IMPROVING ENGLISH SPEAKING SKILLS OF THE NINTH- GRADE-STUDENT BY USING A COMMUNICATIVE ACTIVITY (A GROUP DISCUSSION)

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Abstracts

This study is an experimental research. The purpose of this research were 1) to study the effectiveness of a communicative group discussion activity 2) to study the satisfaction of students toward this teaching method using communicative group discussion activity of the ninth-grade students form one public high school in Hatyai, Songkhla. The sample group was 44 students in upper high school, Class 3/4, at the second semester, 2018 academic year. The 44 students were selected by purposive sampling method. This study found that:

1) The students' score in the speaking post-test could gain statistically significance at .05; the post-test score was ($\bar{x}$ = 14.57 S.D. = 0.94). It showed that the students' English-speaking competencies after using a discussion activity were statistical significantly higher than before they used.

2) The overview results of students' satisfaction level were in the more satisfaction level ($\bar{x}$ = 4.02 S.D. = 0.84). Improving English speaking skills by using a communicative activities-discussion which had fun atmosphere was the methodology reinforcing well satisfaction toward instruction.

Keywords: Communicative Activity, Discussion, Communicative Competence

Introduction

The English language has been teaching in Thailand since the era of King Rama III until King Rama IV of Chakri dynasty (1851 - 1868). The influences of Westerners had been spread to Southeast Asia; thus, to avoid being colonized by the western countries, King Rama IV, he had started studying English after he hired some English teachers to instruct the English language in Thailand at the simple level and provided students some scholarships for studying in other countries. Whereas, English language in Thailand has been emphasized as the important role as well as in many other developed countries and developing countries (Shell, 2016). Previously and so far of the English instruction in Thailand, most English teachers use Grammar Translate Method (GTM) in the instruction

of English subject through which students have the knowledge of the language but they are not able to produce the language, as a result, students are not able to produce the knowledge and the functions of language in their daily communication because this method emphasizes on accuracy over fluency (Khamprated, 2012). Moreover, this method is convenient for teachers because the teachers just instruct the structure of the language and students don't practice it quite often. Therefore, it was proved that this method didn't really affect much to Thai teaching and learning environment.

On the other hands, many present studies have proven and it is significant as it offers insights on Communicative English language. Other beliefs regarding to PBL, it is an approach that should be applied in the language classrooms to enhance oral competency among the pupils (Tantrakul, 2012). Thai students still had trouble with listening and speaking skills, but they were good at grammatical terms; therefore, when they had to speak, they always spoke English incorrectly which made some students felt uncomfortable in English Speaking, (Toolsiri, 2005). Similar to Wanthanasut (2008), students tended to frighten to make a mistake while they were speaking English and they did not dare to speak English with others that they would be embarrassed about making a mistake. Furthermore, problem with speaking of Thai students could also be found in the study by Sirilukkananun (2007), in which she found that nursing students gave more value in speaking skill the most; somehow, speaking was the weakest point for them, especially when they had the foreign patients; therefore, the instruction in Thailand failed in term of speaking instructional management due to Thai students were not able to apply their English speaking knowledge to their daily communication because students were lack obtaining English language skill practicum automatically like Automatic Basic Skill, (Tantrakul, 2012).

Similarly, article of Alexander Franco & Scott S. Roach (2018), clarified that the top companies absolutely accept (80%) the importance of English for Thailand's combining AEC, which Thai people shared that they did not love studying English and the most ambiguous of English language skills they found difficulty was speaking skill, comparing with other three: listening, reading and writing skills. Therefore, Thai students should be able to improve their speaking skill, also to be more master English learners, and they are able to evaluate give point of views to their speaking activity classes. Additionally, another an action research paper, "Improving Students' Speaking Skill through CLT Action Research", a discussion activity was applied: the researcher used picture reconstruction, students must discuss in their group, each group contained of 4

until 5 students, the researcher made three cycles, and reward the score each cycle according to the speaking measurement. As the result, the paper found that in the first cycle of the students' average score was 60, in the second was 70 point, and in the last cycle was 80 point (Anggraini, 2018).

Research Questions

1. Is a communicative activity (A group discussion) able to improve the 9th grade students' English performance?

2. What are satisfactions of the 9th grade students from 3/4 classroom of one public high school, Hatyai, Songkhla toward the communicative activities (A group discussion)?

Concept theory framework
Communicative Approach

Communicative Language Teaching

Firstly, CLT is a language approach which emphasizes on the form and students will learn the realistic use of the language which they can apply in their lives and students will have fluency over accuracy of the English language (Nunan, 1991; Radzi, Hanadi, Azmin, Zolhani, & Latif, 2007).

Secondly, PBL is totally different from traditional instruction because this one student is considered as a student-centered with integrated activities in the real-world situation and it enables students to demonstrate their understanding by producing the last product (e.g., oral presentation, problem-solving and role play) (Poonpon, 2011 & Moss, Van Duzer, 1998). Project - Based Learning is a language instructional approach that it emphasizes on students' language needs, it is defined that, "An instructional approach that contextualizes learning by presenting learners with problems to solve or products to develop" (Moss & Van Duzer, 1998, p. 1). Furthermore, the activities are provided in this approach which integrated activity in the real world situation. PBL activities can be characterized as (Fried-Booth, 1997; Simpson, 2011; Srikrai, 2008; Stoller, 1997 & Poonpon, 2011):

- Focuses on content learning rather than on specific language rules,
- Is student-centered so the instructor becomes a facilitator or tutor,
- Ultimately encourages collaboration among students,
- Give the authentic integration of language skills and processing data from multiple sources,

- Allows learners to present their agreement of content knowledge through an end product (e.g., an oral presentation, a poster session, a bulletin board display, or a stage performance), and

- Bridges using English in class and using English in real life contexts.

Similarly, the elements of communicative competence are fluency and comprehensibility, according to Bartz (1979). To add on, this study takes most consideration on fluency over accuracy, the fluency means "the features which give a speech the qualities of being natural and normal, including native-like use of pausing, rhythm, intonation, stress, rate of speaking, and use of interjections and interruptions. If speech disorders cause a breakdown in normal speech (e.g.as with aphasia or stuttering), the resulting speech may be referred to as dysfluent, or as an example of dysfluency.", which related to the evaluation form of each activity generated by Richards & Schmidt (2009, p. 20).

Related research paper of Gilbert and Pope (1986), they conducted small group discussions built around a stimulus situation. Students were arranged into groups of two or three. In these discussions, students had the opportunity to hypothesize about the stimuli they were given and to challenge each other's conceptions.

Additionally, Canale and Swain (198, p.147) defined that the communicative competence was the pronunciational, vocabulary and grammatical competences. These are vital for language learners that they are able to understand the quality of communication, for this reason, these elements cause the relationship of the connected sentences which create the continuing conversation.

Methods
Participants

The participants of this study were the 9th grade students, studying from 3/4 classroom, at one public high school in Hatyai, Songkhla. They also registered to study Fundamental English 5 subject (E23101), there were 44 9th grade students, 18 males and 26 females.

Research Instruments

The research instruments included:

1. Five communicative activity lesson plans with 2 hours each 10 hours in total.

2. Two tests: pre-test and post-test for evaluating students' English-speaking competencies, (Access 3 Student's Book, unit 5 and unit 6).

3. An English-speaking competencies assessment form from the experts.

4. A satisfaction questionnaire form from the experts.

Data Collection and Analysis

The researcher conducted the experiment with Grade 9 Students at one public high school in Hatyai, Songkhla by conducting and collecting the data as follows:

1. Give students the pre-test to evaluate students' Basic English-speaking skill, by using discussing test which students had to express their opinions toward the topics, and to collect the data to be compared with the post-test.

2. Instruct the students by using 5 lesson plans for the students doing discussion in class with two hours each, the total hours are 10 hours.

3. Do the survey about the satisfaction toward teaching and learning using discussion and oral presentation to be the main activities on English Subject of students.

Results

Table 1: showing the result of pre-test and post-test, using a discussion activity

Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation (S.D.)	t	Sig. (2-tailed)
Pretest	44	11.46	1.03	-44.99	.000***
Posttest	44	14.57	.94	-	

From table 1, the study found that the mean value of students' English-speaking competencies before using a discussion activity was 11. 46, the S.D. was 1.03, and the mean value of students' English-speaking competencies after using a discussion activity was 14.57, the S.D. was 0.94. Comparing students' English-speaking competencies between pre-test and post-test, the study found that the t-test was -44.99 and Sig. (2-tailed) was .000, as the result, the students' English-speaking competencies after using a discussion activity were statistical significantly higher that before their use at .05.

Table 2: showing the result of satisfaction toward using a discussion activity of the 44-ninth-grade students.

Topic	Mean	S.D.	Interpretation
Learning atmosphere using Discussion Activity section			More satisfaction
1. Helps learners having enjoyment in English learning.	4.00	0.86	More satisfaction
2. Helps learners having enthusiasm in English communication.	4.16	0.83	More satisfaction
3. Helps learners having self-confidence in English communication.	3.93	0.82	More satisfaction
Total	4.03	0.84	More satisfaction

Topic	Mean	S.D.	Interpretation
Instructional activities section			
4. The activities promote communication in pair and group.	4.02	0.82	More satisfaction
5. Learners participate in discussion with their classmates.	3.86	0.82	More satisfaction
6. The content and difficulties of activities are appropriate for leaners.	4.05	0.83	More satisfaction
Total	**3.98**	**0.83**	More satisfaction
Learners' development section			
7. Learners are able to understand better	4.18	0.84	More satisfaction
8. Learners use the words, phrases and idiom in communication appropriately to a specific situation	3.98	0.85	More satisfaction
9. Learners enable to communicate fluently.	3.95	0.83	More satisfaction
10. Learners can apply the discussion and express their opinion in English to their daily life.	4.11	0.87	More satisfaction
Total	**4.06**	**0.85**	More satisfaction
Total average	**4.02**	**0.84**	More satisfaction

From table 2, it showed the satisfaction of the 44-ninth-grade students Hatyai Wittayalai Somboonkulkanya School. The overall image of satisfaction was on the more satisfaction level ($\overline{x}$ = 4.02 S.D. = 0.84), considering each section, the study found that for learning atmosphere using Discussion Activity section ($\overline{x}$ = 4.03 S.D. = 0.84), instructional activity section ($\overline{x}$ = 3.98 S.D. = 0.83), learners' development section ($\overline{x}$ = 4.06 S.D. = 0.85). The detail was explained as follows:

Learning atmosphere using Discussion Activity section was on the more satisfaction level, there were, 1.) Helps learners having enjoyment in English learning ($\overline{x}$ = 4.00 S.D. = 0.86), 2.) Helps learners having enthusiasm in English communication ($\overline{x}$ = 4.16 S.D. = 0.83), and 3.) Helps learners having self-confidence in English communication ($\overline{x}$ = 4.00 S.D. = 0.82).

The instructional activities section was on the more satisfaction level, there were, 1.) The activities promote communication in pair and group ($\overline{x}$ = 4.02 S.D. = 0.82), 2.) Learners participate in discussion with their classmates ($\overline{x}$ = 3.86 S.D. = 0.82), and 3.) The content and difficulties of activities are appropriate for learners ($\overline{x}$ = 4.05 S.D. = 0.83).

The learners' development section was also at the more satisfaction level, there were, 1.) Learners are able to understand better ($\overline{x}$ = 4.18 S.D. = 0.84) 2.) Learners use the words, phrases and idiom in communication appropriate to a specific situation ($\overline{x}$ = 3.98 S.D. = 0.85), 3.) Learners enable to communicate fluently ($\overline{x}$ = 3.95 S.D. = 0.83), and 4.) Learners can apply the discussion and express their opinion in English to their daily life ($\overline{x}$ = 4.11 S.D. = 0.87).

Table 3: Examples of Open Question Data on instruction using a discussion activity of the 44-ninth-grade students.

Open Question Data Example
L1: "I think, it was the best instruction I had ever studied, there were discussion and other activities which made English subject more enjoyable; moreover, I believed, students would not be bored with learning English."
L2: "The instructions which English was used as a medium, the strength was; made students more used to with English listening and the weakness was; could not understand clearly for those who had low English proficiency, but it depended on a learner if they were active to study and diligent to translate it."
L3: "In my opinion, it helped me to practice English communication and I could use it in my daily life communication."
L4: "It was an understandable class and fun because there were a variety of discussions, but always speaking English of the teacher could make students dislike the English."
L5: "I wanted some more details of contents, but the class enjoyment would not decrease."

Note: L stands for "Learner". For example, L1 is the representative from learners out of 44.

From the table 3, there were five opening question data, written in the opinion/suggestion section of the questionnaire by learners. The data was written in Thai language because students would give the accurate opinion/suggestion which they could convey the right purpose and was translated into English language later.

Conclusions and Discussion

From the students' English-speaking competency assessment before and after using a discussion activity found that the posttest was statistical significantly higher than the pretest as equal as .05. There was ($\overline{x}$ = 14.57 S.D. = 0.94.) Comparing students' English speaking competencies between pre-test and post-test, the study found that the t-test was 44.99 and Sig. (2-tailed) was .000, as the result, the students' English speaking competencies after using a discussion activity were statistical significantly higher than before they used at .05 which it could fulfill the research questions due to the fact that: First, used a group discussion as a based authentic instruction, learners usually encountered in daily lives which emphasize on learners have practice using the language in communication; in addition, the learners have more opportunities to choose the appropriate and accurate language usages. Conducted the instruction using a group discussion as a based in teaching and learning, the researcher aimed to improve the learning cognitive by persuasion and classroom management that support learners improve their English language, emphasizing the context and applying the knowledge in the reality more than memorizing. Besides, Improving English speaking skill using a group discussion is a methodology focusing on the learner-centered. Applied this technique, learners could have an opportunity to work together supporting each other while having a group discussion, learners worked in a small group with 8 – 9 members; furthermore, the atmosphere can lessen their fear in making mistake while speaking English, and they could express themselves successfully while working in groups. The results of this study supported the effectiveness of these three communicative activities in developing English speaking skills by Oradee (2012). It conducted a study of development of English-speaking skill using communicative activities. The samples were 49-eleventh-grade students of Satri Rachanuchit School, Udon Thani, Thailand. After applying these activities, learners' English-speaking skill competencies were higher than before, assessed by posttest and pretest. Nevertheless, the mean score of the post test was 14.57 out of 24.00. It was considered weak result and the reasons behind it were as follows: firstly, most of the class time was deducted 10 minutes, due to the students had to participate in ONET tutorial class instructed at the end of the day that made the study instruction shorter. Secondly, some classes were cancelled, due to compulsory activity conducted by student council and the researcher had to make up the class out of the actual schedule, which it affected to students mentally and physically of tiring.

Second, the researcher had chosen the appropriate language usage and content in communication, for instance, E-society, Life in the future and Danger down under that learners could express their opinion in a group discussion which they encountered in the past. Each activity afforded learners opportunity to practice language used expressing

their opinion the discussion in the classroom and they could apply to actual and authentic situation in their daily lives. The instruction also was emphasized the variety of communication that reinforced learners have a better behavior in English communication, it caused the learners have more improved communication in English. This was relevant to the study on the Communicative Activities for Developing English Speaking Proficiency in Thailand, University of Melbourne (Klanrit, 2005). As its result, this could lead to self-monitoring, more confidence in speaking, and enjoyment could encourage them to participate more in learning.

Third, from the English speaking skill assessment criteria before and after using a communicative activity of the evaluators, it showed that learners had improved in all sections, for examples, fluency, comprehensibility, amount of communication and quality of communication, the scores of all sections increased since learners had understanding what they were speaking and were able to understand in the topic matter while expressing their opinion in the discussion. This was related to the study of Poonpon (2011), supported the instruction objectives using a communicative activity to improve learners' English by focusing on content learning rather than on specific language patterns, student-centered so the teacher becomes a facilitator or coach, encourage collaboration among students, leads to The authentic integration of language skills and Processing information from multiple sources, allows learners to demonstrate their understanding of content knowledge through an end product (e.g., an oral presentation, a poster session, a bulletin board display, or a stage performance), and bridges using English in class and using English in real life contexts. In other words, if the learners had more opportunity to improve their English by providing learners more time to practice by speaking, they could learn the language more effectively and if they were satisfied toward instruction by using a group discussion, they participated in the activity and they wanted to improve their English language. Therefore, Improving English speaking skills by using a communicative activities-discussion which had fun atmosphere was the methodology reinforcing well satisfaction toward instruction.

From the satisfaction toward instruction using a communicative discussion activity, overview, it was on the more satisfaction level ($\overline{x}$ = 4.02 S.D. = 0.84). If considering in each sections, it could be discussed as follows: using Discussion Activity section ($\overline{x}$ = 4.03 S.D. = 0.84), instructional activity section ($\overline{x}$ = 3.98 S.D. = 0.83), learners' development section ($\overline{x}$ = 4.06 S.D. = 0.85). Therefore, it was able to answer the research question which caused the learners had satisfaction toward instruction using a discussion.

First, the activity to improve students English speaking using a discussion as abased learning was an amusing activity that enabled to create lively atmosphere of

instruction between the instructor and learners. The learners were ready to express the thoughts which caused they learn effectively. It was related to the study of Nanthaboot (2012) using communicative activities to develop English speaking ability of Matthayomsuksa three students.

Second, from the feedback answered by learners in the questionnaires, the learners found that discussion activity made English class more enjoyable, such as, learner 1 "I think, it was the best instruction I had ever studied, there were discussion and other activities which made English subject more enjoyable; moreover, I believed, students would not be bored in learning English." Furthermore, learner 2 "In my opinion, it helped me to practice English communication and I could use it in my daily life communication." Additionally, learner 3 "It was an understandable class and fun because there were variety of discussion but always speaking English of the teacher could make students dislike English." In conclusion, most of the learner were satisfied in learning English by using discussion activity which they thought it could improve their English-speaking competencies.

Acknowledgement

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