

**The Use of Communicative Activities to Develop English Speaking Ability by
the Second Year B.A. Students in the Faculty of Humanities at
Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University**

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Abstract

The objective(s) of this research was 1) to study the effectiveness of communicative activities of the second-year B.A. students' English speaking ability in the Faculty of Humanities, MCU, 2) to develop the student's communicative activities used in the classroom in the Faculty of Humanities, MCU, 3) to evaluate the student's communicative activities to develop English speaking ability by the second-year B.A., students' English speaking ability at the Faculty of Humanities in MCU. This research design is a mixed method, namely a qualitative and quantitative study. The research tools are questionnaires and open-ended interviews. For the population, there are 72 persons from second-year B.A., students within the Faculty of Humanities at Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University, selected by convenience sampling. The questionnaire for students' perceptions and attitudes toward communicative activities was administered after the experiment. The SPSS analysis showed that students have mixed feelings about students' speaking communicative activities. This study revealed a significant statistical difference between the student's English speaking scores before and after learning through communicative activities. The findings also showed that learners had positive perceptions and attitudes towards the use of communicative activities. Students' English speaking ability significantly improved at the 0.05 level after participating in communicative activities. The post-test scores ($M=21.51$) were higher than the pre-test scores ($M=10.59$). These results indicate the effectiveness of communicative activities on enhancing students' English speaking ability. They had highly positive perceptions of communicative activities in the classroom ($M=4.34$). The suggestion was that researchers could compare the effectiveness of communicative activities in learning English speaking ability with other approaches such as task-based learning.

Keywords: Communicative Activities, Develop English, Students Speaking ability

Introduction

In the context of globalization, English stands out as one of the most widely used languages in the world, recognized as a global language employed by people worldwide for

communication, collaboration, and global development. Soares (2011), reports that 400 million individuals speak English as their first language, and over 900 million use it as their second language. This number is expected to continue growing as English becomes increasingly prevalent for various purposes and in diverse settings, including international organizations such as the United Nations, the International Monetary Fund, and the Asia-Europe Meeting. Furthermore, English serves as a communication medium in international business, various professional sectors, including the tourism and travel industry, and particularly within educational contexts across various fields.

The similarity of English language needs in Thailand to those of modern-world countries is evident. Each year, Thailand attracts a significant number of foreigners for diverse reasons such as business, tourism, and education, leading to a substantial surge in the demand for Thai citizens to acquire English communication skills. Consequently, for numerous decades, the Thai government has been steadfastly supporting the integration of English education into the curriculum, starting from kindergarten and extending through the tertiary level. Furthermore, the government extends its support to vocational students, who are destined to become an essential part of the labor force, by mandating their enrollment in multiple English courses. These courses specifically emphasize the use of English for effective communication in their daily lives and future workplaces.

Several researchers, including Wongsuriya (2003: 145), Promshoit (2010: 121-131), Phuphanpet (2007: 161-168), and Kethongkum (2010: 139), who have investigated the listening and speaking skills of vocational students, all concur that these students exhibit shortcomings in their speaking proficiency. They struggle to engage in English conversations. The researchers also point out that these deficiencies stem from various factors. Firstly, students have limited opportunities to utilize English outside the classroom. Secondly, they struggle to apply the knowledge acquired in real-life situations, and their vocabulary range is quite limited, making it challenging for them to express themselves effectively in different contexts. Thirdly, their lack of confidence in speaking English poses a significant hurdle. Fourthly, many English teachers do not prioritize speaking practice due to time constraints. Fifthly, schools often lack adequate teaching materials for enhancing speaking skills. Lastly, students often harbor negative attitudes toward learning English, influenced by their past learning experiences.

Based on my two-year teaching experience at Intrachai Commercial College, it is evident that many vocational students struggle with their English speaking skills, as reflected in their consistently low to moderate grades in English conversation courses. These difficulties in speaking can be attributed to three main factors: the students themselves, their teachers, and the curriculum. Firstly, students often lack the motivation to engage in English conversation and lack clear objectives for improving their speaking abilities. Secondly, teachers face time constraints, which prevent them from organizing communicative activities that

would provide students with opportunities to practice speaking. Additionally, many teachers primarily rely on traditional teaching methods that emphasize grammatical structures, which means that students rarely get the chance to practice speaking or interact with their peers in the classroom. Lastly, the curriculum is also a source of concern. According to the guidelines set by the Office of the Vocational Education Commission in 2010, vocational students are only required to dedicate two to three periods per week to English studies. This limited time allocation does not provide adequate opportunities for students to practice and develop their speaking skills.

Moreover, if vocational students continue to struggle with their English speaking abilities, it could hinder the country's development, as they may lack the necessary skills to compete in global industries such as business, travel and hospitality, education, science, and technology. Therefore, the adoption of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) in the classroom has been introduced as a means to enhance students' speaking proficiency through engaging in communicative activities.

The goal of communicative language teaching is to develop communicative competence, which focuses on using language for various purposes and functions. This includes adapting language use to different situations and people, creating and understanding different types of texts, and maintaining communication even when one's language knowledge is limited (Richards, 2005: 168). According to Moss and Ross-Feldman (2003), communicative activities encompass any activities that encourage learners to speak with and listen to others. These activities serve two crucial language needs: preparing learners for real-life language use and supporting the breakdown of language knowledge. By employing communicative activities, students can also receive practice for completing tasks, boost their motivation, have opportunities to learn natural language and establish a social context that fosters learning (Littlewood, 1998: 198).

As mentioned earlier, the use of communicative activities can improve students' speaking abilities. However, there is limited research on the use of communicative activities with B.A. English students. Consequently, it is essential to investigate whether the use of communicative activities can enhance the speaking skills of B.A. students. This study can serve as a guide for developing the speaking skills of B.A. second year students through the implementation of communicative activities. It proposes numerous effective communicative activities that can be used with B.A. second year students in English classroom settings. The outcomes of effective communicative activities, specifically in enhancing speaking abilities in English, could benefit individuals involved in English language teaching in various ways:

Curriculum developers, English teachers, educators, course developers, and administrators aiming to assist students with speaking difficulties can utilize the study's findings as guidelines for developing and revising English courses for B.A. second-year students who

may lack the motivation to learn English. The study's results can be valuable for classroom teachers in B.A., English institutes. They can implement effective communicative activities in their classrooms to enhance B.A., second-year students' speaking skills, thereby equipping these students for success in the contemporary job market.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study are as follows:

1. To study the effectiveness of communicative activities of the second-year B.A., students' English speaking ability in the Faculty of Humanities, Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University.
2. To develop the student's communicative activities used in the classroom in the Faculty of Humanities, Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University.
3. To evaluate the students' communicative activities to develop English speaking ability by the second-year B.A., students' English speaking ability in the Faculty of Humanities, Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University.

Research Methodology

The research methodology consists of research design which is a mixed method; namely qualitative and quantitative study. The research tools are questionnaires and open-ended interviews. For the population, there are 72 persons from second-year B.A., students within the Faculty of Humanities at Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University, selected by sample methods. The questionnaire for students' perceptions and attitudes toward communicative activities was administered after the experiment. Data was analyzed using the SPSS system.

Results of Study

The Communicative Activities' Effectiveness on Students' Speaking Ability

This section presents the findings regarding Research Question 1: Are the second-year B.A. students at MCU improving their English speaking skills through communicative activities?

Descriptive statistics were used to calculate the mean scores and standard deviation of the second year B.A. students' English speaking ability on both the pretest and posttest. Then, a paired t-test was conducted to compare the mean scores of the pretest and posttest, aiming to assess the effectiveness of the communicative activities on students' speaking ability.

The paired t-test analysis conducted on the mean scores of the pretest and posttest revealed a statistically significant difference between them. Table 1 presents the comparison of the overall mean scores of the pretest and posttest for the second-year B.A. students.

Table 1: Comparing the overall mean scores on the pre-test and post-test

English speaking ability	N	M	S.D.	T	P-value
Pre-test	72	12.59	3.421		
Post-test	72	21.67	2.346	-23.703	0.000*

Regarding Table 1, the results indicate a significant difference between the pretest and posttest scores of the second year B.A. students' speaking ability at the .06 level. The post-test mean scores ($M= 21.67$, $S.D. = 2.346$) were higher than the pretest mean scores ($M=12.59$, $S.D. = 3.421$).

The Speaking Ability Improved After the Experiment

The variance between the mean scores of the pre-test and post-test was examined for each function.

In order to examine the improvement in speaking ability after the experiment, thirty-two students were required to complete both pretest and posttest assessments on one of the English language functions. The initial 72 students were assessed on the first three functions: asking for and giving directions, describing people, and ordering a meal, while the remaining 72 students were evaluated on the last three functions: making a phone call, scheduling an appointment, and booking a hotel room.

The paired t-test analysis conducted on the mean scores of the pretest and posttest across all functions revealed a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the pretest and posttest for each function. Table 4.2 and Table 4.3 demonstrate the comparison of the pretest and posttest mean scores for the second year B.A. students on the English language functions, respectively. Table 4.2 shows the mean score of pre-test and post-test of first three functions.

Table 2: The Mean Score of the Pretest and Posttest for the First Three Functions

Language Functions	N	Pretest		Posttest		T	P-value
		(M)	S.D.	(M)	S.D.		
Asking for and giving							
Directions	72	13.47	3.962	25.64	3.237	-18.889	0.000*
Describing people	72	12.39	3.753	23.65	3.897	-10.087	0.000*
Ordering a meal	72	14.78	3.445	21.09	2.438	-15.578	0.000*

As depicted in Table 2, the mean scores of the posttest surpassed those of the pretest across all functions. The highest mean score in the posttest among the first three

functions was for the ordering a meal function ($M=25.64$), exceeding that of the pretest ($M=14.78$), followed by the asking for and giving directions function ($M=20.75$), which was higher than the pretest mean score ($M=12.39$), and the describing people function ($M=23.65$), which also exceeded the pretest mean score ($M=12.39$). Table 4.3, presents the comparison between the pretest and posttest for the last three functions.

Table 3: Comparing the Pretest and Posttest for the Last Three Functions

Language Functions	N	Pretest		Posttest		T	P-value
		(M)	S.D.	(M)	S.D.		
Making a phone call	72	10.89	4.225	22.87	2.104	-14.781	0.000*
Making an appointment	72	8.54	3.482	22.47	2.983	-17.143	0.000*
Making a reservation for a hotel room	72	12.73	3.304	23.52	2.321	-15.576	0.000*

As indicated in Table 3, the mean scores of the posttest exceeded those of the pretest across all functions. The highest mean score in the posttest among the last three functions was for the making a reservation for a hotel room function ($M=23.52$), surpassing the pretest mean score ($M=12.73$). This was followed by the making a phone call function ($M=22.87$), which was higher than the pretest mean score ($M=10.89$), and the making an appointment function ($M=22.47$), which also exceeded the pretest mean score ($M=8.54$).

This section presents the findings regarding Research Question 2: What are the students' perceptions regarding the use of communicative activities in the classroom?

Students' Perceptions Towards the Use of Communicative Activities

Students' perspectives on using communicative activities were gathered from a self-rating questionnaire.

To investigate students' perceptions regarding the use of communicative activities, students were asked to complete a perception questionnaire, rating each item on a five-point scale ranging from "Strongly agree" to "Strongly disagree". Their self-rating scores from the perception questionnaires were analyzed and computed for mean and standard deviation, then interpreted across five levels from very low to very high. The findings indicated that students held a highly positive perception of the use of communicative activities in the classroom, rated at a very high level ($M=4.43$). Table 6 displays students' perceptions of the use of communicative activities in the classroom.

Table 4: Students' Perceptions towards the use of Communicative Activities in Class

No	Questionnaire Items	M	S.D.	Level
1	The communicative activities are interesting.	4.46	0.61	Very high

No	Questionnaire Items	M	S.D.	Level
2	The communicative activities are varied, enjoyable, and fun.	4.38	0.51	Very high
3	Both the content of communicative activities and the activities themselves are suitable for your proficiency level.	4.21	0.77	high
4	The procedure of using communicative activities is clear.	4.09	0.71	high
5	The topics and the content of communicative activities suit your needs.	4.67	0.57	Very high
6	The included pictures in the communicative activities help you understand them.	4.50	0.51	Very high
7	The communicative activities are challenging.	4.36	0.65	Very high
8	You clearly understand the purpose of communicative activities.	4.32	0.48	Very high
9	The communicative activities motivate you to speak English.	4.32	0.71	Very high
10	The communicative activities are appropriate for using in English class.	4.24	0.81	Very high
Total		4.43	0.61	Very high

As indicated in Table 4, the overall mean scores of students' perceptions regarding the use of communicative activities in the classroom were very high, with a mean score of 4.43. The results unveiled that students held positive perceptions towards using communicative activities. Among the items, learners displayed the highest perception towards item 5 ($M=4.67$), indicating that communicative activities encourage classroom participation. Following this, learners demonstrated the second highest perception towards item 1 ($M=4.46$), expressing that learning through communicative activities creates a relaxed and enjoyable atmosphere for learning English. However, learners exhibited a relatively lower level of positive perception towards item 4 ($M=4.09$), indicating that they did not fully understand the procedure of performing communicative activities.

Students' Attitudes towards the Use of Communicative Activities

To investigate students' attitudes towards communicative activities, they were asked to complete a questionnaire, rating each item on a scale from very low to very high. The self-ratings were then analyzed to calculate the mean and standard deviation, and were interpreted into five levels from very low to very high. The results indicated that students had a very high positive attitude towards the communicative activities used in the classroom ($M=4.45$). Table 4.6 shows these attitudes in detail.

Table 5: Learners' Attitudes towards the Communicative Activities

No	Questionnaire Items	M	S.D.	Level
1	Learning through communicative activities creates a relaxed atmosphere and you are happy to learn English.	4.56	0.59	Very high
2	Engaging in communicative activities helps you improve your speaking ability.	4.53	0.57	Very high
3	Participating in communicative activities increases your self-confidence in speaking English.	4.46	0.62	Very high
4	You clearly understand the procedure for doing communicative activities.	4.18	0.64	high
5	The communicative activities encourage learners' classroom participation.	4.46	0.57	Very high
6	Engaging in communicative activities promotes good relationship among learners, as well as between learners and the teacher.	4.43	0.72	Very high
7	Learning through communicative activities learner's needs and interests.	4.31	0.59	Very high
8	After engaging in communicative activities, you realize the importance of English.	4.37	0.61	Very high
9	Involvement in communicative activities encourages you to think and boosts your self-confidence.	4.68	0.47	Very high
10	Engaging in communicative activities helps you learn English naturally.	4.56	0.56	Very high
11	You enjoy learning English through communicative activities.	4.65	0.56	Very high
12	After participating in communicative activities, you can apply the knowledge learned in the classroom to your daily life.	4.34	0.61	high
Total		4.65	0.61	Very high

According to Table 5, the overall mean score for learners' attitudes towards communicative activities in the classroom was very high, with a mean score of 4.45. This indicates that learners generally had a positive attitude towards these activities. Item 9 received the highest positive attitude, with a mean score of 4.68, where learners felt that

communicative activities motivated them to speak English. Items 1 and 10 both received the second-highest positive attitudes, each with a mean score of 4.56, indicating that learners found the communicative activities interesting and appropriate for English class. However, item 4 received the lowest positive attitude, with a mean score of 4.06, as most learners felt the procedure for using communicative activities was clear.

Conclusion

This study investigated the impact of communicative activities on improving the English speaking abilities of 72 second-year B.A. students. The research had three main objectives: to assess the effectiveness of these activities, develop suitable classroom activities, and evaluate their impact on students' speaking skills. Conducted over 24 hours across two months, excluding pretests and posttests, the study used various instruments including lesson plans, speaking rubrics, and questionnaires. Results showed significant improvement in students' speaking abilities, with post-test scores ($M=21.51$) surpassing pre-test scores ($M=10.59$). Students' perceptions of the activities were highly positive, highlighting increased confidence, fluency, and classroom engagement. Overall, the study affirmed the effectiveness of communicative activities in enhancing English speaking skills, with students appreciating the engaging, varied, and confidence-building nature of the tasks.

Discussion

The primary objective of this research was to evaluate the effectiveness of communicative activities in improving English speaking skills among second-year B.A. students at the Faculty of Humanities, Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University. Additionally, the study focused on developing and assessing the communicative activities employed in the classroom. A mixed-method approach, combining both qualitative and quantitative data from questionnaires and interviews, was used to gain comprehensive insights into the students' experiences and the overall impact of the intervention.

The findings revealed a significant enhancement in students' English speaking abilities after the implementation of communicative activities. The post-test mean score ($M=21.51$) was notably higher than the pre-test mean score ($M=10.59$), indicating a statistically significant improvement. This positive outcome aligns with previous studies, such as those by Promshoit (2010) and Phuphanpet (2010), which also reported significant gains in speaking abilities through communicative tasks.

Students' attitudes towards the activities were overwhelmingly positive, with a mean attitude score of 4.34, reflecting high satisfaction and perceived value. These activities

encouraged more frequent English speaking, diverse practice opportunities, and increased confidence among students.

The study highlighted several benefits of communicative activities, including active participation, catering to different learning styles, and building self-confidence. Future research should explore the long-term effects of these activities and compare them with other instructional methods to optimize English language education.

Suggestions

Due to the course arrangement, there was a suggestion in selecting the participants. The study aimed to investigate the students' English speaking ability, so the researcher had to choose the class enrolling in Developing Skills for English Communication 1. Participants were selected through convenience sampling, which decreased the generalizability of the findings. The limited time of three weeks given for the experiment also influenced the study, as research conducted over different periods might yield different results.

Suggestion for Further Studies

To provide a clearer picture of the integration of communicative activities for learning English, the following suggestions for further studies are proposed:

1. Researchers could apply communicative activities to develop workers' speaking abilities in workplaces like hotels, restaurants, or factories to prepare them for the ASEAN Economic Community's trend of using English as the main language of communication.
2. Researchers could use communicative activities to enhance other English skills, including listening and reading.
3. Researchers could compare the effectiveness of communicative activities in learning English speaking abilities with other approaches, such as task-based learning.

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