



## Active Learning Management Using Soft Power as a Medium to Develop English-Speaking Skills for Foreigners: A Case Study of English Major at Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University, Chiang Mai Campus

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### Abstract

The objectives of this research were: 1) to study active learning management using soft power as a medium to develop English-speaking skills for foreigners: a case study of an English major at Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University, Chiang Mai Campus; and 2) to propose guidelines for active learning management using soft power as a medium to develop English-speaking skills for foreigners, based on the same case study. The findings revealed that 1) constructivist theory and Bloom's Taxonomy were used to enhance effective learning outcomes for the students. These theories were integrated with active learning strategies to engage students, including study-trip projects with related lesson plans and the Monk Chat MCU project. Soft power, such as culture, was utilized as educational material to create a lively, participatory learning atmosphere where students actively engaged in their education, resulting in increased comprehension and retention of the material. 2) The effectiveness of active learning and teaching using soft power, specifically culture, for developing English-speaking skills among foreigners was demonstrated. This case study highlighted the following key components for success: readiness, skills, foundation, and active learning strategies. The new theoretical knowledge of active learning management using soft power as a medium to develop English-speaking skills for foreigners can be summarized as follows: 1) Readiness: Readiness: The readiness of the Soft Power Institute, using culture as a base for active learning. 2) Skills: Effective teaching skills of instructors. 3). Foundation: The variety of



students' learning goals and prior knowledge impacts the effectiveness of learning outcomes. 4) Active Learning Strategy: Hands-on practice by learners, after being taught and trained in the classroom, involves regularly using those skills in real-life interactions with native speakers. Therefore, the success of active teaching and learning can be successfully supported by the fully integrated four elements: the effectiveness of Active learning management using soft power as a medium to develop English-speaking skills.

**Keywords:** Active Learning; Soft Power; English-Speaking Skills; English Major; Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University, Chiang Mai Campus

## Introduction

Active learning is an educational approach that emphasizes student engagement and participation in the learning process through activities that promote critical thinking and problem-solving. This method contrasts with traditional passive learning, where students primarily receive information from instructors. Strategies such as think-pair-share, case-based learning, and interactive simulations are commonly used to facilitate active learning (Grabinger & Dunlap, 1995: 10-12). Research has shown that active learning improves retention, understanding, and motivation among students. Soft power is the ability of a country to influence others through cultural appeal, political values, and diplomacy rather than coercion or military force. Coined by Joseph Nye, it emphasizes attraction and persuasion over compulsion. Soft power includes cultural exports, international broadcasting, and educational exchanges, which help shape global perceptions and build positive relationships (Pál, n.d.: Online). Utilizing soft power in education helps build strong, positive connections that facilitate deeper and more effective learning. This approach includes fostering a supportive and inclusive classroom environment, encouraging collaborative learning, and integrating culturally relevant materials. Therefore, soft power in supporting learning involves using influence through positive relationships, cul-



tural engagement, and intellectual appeal to enhance educational experiences.

Buddha's teachings are currently attracting attention from all around the world, and as English is the official language, better communication is required. Due to their limited experience and linguistic skills, meditation masters may find it difficult to communicate with outsiders, which makes it challenging for foreigners to completely comprehend the Buddha's teachings. Many foreigners have been unable to fully comprehend the teachings of the Buddha because of this limitation (Kittitaro (Jungwatt), Phra Naraset, 2018: 1-2). English major students at MCU Chiang Mai campus face four medium-level (3.13) English skill problems: listening (3.19), speaking (3.16), writing (3.10), and reading (3.09). Some struggle with understanding and interacting with foreign visitors due to their quick English language and limited vocabulary. Some students claim that their limited vocabulary prevents them from speaking in full, lengthy, or complex phrases, making it difficult for them to converse effectively (Wisutti-chai Chaiyasit, 2018:49-50). Therefore, this article aims to study and suggest the guidelines of active learning management using soft power as a medium to develop English-speaking skills for foreigners: a case study of an English major at Mahachulalongkronrajavidyalaya University, Chiang Mai Campus.

## Objectives

1. To study active learning management using soft power as a medium to develop English-speaking skills for foreigners: a case study of an English major at Mahachulalongkronrajavidyalaya University, Chiang Mai Campus.

2. To propose the guidelines of active learning management using soft power as a medium to develop English-speaking skills for foreigners: a case study of an English major at Mahachulalongkronrajavidyalaya University, Chiang Mai Campus.



## Literature Review

### 1. Active Learning Management

#### 1.1 Definition of Active Learning

Active learning centers around student engagement and emphasizes the process of learning over the content learned. It encourages students to actively think and engage with the material rather than just passively receiving information from the teacher. Research indicates that understanding cannot be effectively conveyed merely through direct instruction; instead, teachers need to challenge students' thinking. In active learning, students play a crucial role in their learning journey by building knowledge through opportunities created by their teachers (Cambridge Assessment International Education, [n.d.]: Online).

Active Learning is a 21st-century teaching approach that shifts the focus from teachers to students, promoting greater student engagement. It involves students actively practicing and thinking through various activities to shape their learning experiences. Through interactions with peers and teachers, students build knowledge by engaging in activities such as listening, talking, reading, writing, and discussing. The approach follows five instructional steps: 1) spark interest, 2) present challenges, 3) facilitate reflective discussions, 4) build knowledge, and 5) encourage collaboration, using methods like role-playing, drama, simulations, case studies, and group work (Phoyen Kamon, 2021: 11).

Active Learning is a contemporary teaching method designed for the 21st century that empowers students to engage actively in their education. It involves organizing activities where students read, write, interact, and analyze issues, fostering advanced thinking skills such as analysis, synthesis, and evaluation. This approach enables learners to generate knowledge and structure their own learning processes, preparing them to be effective participants in the modern world (Kuha, A., & Puti S., & Nochi, H., 2019: 2).

Active Learning is the learning that promotes participating in learning which will occur when learners' thoughts or behaviors have been changed through direct experiences from interactions and the environment (Phra



Chatsaphon Surapanyo, 2021:7).

In conclusion, active Learning emphasizes active student engagement and the learning process itself rather than just the content. It encourages students to actively think, interact, and practice through various activities, enhancing their learning experiences. This approach incorporates advanced thinking skills and a structured process involving sparking interest, presenting challenges, and fostering collaboration. By enabling students to generate and organize their own knowledge, Active Learning prepares them to effectively participate in the modern world and adapt to their environments.

## 1.2 Active Learning Management

### 1.2.1 Six Levels of Learning to Structure the Learning Outcomes

McGrae (2019: online) Bloom's taxonomy (1956) of different objectives and capacities has six learning levels that promote learning outcomes; 1) Remembering: such as pulling up relevant data 2) Understanding: this includes understanding and making meaning of things. 3) Applying: using what one has learnt 4) Analysing: splitting data into its elements 5) Evaluating: such as forming conclusions on data or concepts 6) Making: this includes brainstorming. Additionally, Shabatura (2022: n.d.) clarified that these six levels can be used to organize the lessons, exams, and learning objectives for your course.

### 1.2.2 Key Elements of Active Learning

Key Elements of Active Learning at UC Santa Barbara Instruction Development were divided into five topics; 1) Creating a welcoming culture will help pupils feel valued and accepted. 2) Encourage participation from the class by using the subject that was discussed. 3) Request and incorporate student material contributions: Conduct a brainstorming session and survey the students. 4) Encourage students to consider their learning process 5) Classroom logistics: Consider everyone and everything in terms of time and space (Barbara, n.d.: online). Constructivism and constructive alignment connect students as active learners and emphasize the teacher's role as an organizer of learning activities that push students' boundaries intellectually (Bosanquet, n.d.: online).



In summary, Bloom’s taxonomy outlines six levels of learning—Remembering, Understanding, Applying, Analyzing, Evaluating, and Creating—that guide the structuring of lessons, exams, and learning objectives. Active learning at UC Santa Barbara emphasizes creating a supportive environment, fostering class participation, incorporating student contributions, reflecting on learning, and managing classroom logistics. This approach connects with constructivism and constructive alignment, highlighting the teacher’s role in facilitating intellectual growth and active engagement.

### 1.3 Benefits and Challenges of Active Learning in Language Acquisition

#### 1.3.1 The Benefits of Active Learning in Language Acquisition

Based on Squidll Language Learning (2023), active learning has the following advantages: 1) it boosts your motivation and engagement in the learning process. 2) Communication skills are also enhanced by active learning. 3) Additionally, you can practice your language skills in a supportive and safe setting, which gives you a boost in confidence. 4) It also contributes to the long-term maintenance of language abilities. Moreover, Natthakit Nata & Ketvirun Tungsirivat (2017) stated that the four fundamental components of active learning are speaking, listening, writing, reading, and additionally thinking and reflection.

Therefore, active learning aids language acquisition by involving students in educational activities that enhance their communication skills. Consistent practice helps maintain language proficiency and boosts confidence. The four language development skills are speaking, listening, writing, and reading. Active learning allows learners to apply knowledge gained through experiences and active engagement in the learning process.

#### 1.3.2 The Challenges of Active Learning in Language Acquisition

According to Atwood (2022) in environments that promote active learning, educators create and support educational opportunities. However, the breakdown of barriers to active learning is as follows: 1 Student-centered challenge: instructor’s lack of requisite abilities 2) Difficulties with Instructors



and Institutions: Providing assistance and getting past early opposition 3) Overall Difficulties: Students are working more. Moreover, Rodriguez (2023) negative aspects of active learning 1) Being adaptable and spontaneous is crucial: Most of the time, traditional lesson plans cannot handle last-minute questions from students. 2) It might be challenging for children to understand knowledge if they are presented with too much of it at once. 3) Distraction control: Younger students in particular require a teacher's constant attention since they become easily sidetracked from their work.

To sum up, active learning in language acquisition presents challenges such as managing distractions, being flexible, and dealing with information overload. These issues can be challenging for educators and educational institutions without the necessary experience, making it crucial to explore solutions to these challenges.

## 2. Soft Power

### 2.1 The Definition of Soft Power

According to Tunyaluk, the term "soft power" refers to the use of the authority that permits others to carry out the will of the power user without the need for coercion (Tunyaluk Roongsangjun, 2023: 89). Furthermore, Piti Sriseangnam described how Joseph Nye, a Scholar of Political Science, developed the concept of soft power, classifying the three sources of soft power into the following categories: 1) Culture: A nation's culture has a greater potential of becoming a soft power of other nations if it is in line with their interests and values. 2) Political ideals: A nation's soft power in other countries is likely to grow if its political ideals coincide with those of those other nations. 3) Foreign Policy: There will be few opportunities to develop soft power if a nation adopts an aggressive, insincere, ineffective, and unresponsive foreign policy (Piti Sriseangnam, 2022: online).

In conclusion, soft power refers to the ability to persuade others to accept and want what you want, without appearing under pressure. Joseph Nye, a scholar of Political Science, coined the term to describe the use of per-



suasion rather than coercion to achieve desired outcomes. He identified three sources of soft power: foreign policy, political values, and culture. The power user attracts attention and wins favor, allowing them to do as they please.

## 2.2 Explanation of Soft Power and Its Role in Educational Contexts

Soft power is the ability to draw attention to innovations in learning management and encourage engagement to bring about changes in practice and thought (Wichai Wongyai & Marut Patpho 2020:3) Panus Junsrithong (2022:34) states that values and cultures can be extended, and spread, and preserved through the use of soft power in education by imparting knowledge using a systematic approach to teaching. It's arguably one of the most significant worldwide instruments for influencing others' actions or defining one's goals.

Soft power in educational settings is an effective tool that promotes **learning advancements**, **cultural exchange**, and **language acquisition**. Studying abroad exposes students to diverse cultures, ideologies, and perspectives, fostering understanding and empathy. Mastering a second language also removes barriers to cooperation and communication between cultures, making it an essential resource in education.

### 3 Overview of MCU Chiang Mai and its English program

(MCU, Chiang Mai Campus (2022) Buddhist Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University (MCU) was founded by His Majesty King Rama the V of Thailand, to provide Buddhist monks and laypeople with access to higher education. The four missions of the MCU are as follows: 1) to grow and produce its graduates; 2) to conduct research that contributes to the body of knowledge and academic Buddhism; 3) to advance scholarly services for society and Buddhism; and 4) to support and produce study-appropriate educational materials for the preservation of art and culture Wisuttichi Chaiyasit (2018: 44-45) Both ordinary people and monastic English majors at MCU are required to have a solid understanding of Buddhism and its culture. When foreign guests arrive at the temples, English majors should be great hosts, conveying the main lesson of the Buddha





and/or other important teachings and answering all of their questions. By then, tourists can clearly understand Buddhism and culture. This is just another way that Buddhism is supported and promoted. English majors can also improve their language skills in speaking, listening, reading, and writing to help them communicate with people from other countries. Moreover, it contributes to the promotion of Thailand's cultural and Buddhist tourism attributes, which greatly attract foreign tourists.

4. Active Learning Management Using Soft Power as a Medium to Develop English-Speaking Skills for Foreigners: A Case Study of English Major at Mahachulalongkrajavidyalaya University, Chiang Mai Campus

#### 4.1 Active Learning Management Techniques

Oral presentations are essential for students to practice speaking, reading, writing, listening, and other language system abilities, such as vocabulary, grammar, discourse, and phonology. They also allow them to share their knowledge and thoughts with others, furthering their professional development. Practice makes perfect, and group work allows students to learn new things in an enjoyable setting. The concept of “unlimited learning” promotes independence in studying. To improve oral presentation skills, students should focus on several distinct elements and practice giving oral presentations. This practice can increase confidence and generate novel concepts, as they gain knowledge through reasoning (Phra Natthakit Kittiyano, 2020a:58-59). Bloom's Taxonomy's six learning levels are used in student-centered active learning strategies, which involve students applying and analyzing their learning to assess and produce outcomes, with instructors providing opportunities and guidance to facilitate these processes.

Active learning, as outlined in 5 Key Elements of Active Learning, involves group work to exchange ideas and information, creating an environment where students feel free to learn. A friendly and well-organized classroom encourages unlimited learning, with the saying “practice makes perfect” describing how physical activity can improve content retention. Students should be en-

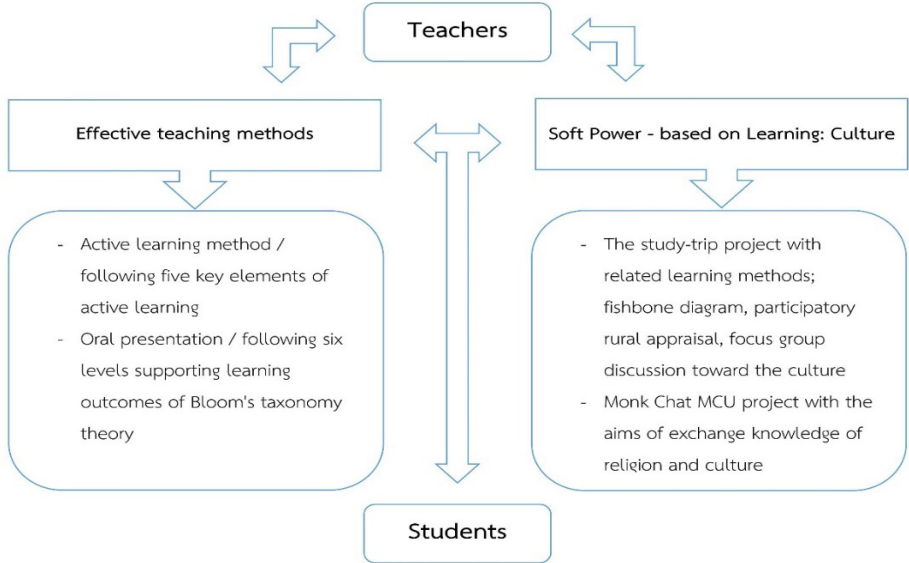


couraged to contribute to the subject matter and reflect on their learning. An active learning strategy aims to increase participation, engagement, and motivation, reducing stress levels for both teachers and students. This approach fosters a sense of freedom and openness to learning (Sitompul, D. R P. & Sihombing, P., 2018, April) Chitnarong lamsamang (2015) states that active learning is a student-centered approach that involves students in educational activities and uses various instructional tactics to help them apply their learning in various contexts. Teachers provide feedback and guidance, using Constructivism theory to ensure students are well-prepared for the real world. This approach fosters continuous learning and development.

#### 4.2 The Sample Project and Related Teaching Plans

Wisuttichai Chaiyasit's (2018) research focused on improving the English skills of English major students at MCU Chiang Mai to communicate with tourists about Buddhism and Culture. The study employed five learning activity plans: Fishbone diagram, Rural Appraisal Through Participation, Study vacation, Discussions with Monks, and Study trip project. Through motivation, enthusiasm, and firsthand experience, students gained self-assurance and competency to converse in English about Buddhism and culture, enhancing their ability to share their knowledge with tourists. In addition, Wisuttichai Chaiyasit & Phramaha Angkan Yanamethi (2019), who studied "A study-trip project on Thai history and English instruction for third-year English majors at Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University, Chiang Mai campus" was highly successful. The Monk Chat MCU Project promotes Buddhism through discussion, question-and-answer sessions, and presentations, and offers a meditation retreat for monastic students to practice English and exchange knowledge about religion, culture, and other relevant subjects. (Weerayut Phongsiri, 2017). Therefore, the Monk Chat MCU Project aims to spread Buddhism and culture globally, support academic Buddhist service, and enhance students' English skills while facilitating knowledge exchange with foreigners. Therefore, Buddhism and culture have been utilized as an educational tool to enhance English skills for English major students, par-

ticularly in communication with tourists. The Study-Trip Project and Monk Chat MCU Project demonstrate the integration of teaching methods. Dogani, B. (2023) highlights the benefits of active learning, including increased student enthusiasm and involvement, which leads to greater interest and engagement in the subject matter shown in Figure 1 below:



**Figure 1:** The Processes of Active Learning Management Using Soft Power as a Medium to Develop English-Speaking Skills for Foreigners: A Case Study of English Major at Mahachulalongkrajavidyalaya University, Chiang Mai Campus

**Conclusion**

1. Active learning management using soft power as a medium to develop English-speaking skills for foreigners: a case study of an English major at Mahachulalongkrajavidyalaya University, Chiang Mai Campus revealed that constructivist theory and Bloom’s Taxonomy were used to enhance effective learning outcomes for the students. These theories were integrated with active



learning strategies to engage students in learning, including study-trip projects with related lesson plans and the Monk Chat MCU project. Soft power, such as culture, was used as an educational material to create a lively, participatory learning atmosphere where students actively participate in their education, resulting in increased comprehension and retention of the material. Techniques such as Interactive Techniques, Problem-Based Learning (PBL), Flipped Classroom, Immediate Feedback, Technology Integration, Hands-On Activities, Peer Teaching, Self-Assessment and Reflection, Case Studies, and Active Listening and Questioning were employed to improve their English language skills. Students also shared information and cultural practices with foreigners through discussions, Q&A sessions, and presentations about monastic life, Buddhism, and other related topics. Therefore, to help its English major students improve their English-speaking abilities, Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University, Chiang Mai Campus utilizes soft power as an effective educational tool, fostering cultural exchange and language education.

2. Guidelines of active learning management using soft power as a medium to develop English-speaking skills for foreigners: a case study of an English major at Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University, Chiang Mai Campus revealed that the effectiveness of active learning and teaching using soft power, specifically culture, for developing English-speaking skills among foreigners. This case study highlights the following key components for success: readiness, skills, foundation, and active learning strategies.

1) Readiness: The readiness of the Soft Power Institute, using culture as a base for active learning, must facilitate the educational process and serve as a valuable instrument for active learning.

2) Skills: Effective teaching skills of instructors, their knowledge and understanding of the material, the implementation of active learning and teaching processes according to plan, and the ability to adapt these processes to immediate situations are crucial. Additionally, integrating knowledge with active learning processes to accommodate students' diverse interests and prior



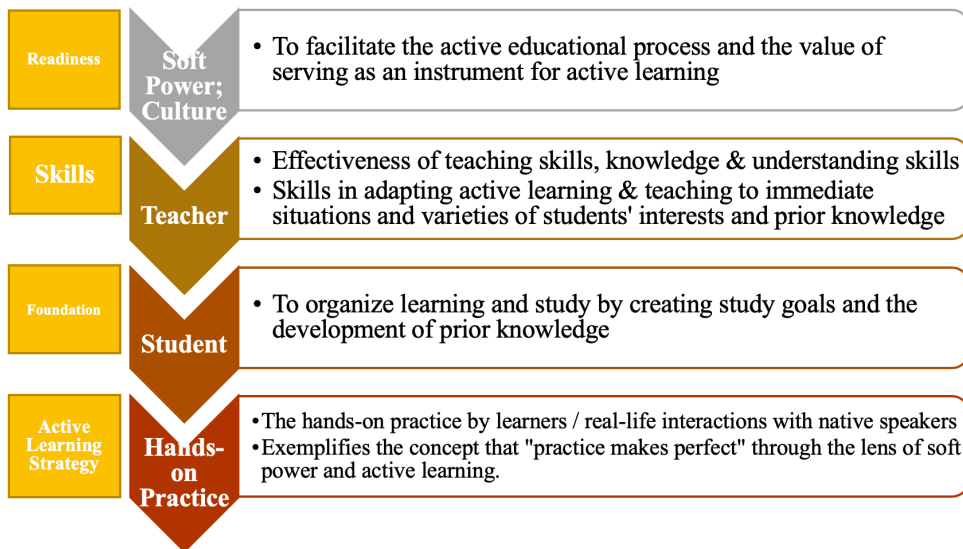
knowledge is essential in a digital world.

3). Foundation: The variety of students' learning goals and prior knowledge impacts the effectiveness of learning outcomes. Organizing learning and study by setting clear goals and building on prior knowledge helps students achieve successful learning outcomes.

4) Active Learning Strategy: Hands-on practice by learners, after being taught and trained in the classroom, involves regularly using those skills in real-life interactions with native speakers. Using Monk Chat as a tool for practicing English-speaking skills exemplifies the concept that “practice makes perfect” through the lens of soft power and active learning. Monk Chat programs, where individuals engage in conversations with Buddhist monks, provide a unique and culturally rich environment for language practice. This method fosters active learning by encouraging real-time, meaningful dialogue and utilizes the soft power of cultural exchange to make learning more engaging and effective. Learners can improve their pronunciation, expand their vocabulary, and enhance their overall communication skills in a relaxed and supportive setting. The monks, who often speak English as a second language themselves, offer a non-judgmental space for learners to practice, make mistakes, and receive constructive feedback. This iterative process of speaking, listening, and adjusting based on feedback helps solidify language skills, making the learning experience both enjoyable and impactful. Through Monk Chat, learners benefit from an immersive, culturally enriched approach that enhances their English-speaking proficiency while fostering greater intercultural understanding.

## **New Theory Knowledge**

The new theory knowledge of Active learning management using soft power as a medium to develop English-speaking skills for foreigners: a case study of an English major at Mahachulalongkrajavidyalaya University, Chiang Mai Campus can be shown in Figure 2 below:



**Figure 2:** The four elements: effectiveness of active learning and teaching using Soft Power: Culture for the development of English-speaking skills of foreigners: A Case Study of English Major at Mahachulalongkrajavidyalaya University, Chiang Mai Campus

## Suggestions

1. Active learning management using soft power as a medium can be applied to other skills or other subjects.
2. The effectiveness of active learning and soft power strategies at Mahachulalongkrajavidyalaya University can be compared with other universities in different regions or countries.

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