowledged that she had taken a step back and assumed the role of a facilitator rather than sole expert, as in a traditional classroom (see examples in 4.2.3). They appeared to accept that they were now given a platform on which to act as active players in co-constructing meaning through sharing and exchanging their experience and ideas with their peers while the teacher offered guidance and helped establish a connection between students and the learning materials. The teacher's perceived role in this study confirmed Knowles' (2014) description of an effective facilitator as someone who ensures students are aware of what is expected of them and creates an environment that is conducive to acquisition of knowledge. In a similar vein, Rojas-Drummond and Mercer (2003) reiterated that the teacher's role is crucial in bringing students to talk and share their thoughts and reasoning in collaborative activities. The teacher's role was viewed by the student participants as positive concerning interpersonal relationships and classroom environment and their perceptions reflected a pedagogical shift towards a more balanced relationship between the two parties. As a result of the teacher minimising her authoritative stance and playing more of a support role in the learning process, the students felt there was positive interaction between the teacher and themselves and felt comfortable seeking advice and asking questions. This result concurs with Ryan *et al.*'s (1998) claim that students tend to seek more help in classrooms where there is support, interaction and mutual respect from the teacher. This practice exhibited some underlying principles of the LCA, which emphasises the teacher's role as one to create a supportive learning environment which can stimulate students' independence, self-motivation and responsibility (Zimmerman *et al.*, 2014).

This section illustrates how a group of Thai university students viewed their experience of the learner-centred principles. While the majority of the students could identify the benefits that the approach has to offer, their exposure to the learning method was not entirely without a problem. The following sections elaborate on the cultural and practical obstacles found in this study.

### **5.3 Cultural influence in learning**

As discussed in Chapter 2, the introduction of the LCA in Thai education reform was initially met with such a negative reaction that it was mocked as a *kwai-centred* approach. More importantly, the literature has portrayed the LCA as a concept that is developed from the western perspective and may not be suitable for eastern contexts where different cultural values prevail (Li, 2004; Hofstede and Hofstede, 2005; Pham Thi Hong, 2011). The study's final

research question examined whether Thai university students' views on the approach reflected held cultural beliefs and values. While cultural generalisations should be taken cautiously to avoid stereotyping, it has been suggested that local culture and beliefs can have a significant impact on students' conceptions and behaviours and exploring them may help extend our understanding of students' classroom behaviour (Gay, 2002). The findings of this study suggested two major and well-established cultural norms that influenced the students' views of learner-centred teaching and learning.

### ***5.3.1 Asymmetrical status between teachers and students***

The status of the teacher in Thai society was the first salient cultural influence mentioned by the students. When given the chance to design their own course, some students immediately felt that the teacher knew best and, therefore, that students should not contradict her (see example in 4.4.1). As noted in section 2.6.2, the status of the teacher and students is markedly differentiated by age, knowledge and experience in the Thai educational context. Teachers are considered highly authoritative and knowledgeable whereas students are seen as lacking in knowledge and inexperienced. Commenting on how Thai teachers and students are traditionally described in terms of 'good' or 'bad', Prpic and Kanjanapanyakom (2004) observed that the traditionally expected behaviours of conventional Thai teachers and learners as:

A good teacher is an expert and has all the answers (or they lose face), organize the content into appropriate learnable units, presents the content clearly via lectures, ensure that the students acquire and retain the knowledge, and are kind and nice to their students.

A good student acknowledge that the teacher is senior and has greater knowledge, pays close attention and carries out all instructions given by the teacher, is quiet in class, retains all the knowledge given by the teacher, and is respectful and loyal to the teacher. (p.7)

This culturally-based value of teacher-student relationship contrasts starkly with the LCA in the sense that the latter calls for and is based on a more egalitarian classroom as opposed to the hierarchical relationship in conventional classrooms (Weimer, 2002; Wohlfarth *et al.*, 2008). Students of the LCA are encouraged to be more active and exercise power over their own learning by contributing their input concerning their course plan. However, since power in the classroom between the teacher and learners has never been equal, it is understandable that Thai learners may be unwilling to participate in such activities since they have never been trained or even encouraged to voice their needs, opinions or be critical of what teachers say. This finding here concurs with the case of forty Thai university students in an ethnographic study conducted by Raktham (2012), who explored whether student behaviours manifested elements of Thai

cultural characteristics. When asked why they were reluctant to actively participate in class, the students reasoned that they were brought up to respect and not to challenge teachers. This finding has an important implication since a study carried out by Cotterall (1995) showed a low level of readiness for autonomy in students who believed that their teacher was an authoritative figure in the classroom.

### ***5.3.2 The desire to maintain social harmony***

A second culture norm salient in Thai education presented in the students' responses was the importance of group and social harmony. Behaving in accordance with the group to avoid confrontation or conflict is a common characteristic of Thai people. The power of maintaining harmony as the ultimate aim of social interactions has built a nation with a national and dominant attitude of '*kreng jai*', translated literally as 'awe heart'. The word is translated to English as being considerate but it carries with it a connotation of an implicit obligation to restrain one's own interest to respect others' feelings (Burnard, 2006). Being *kreng jai* also means avoiding imposing on others and avoiding confrontations, leading to indirectness and reticence (ibid).

The notion of '*kreng jai*' plays a major part in the students' beliefs and practices in the classroom that was integrating learner-centred principles. It had an effect on learner-centred teaching and learning at two levels: the teacher and their peers. First, a number of students in the study did not only feel that the teacher was the most qualified to make all decisions in the classroom but they were also afraid that stating their needs or views may cause the teacher some mental discomfort if she had already had a plan in mind, something a good Thai student should not do. Foley (2005, p. 229) rightly pointed out that a possible negative effect of *kreng jai* is that it can lead to a 'lack of intuition, weakness, and subservience' in the students. The issue of *kreng jai* leaves little room for Thai students to feel that they are in a position to argue or debate with the teacher, even when presented with the opportunity, for fear of causing offence and exhibiting a lack of gratitude (Adamson, 2003; Foley, 2005).

The second level of '*kreng jai*' in the classroom is when students are extremely considerate of peers' feelings. As an approach grounded in the constructive theory of learning, learner-centred education strives for collaborative construction of knowledge through social negotiations among students in various strategies such as discussion and problem-solving. Thai culture complicates this in the sense that although some students might not agree with the decision of the group or with a member of the group, they would prefer not to voice their opinions as they

do not want to disrupt group consensus or upset others' feelings (Witayarat, 2015). Some students would rather sit silently and go along with the class's decision than risk putting themselves in a potential conflict situation.

Moreover, it was also shown that Thai learners in the study found it difficult to give honest criticism of themselves and their classmates when they had to participate in the self and peer assessment which is incorporated into learner-centred education (Lawrence, 2009). Some students in this study deliberately evaluated themselves too low when their assessment from their friends appeared otherwise. Although Nunan (2004) has perceptively identified students' inability to make accurate judgement about themselves as a major source of criticism for self-assessment, the cause of the behaviour of the students in this study could be associated with the influence of their culture. Their behaviour could be explained by the students' cultural value of modesty as a way to maintain social harmony in Thai society, encapsulated in the popular proverb 'Don't lift yourself up to threaten others', meaning do not brag and put yourself above others (Chaidaroon, 2003). This cultural knowledge has been instilled in Thai people over many generations. Therefore, it is not surprising that in their uncertainty on how to grade themselves, the students chose to undervalue their work rather than overvalue it.

However, when it comes to evaluating their peers, their rationale for scoring was reversed as several students admitted arbitrarily awarding scores for their peers when they felt that the scores were too low (see section 4.4.3). Peer pressure is not uncommon in the research concerning peer assessment. A number of studies, such as those of Hanrahan and Isaacs (2001); Saito and Fujita (2004); Lindblom-ylanne *et al.* (2006) and Planas Lladó *et al.* (2014), have also found the same issue of subjectivity as a challenge to implementing peer assessment in the learning process. However, unlike the study of Planas Lladó *et al.* (*ibid.*), whose Spanish participants displayed an attitude of competitiveness in evaluating their peers, complicity seemed to be the aim for the participants in this study. A possible explanation of this could be Thais' ingrained awareness of the need to avoid offending others' self-esteem and the reluctance to criticise others in order to maintain harmonious relations. As a result, instead of giving a truthful scoring, Thai students in this study would rather grade their peers higher than what their performances was actually worth so as to avoid awkward resentment or confrontation.

For most Thais, criticism usually results in loss of face either to one or both parties, and it is better to sacrifice task accomplishment to avoid awkwardness or discomfort for others (Komin, 1990b). In this case, the student participants tried to give acceptable, albeit fake, scores for their

classmates (see section 4.4.3). This was probably because, first, giving low scores may appear as if they were criticising their peers' work as inadequate and, second, they would prefer to avoid possible conflict or discomfort that may arise if peers did not like the given scores. The finding in this study echoed the work undertaken by Thongrin (2002), who also found that Thai undergraduate learners were hesitant to give sincere peer feedback to avoid upsetting their peers in an argumentative writing course. She found that the concept of *kreng jai* and harmony maintenance constituted to a positive compliment-embedded response or an indirect critical comment from the students. However, when the purpose of peer assessment was spelt out to them, the students were able to give longer and more specific comments on writing tasks. Similarly, Dhanarattigannon (2008) found that although students learned to move from focusing on correctness to expressing themselves as they gained experience with writing instructions, some students felt reluctant to give honest feedback in peer assessment due to the concept of *kreng jai*.

Although the results of this study indicated the students' inherent disposition towards a constructivist learning approach that empowers them to think independently and encourages their active involvement, their accounts of their experiences in the module reflected a degree of cultural influence on their participation in a learner-centred classroom. The findings from this study exhibit certain tensions between the learner-centred principles and the norms of Thai social values, which were succinctly characterised by Komin (1990b, p. 47) as 'a tight hierarchical social system, accepted existential inequality and a strong value of relationship'. In this study, it appears that social hierarchy and the concept of '*kreng jai*' to maintain social harmony may, to some extent, prevent Thai learners from fully engaging in socially constructing knowledge with the teacher and peers when there is a situation that implies potential conflicts. The students seemed to be aware of their status in the classroom, so they showed respect and submission by avoiding confrontation with the teacher even when they were given the chance to. Additionally, conformity to maintain social harmony has also been reported as causing anxiousness when students participate in group discussions or ask questions in class. For Thais, shyness, politeness and maintaining relationships are parts of competent behaviour for communication (Chaidaroon, 2003).

These cultural impediments come into contrast with the fundamental role of social interaction in the development of cognition in social constructivism. Social constructivists, such as Dewey, Vygotsky, Brunner and Gardner, theorise that learners acquire and internalise new knowledge through interactions (Palincsar, 1998). The theory is founded on the premise that learning is an interactive process. Individuals learn from taking perspectives and reflecting on interactive and

collaborative learning environments which can lead to cognitive, social and moral development (APA, 1997). The students in this study tended to withhold themselves when interacting with others to avoid possible disagreement. That is to say, their deference to the teacher's power prevented them from expressing what they really wanted in their learning. Their fear of creating disagreement with peers prevented them from expressing opposing views in collaborative learning. Their fear of hurting others' feelings prevented them from truthfully and critically assessing others. These behaviours, while understandable, might have hindered their opportunities to learn and to develop important learning skills such as decision making, evaluating and reasoning. In the classroom context, the students' desire to maintain a harmonious learning environment may also be explained by the three social circles proposed by Holmes and Tangtongtavy (1996). According to them, people (Thai or otherwise) behave differently based on social circles which are classified into three spheres:

- 1) The family circle: the innermost circle includes immediate family members. Within this circle, mistakes can easily be forgiven due to the close bond between its members (Raktham, 2008).
- 2) The cautious circle: includes people who interact on a frequent but more formal basis such as work colleagues, classmates, teachers, doctors. Within this circle, behaviours are likely to be courteous, cautious, friendly or deferential because individuals in this circle would expect to have these associations for an extensive period of time and would want to keep the relationship functioning smoothly for the good of both parties.
- 3) The selfish circle: includes people who are negligible. Within this circle, each individual has one-time-only or minimum contacts. There is no leverage or lasting influence on the others and, as such, this circle is impersonal and 'selfish' behaviours, such as littering or loud talking, are present.

The students' classroom context existed within the cautious circle. As English-majoring students, they may have to take other modules or associate with the teacher within the English department. They will also have to spend most of their time at the university with the same group of classmates for one or two more years. It is, therefore, understandable that they would prefer to refrain from saying what is on their minds in order to keep their relationship with the teacher and peers as smooth and harmonious as possible.

In addition to the cultural influence that impacted on how the students reacted to learner-centred principles, this study also found some practical challenges which emerged from the students'

accounts of their experiences in a learner-centred classroom. They are presented in the following section.

#### **5.4 Practical challenges**

Judging by the students' appreciation of their increased role at the classroom where their opinions and involvement were valued, it seems there is some potential that the approach can be offered as a pedagogical learning style in the Thai context. Nevertheless, despite Thai students' acceptance of the LCA, the implementation of learner-centred principles in this study was by no means entirely smooth. While teachers are normally informed and provided with substantial training on how to move towards new practices, students, who are at the receiving end of such change, are often kept in the dark about what is going on around them. Mezeske (2004) insightfully warned students' experiences of a learner-centred classroom should be explored to avoid potential misunderstanding and resistance. This study has investigated how Thai tertiary students perceived the LCA and in doing so the difficulties the students faced in adjusting to the novel teaching practices which were emerging. These barriers are seen as providing valuable insights that can be added to the existing literature and used to improve the implementation of the approach in Thailand and in similar cultural contexts so that all students can engage in more inclusive learning environments that are meaningful to them. The following section discusses students' challenges that were found in this study.

##### ***5.4.1 Students' inability to negotiate reasonably***

While having a say in their learning seems to increase their motivation and sense of responsibility, the benefits were not gained without cost. Unlike previous studies which mainly mentioned the benefits of providing students with choice, evidence from this study has revealed issues concerning students' ability to make decisions over their learning. The epistemological basis of learner-centred education involves some sharing of power over learning on the part of the student in deciding what, when and how they want to learn or be assessed. The results from this study have illustrated the students' inexperience in making decision regarding their learning as an issue when students are empowered in the classroom. First, some students did not take sharing their opinions over different aspects of the module seriously as they offered choices that were obviously unrealistic (see example in excerpt 4.1). This may be because the idea of being asked for their opinions was relatively novel, and thus not taken literally or seriously. As is generally known, teachers are normally the ones who articulate course goals, content, class policies, teaching and learning methods, types of assignments, and grading schemes. These

decisions are often readily made for students and are provided in the form of a course syllabus on the first day of a new class. As a result, little is left for students to think about what they want from and for their own learning. Years of passive learning with teachers telling them everything they need to know has created dependent learners who are unable to decide for themselves (Weimer, 2002). This mode of learning has sustained teachers' domination and repressed and alienated students' voices (Giroux, 1997). Therefore, it is understandable that students are not readily skilled to make important decisions about their learning in depth and breadth. The issue should be carefully approached to divest students of the familiar shield of being told what to do by the teacher. Nunan's (1995) observation regarding that is insightful:

Learner-centredness is therefore not an all-or-nothing concept; it is a relative matter. It is also not the case that a learner-centred classroom is one in which the teacher hands over power and responsibility and control to the students from Day 1. I have found that it is usually well into a course before learners are in a position to make informed choices about what they want to and how they want to learn, and it is not uncommon that learners are in such a position only at the end of the course. (p.134)

#### ***5.4.2 The misuse of the opportunity and inability to take on responsibility***

The misuse of opportunity to negotiate was present when the students were entrusted to have a say in their learning, particularly in negotiating assignment deadlines with the teacher. Having a say in assignment deadlines received the highest level of agreement from the students in the post-questionnaire (see section 4.2.1). They explained that they liked this because they were able to estimate when they could finish this module's assignments with consideration of assignments from other modules in mind. However, there were times when a number of students came to class with unfinished work and nervously negotiated for a new deadline. Another similar incident occurred when some of them were not ready for the group presentation. They were visibly shocked when the teacher firmly stated that there would be no second chance for the presentation which accounted for substantial points towards the overall scores of the module. It later transpired that the problem could be their time-management skill as many students admitted leaving until the last minute to do or prepare for their assigned tasks. For many of the students, this was a wake-up call and a turning point to evaluate their current approach to learning (see example in excerpt 4.2).

Superficially, the students' unfinished assignments and lack of preparation can be put down to poor time-management skills and their misuse of the opportunity to negotiate. However, further

analysis from the students' diaries and interviews revealed that a number of students struggled with instructions from the teacher, noting unclear instructions as what they did not like in their learner diaries. Interestingly, instead of asking for detailed instructions from the teacher, the students would rather wait for the designated deadlines and then negotiate a new one. It is possible that the students were afraid to cause offence to the teacher, whom they regarded as more knowledgeable, if they said that they did not fully understand her instructions. Instead, they blamed themselves for the confusion. As one student said *'I'm not saying the teacher was wrong but it was actually us who didn't understand the same meanings as the teacher'* (LD4-S23). This lack of willingness to confront the teacher can be interpreted with reference to the hierarchical system in Thai culture, or the concept of saving face. Asking for detailed instructions would be taken as indirectly criticising the teacher's pedagogic ability, so the students would rather remain quiet.

### 5.5 Discussion summary

Exploring Thai students' perceptions of the basic principles of the LCA was the primary aim of this study. From the triangulation of both quantitative and qualitative findings, it can be concluded that Thai university students had an appreciation of the key learner-centred principles. However, there were cultural and practical issues that they may have prevented them from fully engaging in learner-centred learning. The students in the study indicated their acceptance of the primary principles underpinning the constructivist view of learning, which encourages learners to become actively involved in their learning process and to socially seek out and construct new meanings from their prior knowledge and experience. This result is encouraging but unanticipated given the fact that Thai students, similar to students in other Asian countries, have always been judged as passive learners who adhere to the notion that knowledge must be transmitted by teachers (Thamraksa, 2003; Baker, 2008; Promyod, 2013; Chayakonvikom *et al.*, 2016). Such beliefs have led to the assumption that the implementation of the LCA in Asia may be 'ineffective and perhaps even counterproductive' as its principles do not align with local cultural perspectives (Nguyen *et al.*, 2006, p. 2). As discussed in 2.6.2, Thailand is among those Asian nations that place greater emphasis on hierarchical relationships and social harmony. In the educational realm, this manifests itself in the asymmetrical relations between teachers and students, leading to dependent students who hardly put much effort into their learning and lack of the analytical and critical thinking skills which are integral to the LCA (Phungphol, 2005; Dueraman, 2012). Additionally, conformity to maintain social harmony has also been reported as causing anxiousness when students participate in group discussions or ask questions in class. For Thais, shyness, politeness and maintaining relationships are part of

competent and desirable behaviour for communication (Chaidaroon, 2003). Such culturally formed values undoubtedly leads to the conclusion that the prevalent docile, uncritical and reproductive mode of learning of Thai students may hinder the conceptualisation of learner-centred education, making the implementation of the approach in the Thai context challenging, if not impossible.

However, the results of the students' views from both before and after the module implied their inclination towards a constructivist learning approach that empowers them to think independently and encourages their active involvement. The findings reveal a movement away from the traditional views of Asian students and corroborates the ideas of a number of educational researchers, such as Littlewood (2000), Wong (2004), Baker (2008) and Thanh-Pham (2010), who have challenged the stereotype of Asian learners as uncritical rote learners. For them, Asian learners' approach to learning has widely been misconstrued. Asian students merely employ a surface approach such as rigorous memorisation of content to build a foundation to gain better understanding for further study in the area while western students tend to use their personal and real life experiences to relate and make sense of new information (Gow and Kember, 1990; Kember, 2000; Pillay *et al.*, 2000; Hu, 2002; Wang, 2006). Other researchers, such as Biggs (1994), Hongladarom (1998) and Paton (2005), have made the convincing observation that critical and argumentative thinking is actually ingrained in Asian traditions but it has been socially suppressed by other values such as social harmony or hierarchical status. In Thailand, in particular, the teachings of Theravada Buddhism, the country's official religion, do indeed promote critical reasoning and critical self-reflection. Examples of such teachings are *Kalama Sutta*, which discourages people from accepting or believing anything immediately, or *Ariyasacca* (the four Noble Truths), which advises reflective and analytical ways to know and understand sufferings, their causes and solutions (Thunnithet, 2011). As Buddhism directly and indirectly influences the way most Thai people live and think (Komin, 1990b), it can be said that criticality is not a foreign concept in Thai society (Fry and Bi, 2013). The argument for the misconception of Asian learners is also based on the premise that they are able to respond to a more constructivist approach in the western educational system when called on or encouraged to do. For instance, a comparative study between first and second year students with third and fourth year students in an Australian university conducted by Volet and Renshaw (1996) provided evidence that the longer Chinese students had been learning in a learner-centred environment, the more they were able to adapt to the educational system. The authors argued that their perceptions of course requirements may have more influence on their approach to learning than the so-called cultural traits.

Given the counter argument of the generalisation of Asian learners and the positive change in the students' orientation towards an active learning paradigm, Littlewood (2000) who, in his study of cultural influences on learning of students from eight Asian and three European countries, was right in arguing that:

...the stereotype of Asian students as obedient listeners'-whether or not it is a reflection of their actual behaviours in class-does not reflect the roles they *would like* to adopt in class. They do not see the teacher as an authority figure who should not be questioned; they do not want to sit in class passively receiving knowledge; and they are only slightly on the 'agreement' side that the teacher should have a greater role than themselves in evaluating their learning. (p.33, original emphasis)

Littlewood further suggested that the generalisation of Asian learners as reticent and passive does not always represent the role they would like to adopt in the classroom. This conclusion seem to be in agreement with the findings in this study, in which several students reported that they were motivated to study in a more constructivist style of teaching and learning environment. They recognised their ability to express their opinions and seek new knowledge through collaborative learning. These findings support the claims that Asian students prefer and are responsive to learner-centred principles found in previous studies such as those of Volet and Renshaw (1996), Stapleton (2002), Wong (2004) and Jersabek (2010). In particular , a recent qualitative study of students at a university in Bangkok carried out by Jersabek (2010) illustrated that when the learning environment allows students to be active in sharing knowledge and utilising their critical and creative thinking, students can quickly adjust to new learning styles and welcome the idea of learner-centred learning. Similarly, the findings of this study also concurs with those of Klunklin *et al.* (2011). Their study revealed that twenty-five nursing students in Thailand had positive views of problem-based, learner-centred learning and enjoyed exercising various learning skills, such as problem-solving, critical and creative thinking although they initially experienced uncertainty and worry in their adaptation to the approach. Additionally, this study has extended existing research by further examining the students' reasons for their perceptions and their views in relation to cultural beliefs. The following section discusses cultural influences and practical issues which emerged from this study.

The findings discussed in this section confirm the warnings issued by a number of research educators that transition to the LCA is not easy and adaptation to its principles can be difficult, for both teachers and learners alike (Weimer, 2002; Mezeske, 2004; O'Neill and McMahon, 2005; Wohlfarth *et al.*, 2008). Although the majority of the students welcomed the concepts of learner-centred education, it can be said that the self-discovery of knowledge and active learning took many students out of their comfort zone since knowledge is normally presented

to them via traditional forms of teaching, such as lectures. Howell (2006) drew an accurate analogy that shifting the learning paradigm from the TCA to the LCA is similar to changing the rules of a game students have known so well for so long. The change can be unsettling for students, and so there is bound to be some confusion and resistance on their behalf.

Notwithstanding the above, the cultural influence and the practical issues found in this study could not be described as resistance from the students since the term implies a refusal to change. Instead, it could be seen as ‘bumps on the road’ to the LCA that both teachers and students have to overcome on their joint journey to adapt to the new approach. In light of Littlewood’s argument on stereotypical Asian learners and increasing research on how Asian students are responsive to the LCA, it can be concluded that these cultural influences and practical issues can be resolved when an optimal learning environment is provided. The following steps are proposed to facilitate students’ adaptation to the LCA.

#### ***5.5.1 Communication, Accommodation and Feedback steps (C.A.F steps)***

1) Communication: the first step is to inform students of the change in their learning. Years of exposure to the traditional form learning has made students accustomed to lectures and rote surface learning approach (Entwistle and Ramsden, 1983). Their learning behaviours are unlikely to change overnight when they are exposed to a different pedagogic approach, in this case the LCA. Although the aim of the LCA is to place learners at the heart of the learning, it seems that students are often left in the dark about what changes are happening to their learning quest. One example of this is the study conducted by Lea *et al.* (2003). It was found that 28 out of 48 psychology students in a UK university admitted being unfamiliar with the concept of the LCA, despite the fact that the approach had been the university’s policy since 1999. Other studies have reported on the mismatch between teacher and learner beliefs and their approaches to teaching and learning (Peacock, 2001; Hawkey, 2006; Bloom, 2007; Gabillon, 2012; Andarab and Büyükyazı, 2013). Bloom’s (2007) study of thirteen language learners is a good illustration of a discrepancy between a teacher and students. Her findings revealed that the learners experienced confusion and some developed ‘a laissez faire attitude’ when their expectations to be taught in a more teacher-centred style were not met in a communication-focused, learner-centred classroom. Such a mismatch between the teacher’s intentions and learners’ interpretations can impact learning opportunities and desired learning outcomes (Kumaravadivelu, 2006a).

As students become co-managers in the learning process, the transition to learner-centred learning should be understood and mutually agreed by the main actors, namely teachers and students (Elen *et al.*, 2007). One way of doing this is to open a dialogue with students about learner-centred education. Mezeske (2004) wisely suggested that teachers talk about learner-centred practices as the module progresses so it gradually embeds itself in the learning culture of the course. Similarly, calling it ‘selling students on the approach’, Weimer (2004) encourages teachers to communicate with students explicitly and regularly on the rationales and merits of learner-centred activities. A discussion of why the approach is adopted and how it can be beneficial to them may be a good starting point to allow students to understand, see the value in and make the effort in the learner-centred teaching and learning.

2) Accommodation: the next step is to help students adjust to an active learning style by providing appropriate support. Helping students see the values of a learning approach does not mean that students can automatically adopt it. Thailand’s education reform requires students to adopt classroom behaviours that are exceedingly novel to them (Raktham, 2008). Students are not normally used to their new roles as required by the LCA and the shift from receiving organised information from teachers to actively discovering information and constructing meaning can be daunting for many of them. It seems improbable that they would adapt perfectly to the LCA. The teacher bears the responsibility for gradually introducing learner-centred practices and scaffolding student learning to a more advanced level. For this, Vygotsky’s (1962) ZPD can be applied in the sense that teachers can evaluate what kinds of learning behaviours students already have and provide additional support to gear students towards learner-centred learning. For example, from this study, it was revealed that the students were enthusiastic about giving their input about their own learning but some of them could not initially take the opportunities seriously due to their inexperience in making decisions over their learning. Another incident is when students misused the opportunities to negotiate by missing the agreed deadlines. As advised by Boud (1987, p. 24), ‘students often need considerable learning skills to be able to make full use of the opportunities that are available to them’. Therefore, in this case, guided provision of choices should be provided to give students some directions and limitations regarding what is appropriate and gradually help them develop their decision-making skills. For instance, instead of letting students choose freely on a deadline, a time frame should be given and rigorously followed. Additionally, teachers should ensure that their lesson plans and instructions are clear, simple and understandable for students to avoid possible mishaps such as students not finishing tasks or assignments due to inadequate understanding.

Moreover, learner-centred learning promotes assertive behaviours, such as speaking up, asking and challenging others' opinions. Research has shown that tensions may also arise when these learning expectations are not consistent with students' cultural values (Frambach *et al.*, 2014). As certain values that students hold, in this study social status and social harmony, can have an impact on learning behaviours, teachers need to be aware of students' cultural perspectives and how they affect learning styles. Once teachers know what cultural beliefs and values students bring to class, they can then consider strategies to address those cultural perspectives appropriately. Since it seems hard to change values that have become ingrained in students' ways of thinking and behaving, Rungwaraphong (2012) perceptively advised that teachers 'negotiate' cultural values by ensuring students that their opinions are valued and any different or opposing opinions are not regarded as being ungrateful to teachers or causing disagreement. It is vital that teachers create a learning community that promotes mutual respect so that students feel comfortable and safe when asking questions and expressing their thoughts.

3) Feedback: the last step is to solicit feedback from students. In keeping with a key message of the LCA that students are at the centre of all learning, teaching and learning should always be informed by them. At the end of the learning experience, teachers should seek students' perceptions and opinions about their learning experience. The statistical evidence from the pre- and post-questionnaires in this study indicates that students were more evaluative and critical once they had encountered learner-centred learning in the module so it may be wise to seek students' perceptions of a lesson right after it is finished so that students are able to recall what has just happened in that lesson (Kumaravadivelu, 2006a). Obtaining feedback can take several forms: individual, collaborative or both. It can be an in-class discussion, a written report, an online evaluation or even a combination of a task (Weimer, 2002). Providing opportunities for students to talk about their experiences (What happened? What have they learned from a task or a lesson? What worked well? What would they like to change? What would they have done differently?) can be a good strategy to train them to reflect on their learning. More importantly, an understanding of the way learners perceive classroom experience can lead to effective pedagogic intervention to improve teaching effectiveness and student learning.

The C.A.F. steps, as shown in figure 5.1, require the teacher's pedagogical knowledge and ability to achieve effective classroom organisation and management when engaging students in the active learning process. The steps can be repeated when students' feedbacks have been collected, and teachers can use the information from step 3 to revise their teaching strategies and come up with a new lesson plan or learning activities which can then be informed to students in following lessons (step 1).

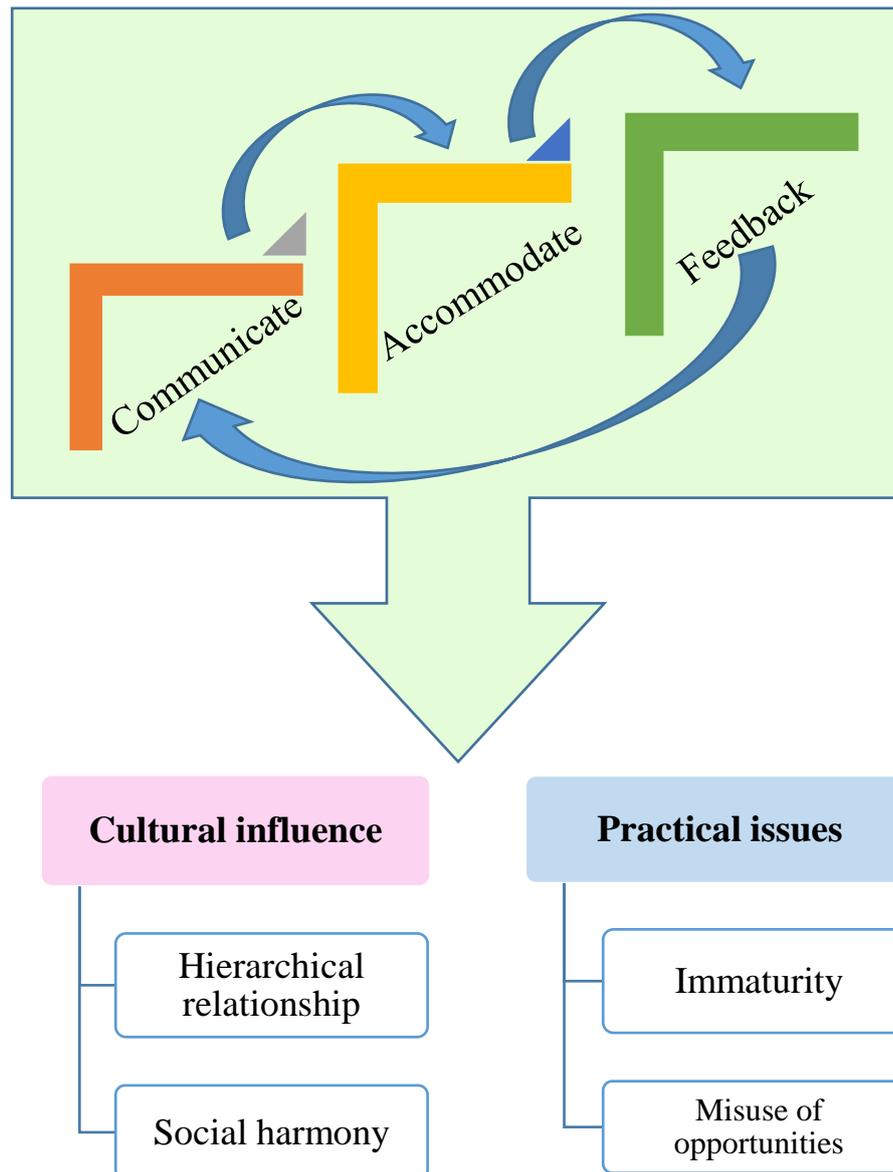


Figure 5.1 Communication, accommodation and follow up steps (C.A.F steps)

## 5.6 Chapter summary

To sum up, this study's results illuminate Thai university students' willingness to embrace a learning approach that puts them at the core of learning and enhances their active participation in learning. The results raise the need to re-assesse the preconceptions that have branded Asian learners as inactive and 'obedient learners' (Littlewood, 2000, p. 33). It is evident from this study that the majority of the students appreciated the learner-centred pedagogies and were seen to enthusiastically share their learning decisions with the teacher, engage in collaborative learning activities using their existing knowledge and experience to construct new knowledge with teacher acting as a facilitator, and become aware of their learning responsibilities and their

learning strengths and weaknesses. However, it cannot be said that these favourable perceptions led automatically to their perfect adaptation to learner-centred learning. Factors related to cultural impediments, students' maturity in making important learning decisions, and teachers' pedagogical strategies could hinder a smooth operation of the approach. The study's results point out that the successful implementation of the LCA depends very much on the interplay between students' perceptions and their ability to adjust to a more active learning, influences from students' cultures and teachers' pedagogical knowledge, awareness and ability to deliver an effective learner-centred classroom. The C.A.F steps are proposed in this study as an alternative way to facilitate the transition to the LCA.

## **Chapter 6. Summary and Recommendations**

### **6.1 Introduction**

This chapter first summarises the major findings of this study, based on the analyses and discussions of the data collected from both the quantitative and qualitative methods. Following this, the implications drawn from this study are presented. The next section provides the contributions of this study, followed by a number of recommendations for future study. The chapter concludes with some final concluding remarks.

### **6.2 Summary of findings**

This thesis has explored the perceptions of Thai students in the Introduction to the English Literature course at a Rajabhat university in the east of Thailand. The study was triggered by a concern over the adoption of the LCA in Thailand as a result of an ‘ambitious’ education reform mandated in the 1999 National Education Act. It adopted a mixed methods research approach. Findings drawing from a combination of the results from pre- and post-questionnaires, interviews, learning diaries and classroom observations provided complementary insights into how a group of students perceived their experiences of a learner-centred classroom and the reasons they gave for their views on the approach.

In general, the participants showed clearly favourable attitudes towards learner-centred education. Exposure to learner-centred principles produced a positive effect on the students. The students claimed that learner-centred learning had allowed them to become involved in making decisions about what, how and when to learn (Nunan, 1988; Rogers, 1994). Through content that allowed them to use higher-order thinking skills, the students acknowledged that they were able to internalise new knowledge from sharing their existing knowledge and experiences with their peers, which is in line with how constructivist perspectives emphasise students’ interpretations of the information they receive. The students also learned to develop learning skills such as self-appraisal, self-monitoring and evaluation, from engaging in self and peer assessment, which promoted their motivation to learn and responsibility for learning (Rogers, 1994). This suggests that the motivation of Thai students could be enhanced through a constructivist learning environment. This result is in line with previous research that has posited that students’ motivation improved through their active participation in a learner-centred classroom (Nunan, 1988; Brandes and Ginnis 1992; Tudor, 1996; Lambert and

McCombs, 1997; Weimer, 2002; Lea *et al.*, 2003; Cornelius-White and Harbaugh, 2009). Evidence from this study has revealed that Thai students' perceptions do not reflect their adherence to passive learning styles as has been somewhat controversially debated in the literature. These findings support the counterargument proposed by several researchers, such as Biggs (1996b), Littlewood (2000) and Baker (2008), who argued that Asian learners do not prefer to be passive and uncritical.

However, despite the students' positive attitudes towards the approach, there still exist cultural and behavioural barriers in their adjustment to a more active learning environment. The cultural hindrances relate to the teacher's authority and group harmony, which indicate that the students viewed their learning through the prism of deep lying cultural values. A number of students appeared to be careful when negotiating with the teacher and expressing their ideas with peers as they feared that different opinions could cause offence. It seems that a situation in which a conflict is implied seems to be problematic for Thai students when interacting and sharing opinions with teachers and classmates. As for the behavioural impediments, the study indicates that the students' struggle to adapt to certain aspects of learner-centred learning. These impediments stem from two main sources: students and the teacher. First, it appears that some students were not experienced in making learning decisions and taking on learning responsibility as some initially could not take offering input with the teacher seriously and many were not prepared for assigned work. Second, teachers' pedagogical knowledge and ability are also crucial as unclear instructions from the teacher in this study caused students to misuse their opportunity to negotiate with the teacher.

To sum up, the findings from this study suggest a positive possibility of applying the LCA in Thai classrooms. However, certain cultural and behavioural hindrances need to be considered when integrating the approach in the Thailand. Three steps were proposed in this study as a guideline for teachers to facilitate transition and enhance the effectiveness of the LCA in the Thai and similar contexts.

### **6.3 Implications**

The limited number of participations means, naturally, that the results of this study are not generalisable to the entire population of Thai university students. However, the findings here do suggest a number of important implications for theory and practice in the learner-centred education.

The theoretical implication pertains to the application of the LCA. Learner-centredness is a broad concept and has been subjected to various definitions in the literature. A review of the existing literature, together with the results from this study, indicates the need to recontextualise the LCA to reflect local cultural values and practical implications. Although the positive perceptions of the students in this study exhibited a willingness to shift towards the approach, the transferability of the approach may differ from one context to another. Consideration should be given to recontextualising the approach instead of aiming for the full adoption. Teachers, policy makers and curriculum developers can draw on the findings from this study to plan suitable activities and curricula that acknowledge local conditions that do not align with learner-centred principles.

The pedagogical implication emerged from the findings concerns the way the LCA is introduced to students. This study suggested that that students may not be able to automatically and suddenly change their learning behaviours to a new learning paradigm, even though they welcome it. That is to say, the students in this study positively perceived the LCA as a useful approach and it can be said that this signifies their willingness to shift towards learner-centred learning. However, not all students are equally well-adjusted and the changes in the learning process may be foreign to many students, as evident in the cultural and practical challenges found in this study. Therefore, in order to enhance the chance of the LCA being successfully implemented, the LCA should be gradually and strategically introduced to students. This study proposes the Communication, Accommodation and Feedback steps (C.A.F steps) as a strategy to help get students on board on a learner-centred journey.

The methodological implication derived from this study is that students are powerful assessors of teaching and learning. The rich data obtained here has produced interesting results, demonstrating that students are important players in improving the quality of teaching and learning. Learner-centred education is known for placing learners at the centre of all learning. It is, therefore, important that educator reformers or policy makers seek students' views when considering changes to the learning process.

#### **6.4 Contributions of the study**

An exploration of how the LCA is perceived through the eye of Thai university students offers valuable contributions to the development of educational theories about teaching and learning, particularly in Thailand and similar higher education contexts.

First, the results of the study make a theoretical contribution to the existing literature on how students from developing countries view the LCA which is an area that has not been adequately explored (Schweisfurth, 2011). The results from this study support Schweisfurth's (ibid.) argument for a more contextualised LCA that takes into account local realities. Failure to take cultural and contextual realities at the local level is often cited as an obstacle in adopting the LCA in different contexts. For example, when it was introduced in Thailand, the LCA was mocked as a '*kwai-centred*' , or 'buffalo-centred' learning partly due to the fact that Thai learners were perceived as not wanting to or being incapable of taking more charge of their own learning (Phungphol, 2005; Kantamara *et al.*, 2006). This could partly be because the approach was adopted to the Thai context with little consideration of the unique conditions that have shaped students' learning behaviours. The cultural and practical aspects that have affected how students react to learner-centred principles in non-Western contexts raise awareness that the implementation of the LCA in Thailand or similar contexts should pay particular attention to local cultural values and existing practical dilemmas. This signifies the need for teachers, educators and curriculum designers to relate contextual and cultural influences to the adoption of the LCA in different contexts.

Second, this study proposes the Communication, Accommodation and Feedback steps (C.A.F steps) as a pedagogical framework for adoption of the LCA. The steps were intended as initial steps for teachers to incorporate in their teaching when a transition to a learner-centred learning is made so that cultural or practical complexities that impede the effective implementation of the approach can be addressed.

Finally, the movement in students' perceptions before and after their experience of the module can be deemed a further methodological contribution of this study. As mentioned in section 4.3, there is a decreasing movement in the 'neutral opinion' option from the pre- to post-questionnaire. There are several other reasons why respondents may have chosen to express no opinion. For example, they may have given 'a don't know' response in order to avoid thinking or committing themselves' (Oppenheim, 1966, p. 129) , they did not understand the question or they may have felt ambivalent towards the subject and chose to be neutral instead of selecting a single response (Krosnick *et al.*, 2001). While it is recognised that the students' choice of uncommitted opinions could have been caused by the reasons noted, it also seems possible to assume that a whole range of experiences of learner-centred principles in the module had a certain amount of impact on their views by the end of the semester. The students gained more consolidated opinions and were more able to make judgement and form opinions of different aspects of learner-centred teaching and learning.

As some students in this study confirmed that they had no or little experience of learner-centred learning before this module, a possible explanation for the difference in the students' neutral opinions can be that they have not previously had relevant experience or knowledge concerning some of the features mentioned in the pre-questionnaire so the no-opinion option seems to be most applicable to them. The response is classified by Krosnick and Presser (2010) as an initial reaction when the respondent lacks the necessary information and/or pre-experience to form an attitude towards a subject. The shift in the no-opinion option at the end of the semester implies that the students became more evaluative and able to make judgements and form opinions of different aspects of learner-centred teaching and learning after their exposure to a more democratic learner-centred education in the module. From the methodological perspective, this finding reminds researchers to be cautious in asking for perceptions. To ensure that their participants have some information or experience of a subject before asking for their perceptions may be a starting point to diminish the chance of non-attitude reporting.

## **6.5 Recommendations for future research**

This study supplements the existing body of knowledge for learner-centred teaching and learning. Throughout the process of this study, a number of questions have come up which may be beneficial for future research. The study offers the following recommendation for future studies:

1. Future research may replicate this research using a bigger sample or studies with different cohorts of student to confirm whether the perceptions held by the students in this study were unique or similar to different students. Possible groups of students include those in practical disciplines such as engineering or medicine since different way of learning may have an impact on students' perceptions of learner-centred education.
2. Since the pre- and post-questionnaire revealed movement in the students' perceptions before and after the module, future research may gather descriptive information, such as interviews or focus groups, from students both before and after their experience of a teaching and learning method to achieve better understanding of their experience.
3. Future research may conduct a comparative study that examines the perceptions of both teachers and students of the LCA in order to discover potentially interesting insights that may result in supporting or contradictory findings in perceptions.

4. Future research may focus on the cultural characteristics that manifest in students' social behaviours. Although the students' in this study acknowledged that learner-centred learning developed their positive attitudes towards learning, increased their motivation and responsibility, there were cultural influences that prevented them from fully engaging in the learning process. More observations over a longer period of time may be useful in confirming and providing more information on these cultural impacts so that solutions can be put forward.
5. A further study may be needed to expand the understanding of others factors or reasons for the practical difficulties which emerged in this study. This type of study could bring some practical values for the development of the LCA.

## **6.6 Concluding remarks**

Thailand's national educational reform emphasises the implementation of learner-centred instruction as central to the development of the country's debilitated quality of education. This study arose from the concerns about the adaptation of western-originated learner-centred teaching and learning in a Thai context. Phungphol (2005) branded the reform as ambitious since the far-reaching goals to change Thailand's prevalent traditional teacher-centred form of teaching to a more learner-centred have brought about changes in many aspects, especially with regard to teaching and learning practices. This study was an attempt to investigate Thai students' perceptions when a change to the LCA occurred in their classroom. Through the use of mixed-methods study, the experience of the LCA produced a positive effect on Thai university students in the study. The students claimed that a learner-centred classroom environment had made them feel involved, respected and motivated. However, there were also underlying issues that might stand in the way of appropriating learner-centred instruction in the classroom. This research found that hierarchical relations and social harmony were present as complicating factors in the process of transitioning to a more learner-centred education. Moreover, practical challenges, such as students' maturity and readiness and teacher's learner-centred pedagogical knowledge, created some boundaries for the students to fully engage in active learning. This research has identified that the LCA has some potential in the Thai and similar contexts although there are certain contextual issues that need to be taken into consideration. It is hoped that, through reviewing this research, readers might use the findings to compare and reflect on their own context and educational practices.

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## Appendices

### Appendix A: Questionnaire: English

#### Questionnaire on students' attitude towards learner-centred approach

The purpose of this questionnaire is to obtain your views and opinions about the learner-centred approach. Use the scale below to indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree about specific aspects of your course. Please read each statement carefully and then tick (✓) the number that best describes how you feel.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	No opinion	Agree	Strongly agree
1. I like a course on which which I am allowed to offer my input to the content.					
2. I enjoy expressing my alternative perspectives where appropriate.					
3. I like offering my input on assignment.					
4. I like offering my input on how much weight the assignments are worth.					
5. I prefer assignments that are open-ended (e.g. projects) and/or allow for more than one right answer.					
6. I like a course on which I am allowed to negotiate classroom management policies with the teacher.					
7. I like a course on which I am allowed to negotiate assessment methods with the teacher.					
8. I like a course on which I am allowed to negotiate assignment deadlines with the teacher.					
9. I feel I have more control of my own learning if I am involved in making decision regarding the course (e.g. content, methodology, assessment).					
10. I like course content that allows me to practice using inquiry or ways of thinking instead of only memorising it for examinations.					
11. I enjoy the content more when I understand why I have to learn it.					
12. I like the course content that allows me to build discipline-specific learning methodologies. (e. g., how to interpret a written passage)					
13. I like the course content that allows me to develop other learning skills (e.g. critical thinking, communication, presentations).					
14. I enjoy creating new knowledge by connecting new information from the course content to my prior experiences.					
15. I believe I can apply the course content to other subjects or content in the future.					

16. I like a teacher who creates an environment that makes me want to learn.					
17. I prefer a teacher who acts as a facilitator and allows me to play an active and inquiring role than one who acts like the sole expert in the class.					
18. I like a teacher who creates an environment that motivates students to accept responsibility for their own learning.					
19. I enjoy activities in which I can interact with the material, teacher, and fellow students.					
20. I like being inspired and encouraged to take ownership of my own learning.					
21. I prefer a course on which the teacher and I share responsibility for achieving stated learning objectives to a course on which the teacher takes all the responsibility.					
22. I like a teacher who helps me develop skills for future learning (e.g., the ability to work in groups).					
23. I like being encouraged to become a self-directed, life-long learner.					
24. I like being made aware of my abilities to learn.					
25. I enjoy assessing my own learning (knowing how much I've learned and what else I need to learn)					
26. I like taking charge of my own learning (knowing how to manage your own learning needs, activities and goals)					
27. I prefer a course that integrates student assessment within the learning processes to a course on which student assessment happens only in examinations at the end of the course.					
28. I prefer formative assessment with constructive feedback from the teacher throughout the course					
29. I find it useful if I am given multiple opportunities to learn from my mistakes during the course.					
30. I enjoy engaging in self-assessment.					
31. I enjoy engaging in peer assessment.					
32. I prefer a course that encourages students to justify their answers when they don't agree with the teacher's answers.					

Are there any other comments you wish to make?

.....

.....

**Background Information:** Please mark (X) for the one that applies to you

1. Age : \_\_\_\_\_
2. Gender:      Male            Female

Thank you for your cooperation.

## Appendix B: Questionnaire: Thai

### แบบสอบถามทัศนคติของนักศึกษาต่อการจัดการเรียนการสอนที่เน้นผู้เรียนเป็นศูนย์กลาง

แบบสอบถามนี้มีวัตถุประสงค์เพื่อสำรวจความคิดเห็นเกี่ยวกับการเรียนการสอนที่นักศึกษาเข้าเรียน

กรุณาเลือกคำตอบของคำถามด้านล่างเพียงคำตอบเดียวเพื่อแสดงว่าเห็นด้วยหรือไม่เห็นด้วยมากน้อยเพียงใดกับแง่มุมต่างๆ ในวิชาที่เรียน

กรุณายืนยันข้อความแต่ละข้อโดยละเอียด และวงกลม (✓) ตัวเลือกที่อธิบายความรู้สึกของคุณได้ดีที่สุด

	ไม่เห็นด้วยอย่างยิ่ง	ไม่เห็นด้วย	ไม่มีความเห็น	เห็นด้วย	เห็นด้วยอย่างยิ่ง
1.ฉันชอบวิชาที่เปิดโอกาสให้ฉันนำเสนอความคิดเห็นเกี่ยวกับเนื้อหาวิชาที่เรียนได้					
2. ฉันชอบแสดงความคิดเห็นมุมมองทางเลือกอื่นๆ ที่แตกต่างออกไปเมื่อมีโอกาสที่เหมาะสม					
3. ฉันชอบเสนอความคิดเห็นว่าอยากให้งานที่ได้รับมอบหมายนั้นเป็นแบบไหน					
4. ฉันชอบเสนอความคิดเห็นว่างานที่ได้รับมอบหมายนั้นควรมีค่าน้ำหนักคะแนนเท่าใด					
5.ฉันชอบงานเก็บคะแนนแบบเปิดกว้าง)เช่นการทำโครงการ(และ/หรืองานที่มีคำตอบที่ถูกต้องมากกว่าคำตอบเดียว					
6.ฉันชอบวิชาที่เปิดโอกาสให้ฉันแลกเปลี่ยนข้อเสนอและความคิดเห็นกับครูผู้สอนเกี่ยวกับระเบียบในการเข้าชั้นเรียนได้					
7. ฉันชอบวิชาที่ที่เปิดโอกาสให้ฉันเจรจาต่อรองวิธีการประเมินผลกับครูผู้สอนได้					
8. ฉันชอบวิชาที่เปิดโอกาสให้ฉันเจรจาต่อรองเกี่ยวกับกำหนดเวลาการส่งงานกับครูผู้สอนได้					
9.ฉันรู้สึกว่าการจัดการดูแลการเรียนของตนเองได้ดีกว่าหากฉันมีส่วนร่วมในการตัดสินใจที่เกี่ยวข้องกับวิชาที่เรียน )เช่น เนื้อหา, วิธีการเรียนการสอน และการประเมินผลการเรียน (					
10.ฉันชอบเนื้อหาวิชาที่เอื้อให้ฉันได้ฝึกฝนการตั้งคำถามหรือวิธีการคิดแทนที่จะท่องจำเพื่อไปสอบเพียงอย่างเดียว					
11. ฉันสนุกกับเนื้อหาที่เรียนมากขึ้นเมื่อเข้าใจว่าเพราะเหตุใดฉันจึงต้องเรียนวิชานี้					
12.ฉันชอบเนื้อหาวิชาที่เอื้อให้ฉันได้ฝึกทักษะการเรียนรู้เฉพาะด้าน)เช่น วิธีการตีความจากงานเขียน เป็นต้น (					
13.ฉันชอบเนื้อหาวิชาที่เอื้อให้ฉันพัฒนาทักษะการเรียนรู้ด้านอื่นๆ)เช่นทักษะการคิดอย่างมีวิจารณญาณ ทักษะการสื่อสาร และทักษะการนำเสนอข้อมูล(					
14.ฉันชอบสร้างความรู้ใหม่โดยการนำข้อมูลใหม่ๆจากเนื้อหาวิชาที่เรียนมาเชื่อมโยงกับประสบการณ์ที่มีอยู่ก่อนหน้านี้					
15.ฉันเชื่อว่าฉันสามารถนำเนื้อหาวิชาที่เรียนไปประยุกต์ใช้กับวิชาอื่นๆหรือเนื้อหาอื่นๆ ในอนาคตได้					
16. ฉันชอบผู้สอนที่สร้างบรรยากาศแวดล้อมที่ทำให้ฉันรู้สึกอยากเรียน					

17.ฉันชอบผู้สอนที่ปฏิบัติตนเป็นเหมือนผู้เชื่ออำนวยความสะดวกและยอมให้ฉันมีบทบาทในการทำกิจกรรมและถามคำถามมากกว่าผู้สอนที่ปฏิบัติตนเหมือนผู้เชี่ยวชาญแต่เพียงผู้เดียวในชั้นเรียน					
18.ฉันชอบผู้สอนที่สร้างบรรยากาศแวดล้อมที่สนใจให้ผู้เรียนตระหนักถึงความรับผิดชอบในการเรียนของตนเอง					
19.ฉันชอบกิจกรรมที่ฉันสามารถมีปฏิสัมพันธ์กับผู้สอนเพื่อนักศึกษาและสื่อวัสดุอุปกรณ์ได้					
20.ฉันชอบที่จะได้รับแรงบันดาลใจและการกระตุ้นให้เกิดความรับผิดชอบในการเรียนของตนเอง					
21.ฉันชอบวิชาที่ผู้สอนและฉันร่วมแบ่งปันความรับผิดชอบเพื่อให้อ่านเรียนเป็นไปตามวัตถุประสงค์การเรียนรู้ที่กำหนดไว้มากกว่าวิชาที่ผู้สอนเป็นผู้รับผิดชอบทุกอย่างเอง					
22.ฉันชอบผู้สอนที่ช่วยให้ฉันพัฒนาทักษะสำหรับการเรียนรู้ในอนาคต) เช่น ความสามารถในการทำงานเป็นกลุ่ม (					
23.ฉันชอบที่จะได้รับการกระตุ้นส่งเสริมให้เป็นผู้เรียนที่กำหนดรูปแบบการเรียนด้วยตนเองได้และเกิดการเรียนรู้ตลอดชีวิต					
24. ฉันชอบที่จะได้รับการกระตุ้นเตือนให้ตระหนักถึงความสามารถของตนเองในการเรียนรู้					
25.ฉันชอบประเมินการเรียนของตนเองรู้ว่าฉันเรียนไปมากเท่าใดและมีอะไรที่จำเป็นต้องเรียนรู้เพิ่มอีก(					
26.ฉันชอบที่จะจัดการดูแลการเรียนของตนเอง)รู้ว่าจะจัดการกับความต้องการกิจกรรมและเป้าหมายในการเรียนอย่างไร(					
27.ฉันชอบวิชาที่ผสมผสานการประเมินผู้เรียนในระหว่างเรียนมากกว่าวิชาที่มีการประเมินผู้เรียนในการสอบเมื่อจบวิชาเท่านั้น					
28.ฉันชอบให้มีการประเมินผลในระหว่างเรียนควบคู่ไปกับการให้ข้อมูลย้อนกลับ)ที่ออกแบบ(จากผู้สอนที่ฉันสามารถนำไปพัฒนาตนเองได้ในตลอดภาคการศึกษา					
29.ฉันรู้สึกว่าเป็นประโยชน์มากหากฉันได้รับโอกาสหลายๆครั้งที่จะเรียนรู้จากความผิดพลาดของตนเองที่เกิดขึ้นระหว่างเรียน					
30. ฉันชอบมีส่วนร่วมในการประเมินตนเอง					
31.ฉันชอบมีส่วนร่วมในการประเมินโดยกลุ่มเพื่อน					
32.ฉันชอบวิชาที่ส่งเสริมให้ผู้เรียนมีโอกาสพิสูจน์ให้เห็นว่าคำตอบของพวกเขาถูกต่องเมื่อไม่เห็นด้วยกับคำตอบของผู้สอน					

มีความคิดเห็นอื่นๆ เพิ่มเติมอีกหรือไม่

.....  
 .....

**ข้อมูลทั่วไป:** กรุณากากบาท (X) ช่องที่ตรงกับตนเอง

1. อายุ : \_\_\_\_\_

2. เพศ :  ชาย  หญิง

ขอบคุณสำหรับความร่วมมือนะคะ

## **Appendix C: Interview protocol**

1. Could you describe your overall experiences of the Introduction to Literature course this semester?
2. Have you ever heard of the term ‘learner-centred approach’?

(Probe: When and where did you hear of it?)

3. According to your understanding, what does the learner-centred approach mean to you?

### **Balance of power**

1. How did you feel when the teacher gave you the opportunity to offer your input concerning the course content, classroom management policies, assessment methods, methods of learning and deadlines in other course?

(Probe: Why did you feel that way?)

2. How did you feel when you were involved with making decision regarding the course (e.g. content, methodology, assessment)?

(Probe: Why did you feel that way?)

### **Function of content**

1. Did the content in this course help you to express your ideas or opinions?

(Probe: If yes, how do you find it? Any challenges?)

2. What do you think about pair work and group work?

**Role of the teacher**

1. Thinking about the teacher's and your role in this course, who played the dominant role in your class?

2. Did you feel that the teacher in this course created an environment that encouraged you to learn?

(Probe: When and how?)

3. Did you enjoy the activities in which you could interact with fellow students, the teacher, and the material?

(Probe: Why or why not?)

**Responsibility for learning**

1. Do you think it is the teacher's responsibility to tell you exactly what to do in your learning process?

(Probe: Why? Why not?)

2. What do you think are your responsibilities as a student?

3. How do you feel about taking more responsibility of your learning?

(Probe: Why do you feel that way? Any challenges? )

**Purpose and processes of evaluation**

1. During the course, did you receive any feedback that helped you to improve, not just to grade your work?

(Probe: What do you think about this feedback that helps you to improve?)

2. Besides the teacher's evaluation, do you think students should evaluate one another's work?

(Probe: Why? Why not)

3. How did you feel when you had to assess your own work?

(Probe: Did you encounter any challenges in assessing your own work? What are they?)

4. How did you feel when you had to assess your peers' work?

(Probe: Did you encounter any challenges in assessing your own work? What are they?)

After this course, do you think you have developed any skills?

After this course, do you think you have become more in charge of your own study?

Do you have anything to add or ask before we finish the interview?

Thank you very much. I appreciate the time you took for this interview

## Appendix D: Sample of an interview

### Transcription System

I- interviewer,

S- student,

[XX] - editor's comments/clarification

- I: What we will talk about today I will ask the Introduction to literature module. First of all, I'd like to ask about your experience of this module ...what they are, for example, what you have learnt and what you did in this module.
- S: In the Introduction to literature module? Well, I learnt short stories, poems.
- I: Do you remember what you learnt for short stories and poems?
- S: Well, short stories were ...er... To Kill a Mocking bird. And for poems, we learnt many of them but what I remember is... what was it... Fear No More?
- I: Yes, Fear No More, Daffodils.
- S: Yes!
- I: Daffodils was also a poem, right?
- S: Yes.
- I: Roses are red. Was Gift Outright a poem? Do you remember?
- S: Gift Outright...I don't remember.
- I: You don't remember. Maybe you weren't present in that lesson. What about the teaching instructions in this module, what were they?
- S: Well, there were group works, that's what I see. Group works and pair works and exchanging opinions.

- I: Were there lectures?
- S: Lectures? Yes, it was explanation but explanation during group work.
- I: OK, I'll ask you about a word, 'learner-centred approach'. Have you ever heard of the term 'learner-centred approach'?
- S: Yes, but never learned in this way.
- I: When did you hear of it?
- S: I heard of it from the school I graduated, secondary school.
- I: Secondary school. If you have to define the word, according to your understanding, what does the learner-centred approach mean to you?
- S: If I have to define it, the learner-centred approach, I think it's a way of learning that puts the importance on learners, students, university students, what they are thinking. Letting students think and teachers further explains.
- I: You said what students are thinking, thinking about the content or what?
- S: Yes, the content, what they are thinking and then teachers explains whether what they think is right or not. If it's not right, what they have to improve and give guidance.
- I: So you mean what students know and let them say so that teachers can add? Is that what you are saying? Do I understand you correctly?
- S: Yes, yes.
- I: Now I'll ask about your experience in this module. I noticed you were given the opportunities to express your opinions. Like the content, how did you feel when you were able to offer your input concerning the content?
- S: I felt very OK with learning like this.

- I: OK means?
- S: Because ... because when we think, like a story, each of us will interpret it differently. For example, if it's a poem, each person will interpret it differently because reading a poem depends on the words the poet uses; sometimes on which an emotion state the reader is in ... like if someone is sad, when she/he reads a poem, she/he will feel it's a sad poem. The poet may convey it to be happy but if the reader is sad, the poem may be interpreted as sad accordingly. Therefore, when the teacher allowed us to share our thoughts on a poem, there were many interpretations and there were no right or wrong answers.
- I: What about when the teacher allowed you to pick stories to read instead determining that for you?
- S: Well, I liked it. It looked like being forced .Because if I was forced to do something, I would want to read or do it less. If I am allowed to choose, I will be more interested.
- I: OK, I observed that the teacher also asked for your opinions about the portions of marks. How did you feel about it?
- S: I also liked it because marks in different assignments, when the teacher assigned something, we had different expertise in different tasks. We should be allowed to make our choice. For instance, some people were good at projects, group works, and reports. When we are allowed to discuss and make our choice, the portions of marks would be suitable for everybody, the marks would be appropriate.
- I: What about the deadlines? I noticed that you could negotiate with the teacher. How did you feel about this?
- S: This one I felt, negotiation of the deadline? I liked it because some teachers give assignments and pre-determined deadlines. Sometimes students have things to do which we know that we won't be able to finish the assignment in time. When we were given the chance to choose the deadline, we would know when it could be finished. If we agreed on this with the teacher, then marks would not be deducted from us because we couldn't hand in work in time.
- I: OK. And on the whole, talk about everything, how do you feel when you are involved with making decision regarding the course, like the content, methodology, assessment?
- S: Involved with making decision regarding the course?
- I: Yes, for example, in this module, you were involved in making decisions regarding marks, contents and deadlines. How do you feel?

- S: I feel better about this module because I don't like literature. When I was allowed to make decisions about the content, rules, it made me want to learn more. Maybe not a lot but I felt more positive about the module because I don't normally like literature or history. When I could negotiate, I could choose, choose stories I liked, I felt more positive with the module.
- I: How did it make you feel when you said you felt better with the module?
- S: It, it ...felt I liked it. It's like it made it fun to learn, made me want to come to learn each week.
- I: And when you negotiated with the teacher, could you do it comfortably or did you feel shy or anything?
- S: In the beginning, I felt shy because I never negotiated with teachers like this. Like deadlines, usually teachers just make those decisions. When negotiating, initially I was afraid there would be problems or I would be reprimanded. But when it was like this every week, it became a norm.
- I: Why did you think there would be problems or you'd be reprimanded?
- S: Because when I was in high school, I negotiated deadlines, also sometimes in my first year, the teachers answered back that 'you can't finish in time for this little task?'. But they didn't think of how many subjects I had to study.
- I: OK, now, I'll talk about the content in this module. I noticed that the content in this module allowed you to express your thoughts. Like you said before that you had to read and interpret with your friends, did you like the content in this module which allowed you to express your thoughts rather than memorizing it.
- S: Content which allowed me to express my thoughts... I think it's normal because in everyday conversation, I use thinking. I don't remember and talk to them. So when I learn, it has to be in line with my daily life, which I have to think and talk simultaneously.
- I: In that case, can I say that you felt positive with the content that allows you to think?
- S: Yes.
- I: Then were there any challenges for you with the content in this module allowed you to express your thoughts?
- S: Challenges?
- I: Yes, challenges in the content that you have to think.

- S: Mostly it's about words because people use words differently. For this module, some people use difficult vocabulary in order to communicate, phrases. I'm not good at that so it becomes difficult for me.
- I: So you mean the language used by writers?
- S: Yes.
- I: OK, now I noticed you worked in groups a lot, what do you think about pair works and group works?
- S: I liked it. I liked it more than working on my own because, first, I know my friends well and, hence, we could get the job done quicker. And I wasn't shy to express my thoughts to my friends because we were close. I could say whatever I wanted. My friends listened. It was an easy and quick exchange.
- I: Talking with friends in groups, do you think you learn anything from this?
- S: Yes... er... we came from different backgrounds. A friend came from one background, another friend from another, so they had different ways of thinking. When we worked together and shared ideas, they would be different. We could then see things from different angles.
- I: If you compare when working in groups with friends and sharing opinions and when the teacher lectures. Which do you think you can learn more?
- S: Err, knowledge, from working with friends.
- I: Why is that?
- S: Because in the real world, for example, if the teacher lectures, she/he may get from only one book. But in reality, we have to meet a lot of people. Listening to various people makes us well-rounded.
- I: Apart from the knowledge, do you think you learn any skills from working in groups?
- S: I learned how to work systematically because working in groups requires a plan, who does what first. For example, when there were tasks that required 4 duties, the word master, those things, we could say who came first, prioritise and then assign work and we could finish it quickly.
- I: Do you think you can apply the content in this course to use in your daily life?

- S: Err, the content, content, most of the things that can be applied are skills because the content was mostly novels, like To Kill a Mocking bird which was about misjudging people. I learned morals from that but in the end, I need to use the skills. At least I gained the skills in working in groups with friends. As for the content, I learned morals from it. For example, Fear No More, 'Oh, OK. I shouldn't be afraid', that's all I got but mostly thinking skills.
- I: OK, now I'd like ask about the role of the teacher. Think of the teacher's and your role in this course, who do you think plays the dominant role in your class?
- S: Please repeat that.
- I: Think of the teacher's and your role in this course, who plays the dominant role in your class?
- S: Hmm, the students.
- I: What did they do?
- S: Because the stories, usually the teacher provided with worksheet and mostly of the thinking came from students. The teacher only gave us the direction.
- I: Then what do you think was the role of the teacher in this module?
- S: Err, well, the teacher monitored, monitored the time so that we could manage ourselves easily and gave guidance, sometimes not directly but giving hints 'you should do something like this' but as she suggested us to a direction, there were also alternative directions we could choose, there was no fixed direction.
- I: What about in other modules, who do you think should play the dominant role in class?
- S: general modules...other modules
- I: Yes, other modules.
- S: Actually, students should also play the important role in other modules because if teachers only give lectures, this means teachers are important. One teacher may not be able to get message across to each of the 40 students, cannot reach some people or some groups. Those groups would get nothing but if teachers allow students, like how I am learning now, at least 4 people a group, in the end, everyone got to share their thoughts. The teacher was more approachable and she could also respond back to us. Other modules should teach like this.

- I: OK, in this module, did you feel that the teacher in this course created an environment that encouraged you to learn?
- S: Well, mostly it was group work that made me want to learn because I got to see my friends. To be honest, we did make unrelated small talks but we also did our task which made me want to learn.
- I: Anything else?
- S: I liked that ...that she encouraged us to think about our real life, our experiences. I may have experienced something scary but when I talked about it the teacher could turn it into a funny story. Eventually, I forgot about that dreadful story, something like that, so I felt this module was good.
- I: OK, next I will ask about the interaction with friends, the teacher and materials. I noticed that you got to interact with your friends. Did you enjoy it when you could interact with your friends?
- S: Yes, I did because when working in groups, when we had to share our stories, I listened to their stories and sometimes I could tease them later, which was fun.
- I: Did you enjoy the activities in which you could interact with the teacher?
- S: I also enjoyed this because the teacher answered questions that I posed, some teachers will respond to me in a serious way because of the teacher-student status. But the teacher in this module was friendly so I didn't feel scared to ask questions.
- I: What about when you read, interpreted, imagined and linked the story with your real life, did you enjoy these activities?
- S: Well, when I read stories, from the materials, I was worried that I couldn't do it and some stories could be interpreted in various ways. I made wild guesses and when the teacher talked through them, they were not as I thought. It was interesting that she got one interpretation and I got another.
- I: OK, now I'd like to talk about learning responsibility. What do you think it is?
- S: Responsibility? I cannot think of any.
- I: Think of the word, what do you think of?
- S: Responsibility, mostly if the teacher doesn't assign homework, my responsibility is to turn up to class.

- I: Anything else?
- S: Coming to class and doing my best on the day. For example, doing my best for the duty I was assigned in my group. That's one responsibility.
- I: Anything else? Responsibility, coming to class, doing your best on the day. What about outside the classroom, do you have any responsibilities?
- S: Outside the classroom? Hmm, submitting assignments? Hand in assignments and play by the rules in the classroom.
- I: What about revision?
- S: Yes, sometimes.
- I: Whose duty do you think it is to be responsible for your learning?
- S: Students, they have to do that.
- I: How do you feel about taking responsibility of your own learning?
- S: Well, if thinking about the assignments I had to do, initially I felt tired, why there were a lot of work to do. But when I thought hard about it, I think I am lucky to be able to learn. I should do best for my duty here.
- I: Whose duty do you think it is to encourage you to be responsible for your learning?
- S: I have to encourage myself because teachers' duty is only to give guidance. But if I need help and a teacher helps me as much as he/she can but I don't accept it. He/she can do nothing about it.
- I: OK, in this module, did the teacher encourage you to take responsibilities for your own learning?
- S: Yes, but she did not say it directly. Err, for me, the teacher said that my class, generally, didn't do well. This was one of the wake-up call for me because if we weren't really bad, she would not have said it.
- I: Anything else?
- S: And, and the deadlines. Sometimes she would repeatedly reminded us throughout the lesson that when was the deadline and a bit later, she would remind us again. Repeating it made us aware and remember the deadline.

- I: Hmm, OK. I'll ask about comment or feedback that the teacher gave and you can use it to improve your learning. What do you think about this feedback that helps you to improve?
- S: When receiving feedback, I liked it every time because if she didn't say anything, I wouldn't know if I did well. But when I answered, gave presentations or worked and the teacher commented that 'you did this well, you didn't do that well', it helped me to improve a lot next time or in other modules.
- I: So you can apply to other modules?
- S: Yes.
- I: I noticed you were allowed to do assess yourself and peers. Let's talk about self-assessment first. How did you feel when you did self-assessment?
- S: Self-assessment... it was good because people should know about themselves whether they are good. Because some people are full of themselves and give 10, 10, and 10. Were you actually that good? The more you assess yourself, the better you know about yourself. When you know yourself well, it will result in other work because, to do well, you need to be yourself. If I speak in front of the class and I am not myself, I can lose marks on that.
- I: Any challenges in assessing yourself?
- S: Well, the challenge when doing self-assessment is that I don't know myself well enough. Sometimes, a question asks how well you do this and I didn't know.
- I: You mean you don't know how to mark yourself?
- S: Yes, for example, I might speak well. When I spoke, I did it well, I was well prepared but I might busy reciting script and forgot about gestures. When I had to assess myself, 'how did I do' because when I spoke, it was automatic. My body worked automatically and how do I mark myself here?
- I: What about peer assessment?
- S: Peer assessment...
- I: Any challenges?

- S: The difficult thing was I was afraid that I would mark peers too low. My friends assessed themselves and they got certain scores and when I did it, it's too low.
- I: Then how do you feel about peer assessment?
- S: Peer assessment...
- I: Did you like it?
- S: Honestly, I didn't like it because I feel it's not my right to assess them. They have the right to assess themselves and the teacher [has the right to assess]. What I could do was making notes that they did this and that. I could watch and avoid doing what they did wrong but to give them scores for what they did, I felt, was a bit too much for me.
- I: Then do you think students should do self- and peer-assessment or should only teacher do it?
- S: Actually, in the classroom, students should assess themselves and teachers assess them again. But there shouldn't be peer assessment.
- I: Why is that?
- S: Because some people do not like each other and when they don't, the marks will be deducted.
- I: OK, after this course, do you think you have developed any skills?
- S: Well, mainly thinking skills because I got to listen to other people more from the content, listen to opinions more. So after this module, whether in real life or in other modules, I am aware that there will be alternative thoughts, like I have an answer, I will also have an alternative. I got to think more.
- I: what about being in charge of your own study? After this course, do you think you have become more in charge of your own study?
- S: Become more in charge?
- I: Yes, become more in charge of your own study, do you feel you have improved?
- S: Hmm, not a lot.
- I: Why do you feel like that?

- S: Because my responsibility of assignments was still low because there were so many assignments to do. And when there were a lot to do, I felt disheartened so I didn't improve much. And the module itself, I didn't like it from the very beginning so I didn't become more in charge. But if it was, for example, listening and speaking, I may have been more in charge.
- I: I remembered the teacher talked about why you had to take this module. Were you in that lesson?
- S: Yes, I was.
- I: After the teacher talked about that, was your attitude changed?
- S: It changed but not a lot because I don't like it. I asked myself that if I know about the past, can I change anything? It has always been like that. But when I learned, I knew about other cultures. When cultures were involved, it was not just about history. It's tradition and it still exists today. If I'm not interested in things in the past, at least their cultures are still there. It may help me adjust to other cultures when I travel, when I meet foreigners so it changed a bit.
- I: OK, do you have anything to add or ask before we finish the interview?
- S: Not really, I feel many things were appropriate, like the teaching method, group works. Everything was fine because there were only 2 or 4 people in groups. No more than that because more than that would be no different to learning as a whole class.
- I: If, in the future, you can choose to learn by lectures and learning in the LCA, what will you choose?
- S: I want to learn in the LCA because if I learn in lectures, there will be only one thought. But if in small groups and everyone gives a presentation, I'll know everyone's thinking. If there are 40 students like this module, I will get 40 ideas within just 3 hours. And some people's thoughts can change my thoughts, negative to positive.
- I: Anything else?
- S: Well, I'd like to add about the teacher because normally she let us discuss in groups, exchange our ideas and she added to what we said. But, here, I didn't usually hear her thoughts. She just made what my friends said, what I said clearer but what about a grown up's thoughts? We had only kids' opinions but opinions of adults like the teacher, what was she thinking? What was her perspective? I'd like the teacher to add her own thoughts.
- I: Did you ask the teacher at the time?
- S: I didn't because of the time limit. Everything was in a rush, we ran out of time so I didn't get a chance to ask.

I: I think you could have asked her. It would have been useful. If you had enough time, you would have asked?

S: Yes, if we had time, I would have asked what she feared of, what she thought about it. What she thought about Daffodils and how she felt? Grown-ups may think differently to us. We are young, we are happy with our life but in an adult's perspective, do they think this poem is too fanciful. Can someone be that happy?

I: I see, is there anything else?

S: No.

I: Well then, thank you very much for coming today.

## Appendix E: Learning diary

Dear student,

Thank you very much for your help with my research. Here are some suggestions on how to approach the writing of your journal.

1. You can write in Thai if you wish. If you are to write in English, do not worry about grammar or organisation as long as you can express yourself clearly.
2. Carry a small notebook with you so you can make notes about your learning experience whenever you wish.
3. Try to support your account with examples.

Name	Date	Time
1. What did you like about class today (Please describe and provide reasons)		
2. What didn't you like about class today (Please describe and provide reasons)		

3. Is there anything you would like the teacher to do more?

4. Do you have anything to share about the lesson today?

## Appendix F: Sample of a learning diary

### Observation 2: 26 September 2014

Dear student,

Thank you very much for your help with my research. Here are some suggestions on how to approach the writing of your journal.

1. You can write in Thai if you wish. If you are to write in English, do not worry about grammar or organization as long as you can express yourself clearly.
2. Carry a small notebook with you so you can make notes about your learning experience whenever you wish.
3. Try to support your account with examples.

Name: S32	Date	28 September 2014	Time: 19.49
1. What did you like about class today (Please describe and provide reasons)			
I like that the teacher create a good environment in the classroom and she could control her emotion and classroom environment well. The problem that occurred was that students didn't finish their homework. Instead of telling them off, she talked to us which I felt good and impressed very much. Moreover, she organised learning that was fun by using group discussion which helped me understand the content even more.			
2. What didn't you like about class today (Please describe and provide reasons)			
It's not a dislike it but I worried about the teacher's feeling when many students didn't finish their homework.			
3. Is there anything you would like the teacher to do more?			
Nothing.			
4. Do you have anything to share about the lesson today?			
Like I said, working in groups requires understanding from both parties.			

## Appendix G: Observation transcript

### Lesson transcript of 15 August 2014 (1<sup>st</sup> observation)

**Lesson duration:** 95 minutes

**Lesson topic:** Course orientation

**Student number:** 37

**Overview:** This lesson provided a general introduction to the module. The teacher introduced students to the content that was required by the course description. Students were then invited to offer their opinions regarding the course (e.g. content, methodology, assessment). After that, students were introduced to a short poem, its meaning and structure. Finally, students were asked to create a similar poem as a group and shared it with the whole class.

Time	Activity	Teacher –Student Activity 15 August 2014	Researcher’s observation	Learner- centered Component	Time spent (minutes)
0.28	Class begins	T introduced Ss to the module explaining the name, code and main topics. Students listened to the T.	Ss listened to the T and looked at their tentative course syllabus.	Administrative work	0.37
1.05	T and Ss determined attendance.	T invited Ss to give their input on whether to give marks on attendance, to which Ss agreed. T then asked how many marks Ss wanted for this. When Ss said 50 out of a total of 100, T provoked them to think about the marks they would have left for other parts of the module. Ss then proposed 35, 25 and 10. Finally, the majority of Ss agreed on 10 marks for attendance.	Ss seemed to be eager to give their input on this matter by shouting out their ideas. Though they did not take it seriously in the beginning, they could offer reasonable marks in the end.	BOP2 BOP4 BOP6	2.0
3.05	T and Ss determined how marks	T negotiated with Ss on assignments and exam marks. T first suggested two options: (1) having only mid-term and final exams without any	Ss listened carefully and paid careful attention at this stage. Many students actively	BOP2 BOP3 BOP7	4.02

	should be collected and how many marks should be allocated for assignments and exams	assignments, (2) having quizzes for the 3 main topics without an exam. When a student repeated the word 'no exam' with surprise, T then provided Ss with another option which was to have 3 quizzes and a final exam. Ss said no to 20 marks each quiz so T gave another alternative which was to have marks for assignment, quizzes and the final exam. Most Ss agreed on the last option.	offered their input by saying their thoughts out loud. They were able to voice their concern and express their disagreement throughout the process		
7.07	T asked Ss they method they preferred to work with.	T invited Ss to come up with the way they would like to work: in pairs or in groups. Mixed responses were received so T invited Ss to vote. Half of Ss voted for groups. T then asked Ss how many people they wanted in a group. A student shouted 6 and T then pointed out that a group should not consist of more than 4 members according to some studies. Ss accepted that and, in the end, they were content with working in pairs or in a group of 3. Considering the number of Ss, T finally gave Ss the choice of working in pairs or in a group of 3. After that, T gave Ss time to find their pairs or group mates and write their names on a piece of paper for T for record.	Ss were seen to be eager to voice their choices by engaging in the negotiation with the T. They were seen discussing with their peers and some also provided reasons for their choices.	BOP 2 BOP 9	7.16

14.23	T explained the grading system.	T wrote the grading system on the whiteboard. T explained that this system was determined by the Department of English. Ss listened attentively and some made notes on grading system provided.	Ss accepted the grading system without saying anything.	The grading was non-negotiable because all teachers had to follow the system predetermined by the English department.	1.28
15.51	T collected group names	T urged Ss to quickly finish writing their group names. Some groups gave their names to T while some were still writing.	Administrative work	-	3.62
19.13	T activated students' background knowledge	T activated Ss' prior knowledge by asking them what they know about foreign poets. Ss were quiet. T then encouraged them to think of any foreign writers. A student said Shakespeare. T then elicited what Ss know about Shakespeare by asking whether Shakespeare was a man or a woman. Only 2 Ss answered correctly. When T asked if the rest thought Shakespeare was a woman, Ss admitted that they did not know who he was. T then asked if Ss heard of Romeo and Juliet. Many Ss did and when asked what the story was about, Ss could say that it was a love tragedy Then class engaged in a small discussion about Romeo and Juliet.	Ss were seen quiet at first but they became interested and engaged in the discussion about Shakespeare's gender and Romeo and Juliet even though many accepted they had not heard about Shakespeare before.	FOC1 FOC4	3.14
22.27	T built on students' background knowledge	T gave examples of different types of Thai poems and asked what Ss understood of prose. Ss listened attentively and offered answers when asked.	-	-	2.59

25.26-30.10	T collected group names	T collected group names from Ss and read out each group members' names. Ss listened to their group names.	Administrative work	-	4.44
30.35	T briefly introduced Ss to literature.	T briefly talked about two main literatures (American and British) covered in the course and talked about the nature of the course and that it was an introduction to literature. Ss listened to this. When T asked Ss if they can read a full novel for this course, Ss were momentarily silent and then some Ss asked what they would have to read. T gave an example of Harry Potter. Ss turned to each other to discuss but did not give their decision. T then moved on to talk about a poem she had prepared for this lesson.	Students appeared to uneasy about reading a full novel in English as they instantly erupted in talk with their neighbours once the T talked about it. T probably sensed this and decided to move on to the next task first.	BOP1	2.18
32.53	T introduced Ss to a short poem.	T introduced Ss to a poem starting with 'Roses are red...' and assigned homework for Ss to find the writer of the poem. T then showed pictures of violets as many Ss may not know violets. As she went through the poem, T periodically encouraged Ss to interpret each line of the poem by asking questions, to which Ss tried to answer. T also helped Ss with the grammar aspect of the poem.	-	FOC3	2.09
35.02	T negotiated class rules.	T saw a student was using her phone so she talked to the whole class about whether they agreed not to use their phone when they were in class. The student explained herself that she was looking up the writer of the poem. T then asked her to do it at home.	-	BOP6	1.56
36.56	T showed Ss some parodies of the poem	T read out different parodies of the poem 'Roses are red...' She encouraged Ss to use a dictionary to find meaning of the word 'lumpy' in the first parody poem and the word 'wilting' in the second parody poem. Ss looked for meanings of the words	Ss were seen to be more active in this part of the lesson than the previous part. They seemed eager to find the word meanings in the	ROT1	3.31

		and shouted their answers. T also pointed out a grammar aspect of the line 'and so are you' by giving Ss phrases in Thai and asked them to translate into English. Ss tried to work out the phrase 'and so are you'.	parody poems and said the meanings out loud. They seem engaged to interpret the meaning of different poems and laughed when they found funny parts.		
40.27	T asked Ss to work out how the poem rhyme	T led Ss to read each line out loud and then asked them to find the rhymes in the poem. Ss volunteered answers of the rhymes they found. T led Ss to read again and then assigned them to create a new poem with the groups they formed.	Ss were able to work out the rhyme in the poem and could offer their answers voluntarily.	FOC1 ROT4	7.22
47.49	Ss started their group work	T monitored Ss and walked to each group to offer help. Ss worked with their groups and sought guidance from the T when needed.	Ss seemed to try to work rigorously and helped each other.	ROT1 ROT2 ROT3	16.09
63.58	Ss sought T's approval of their poem	Groups that finished brought their poem to the T for checking and then wrote their work on the whiteboard.	Even though this was a creative task, it seemed Ss still felt that they needed T's approval of their work before going public.	-	19.42
83.00- 92.23	T went through finished poems	T read out each group's poem and reminded Ss that there was no right or wrong answers for this task. Ss listened as the T went through other groups' work.	Ss were seen excited and interested in other groups' work. They laughed and tried to work out the meaning of their friends' work.	BOP5	9.23
92.24	T assigned homework and preparation for next week	T reminded Ss of their homework which was to find the writer of 'Roses are red...'. She then assigned the class captain to arrange the photocopy of the worksheet for next week. T told Ss to read the worksheet and find the names of the poets in the worksheet. T also assigned Ss to find articles about English literature. T asked Ss how long they need to do this task.	Administrative task	-	2.19
94.43	End of class				

**Appendix H: Observation codes based on questionnaire items**

<b>Codes for learner-centred features (for classroom observations)</b>	
<b>Balance of power ( BOF )</b>	
1. Teacher allows students to offer input on the content.	BOP1
2. Teacher allows students to express alternative perspectives where appropriate.	BOP2
3. Teacher allows students to offer input on assignments.	BOP3
4. Teacher allows students to offer input on how much weight the assignments are worth.	BOP4
5. Teacher uses assignments that are open-ended (e.g. projects) and/or allow for more than one right answer.	BOP5
6. Teacher allows students to negotiate classroom management policies with the teacher.	BOP6
7. Teacher allows students to negotiate assessment methods with the teacher.	BOP7
8. Teacher allows students to negotiate assignment deadlines with the teacher.	BOP8
9. Teacher allows students to have more control of their own learning by making decision regarding the course (e.g. content, methodology, assessment).	BOP9
<b>Function of content (FOC)</b>	
10. Students are allowed to practice using inquiry or ways of thinking instead of only memorising it for examinations.	FOC1
11. Students understand why they have to learn the content.	FOC2
12. The course content allows students to build discipline-specific learning methodologies. (e. g., how to interpret a written passage)	FOC3

13. The course content that allows students to develop other learning skills (e.g. critical thinking, communication, presentations).	FOC4
14. Students create new knowledge by connecting new information from the course content to their prior experiences.	FOC5
15. Students can apply the course content to other subjects or content in the future.	FOC6
<b>Role of the teacher ( ROT)</b>	
16. Teacher creates an environment that makes students want to learn.	ROT1
17. Teacher acts as a facilitator and allows students to play an active and inquiring role.	ROT2
18. Teacher creates an environment that motivates students to accept responsibility for their own learning.	ROT3
19. Students interact with the material, teacher, and fellow students.	ROT4
20. Students are inspired and encouraged to take ownership of their own learning.	ROT5
<b>Responsibility for Learning (RFL)</b>	
21. Teacher and students share responsibility for achieving stated learning objectives rather than a course on which the teacher takes all the responsibility.	RFL1
22. Teachers helps students develop skills for future learning (e.g., the ability to work in groups).	RFL 2
23. Students are encouraged to become a self-directed, life-long learner.	RFL 3
24. Students are made aware of their abilities to learn.	RFL 4
25. Students assess their own learning (knowing how much they've learned and what else they need to learn)	RFL 5
26. Students are encouraged to take charge of their own learning (knowing how to manage their own learning needs, activities and goals)	RFL 6

<b>Purpose and process of evaluation (PPE)</b>	
27. Teacher integrates student assessment within the learning processes.	PPE1
28. Teacher offers formative assessment with constructive feedback.	PPE2
29. Students are given multiple opportunities to learn from their mistakes during the course.	PPE3
30. Students engage in self-assessment.	PPE4
31. Students engage in peer assessment.	PPE5
32. Students are encouraged to justify their answers when they don't agree with the teacher's answers.	PPE6

## Appendix I: Informed consent



### Student Consent Form

**Title of Project:** Thai university students' perspectives towards learner-centred approach  
**Researcher:** Rungsima Jeanjaroonsri (r.jeanjaroonsri.newcaslte.ac.uk)  
**Supervisor:** Dr. Mei Lin, Mr. Scott Windeatt

1. Purpose of the study: The purpose of this research is to explore students' perceptions of the learner-centred approach (LCA). In carrying out a mixed-method study, it is hoped that students' perceptions and the factors affecting their perceptions of LCA will be identified.

2. Procedures of the study: The study will be conducted at a university in the east of Thailand. Participants will be a teacher and students enrolled in the Introduction to Literature course and volunteer to be participants. Participants will:

2.1. Be asked to complete a questionnaire at the beginning and the end of the course.

2.2. Be observed and video-recorded in at least five classroom sessions.

2.3. Be asked to write a learning journal reflecting on their experience of the observed classroom sessions.

2.4. Be selected for the audio-recorded interviews at the end of the course.

3. Discomforts and risks: There are no risks in participating in this research beyond those experienced in everyday life. Participation or non-participation will not have any effect on participants' grade for the course. As a participant, you do not have to answer any questions you do not want to answer.

4. Duration/time of the procedures and study: This study will be conducted within a single academic semester during the university's scheduled class times.

5. Statement of confidentiality: All of the information collected during this study, including any information that directly links you to the study, or identify you will be kept confidential. Should you decide not to participate in this study, your grade on the course will neither be affected. And, even if you decide to participate but change your mind, you are free to withdraw from the study at any time. Any coded information that may identify your identity will be destroyed immediately after the thesis defense.

6. Payment for participation: No monetary payment or other incentives will be offered.

7. Right to ask questions: The researcher will be happy to answer any questions concerning this study. You can contact Rungsima Jeanjaroonsri by e-mail: [r.jeanjaroonsri@newcastle.ac.uk](mailto:r.jeanjaroonsri@newcastle.ac.uk) or by telephone at 44 7450 270 299 (UK) and 66 9 8278 8324 (Thailand).

If you agree to take part in this research study and information outlined above, please sign your name and indicate the date below.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Participant Name (Please Print)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Participant Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Person Obtaining Consent

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

