

A Study of Effect of Dramatic Activities on Improving English Communicative Speaking Skill of Grade 11th Students

Prisana Iamsaard¹ & Sakon Kerdpol²

¹ Graduate School of Applied Linguistics for English Teacher, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Pibulsongkram Rajabhat University, Thailand

² Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Pibulsongkram Rajabhat University, Thailand

Correspondence: Sakon Kerdpol, Department of Foreign Languages, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Phitsanulok 65000, Thailand. Tel: 66-819-716-548. E-mail: niceguy2498@yahoo.com

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Abstract

This paper aimed to reexamine the current EFL communicative speaking skill in high school level in Thailand due to the coming of the entry to ASEAN at the end of the year 2015. Thai students need to be well prepared for workforce in the future since English is used as the working language in ASEAN. The purposes of this paper were to study the effect of dramatic activities on improving English communicative skills of grade 11th participants and to examine students' opinions towards the use of dramatic activities in their speaking class. The duration of experiment was 21 hours within 7 weeks. The research instruments were lesson plans using dramatic activities, English communicative speaking test and a questionnaire measuring students' opinions towards the teaching based on dramatic activities. The findings were that the English communicative speaking skill on grade 11th students after attending the teaching class using dramatic activities was significantly higher than before attending the teaching and the students' opinions towards dramatic activities on speaking were highly positive.

Keywords: dramatic activities, English communicative speaking skill, English speaking teaching

1. Introduction

In a global society currently, English is an international language spoken throughout the world and it plays important role in the people's ways of life. From the influence of information technology and communication, English becomes so important because it is the means of communication, knowledge seeking from various sources including career (Wonglekha, 2010). Now there are 53 nations using English as an official language (Martin, 2002). Moreover, Graddol, a British linguist, did his research entitled, "English Next" for British Council and mentioned that the trend for English learners will increase continually and expect that in the 10-15 years ahead (in the years of 2015-2030) there will be 2 billion learners worldwide; that means the population of the earth realizes the importance of English in the globalization because it is the key in searching for knowledge and communication.

English is not only important globally but also regionally like ASEAN regions, it becomes more important stating in the ASEAN Charter article 34 (Senate, 2012) stating that "The working language of ASEAN shall be English" that means English is used as the means for communication among ASEAN nations in terms of government sectors as well as other organizations related both in government and private sectors; therefore, English is the first priority for the people of ASEAN to create such relationship without borders in terms of geography and culture, and the world of competitiveness. English becomes a second language as important as the first language of each nation.

The Ministry of Education in Thailand has focused the development of learners' capacities in higher secondary school students from grade 10-12 especially in foreign languages particularly English enabling learners to communicate (Office of Basic Education, 2010) including the policy designation of the year of speaking English 2012 as English Speaking Year 2012 (Khruajanyod, 2011). From the needs of using English for communication, the development of English curriculum is a must by promoting the instruction emphasizing on more

communicative purposes and the language skill which is mandatory is speaking skill due to the fact that it is foundation for the people to communicate directly and faster than any other skills.

However, language proficiency of Thai learners is still not efficient as shown in the report of English Proficiency Index (EPI) from Educational First (EF, 2012) who ranked the English Proficiency from 54 countries throughout the world and found that Thai was ranked in the 53rd. When comparing the population among ASEAN who can use English in communication, it was found that Singaporeans was 71%; Filipino was 55.49%; Brunei was 37.73%; Malaysians was 27.24% whereas Thai was 10%. From the statistics previously mentioned, it was consistent with the English instruction of Thailand in that the unsatisfactory result due to the poor achievement of the Thai learners. In addition, from the national test called O-Net on English test of the 12 graders in the academic year of 2011 (The Educational Test from the National Institute, 2012) found that the national mean was 21.80 % by classifying into language for communication strand was 26.79, the mean score for language and culture strand was 16.39%. At the same time, O-Net of 12th graders of Thungsaliachanupatham in the academic year of 2011 found that the school mean score was only 17.33% by classifying into their language for communication strand was only 21.72%, the mean score for language and culture strand was 12.57% which are quite lower than the standard. From the reasons aforementioned, the school should have urgent development for the language communication strand as well as language and culture strands.

From the previous problem, the researcher believes that the teachers of English should readjust themselves in teaching in terms of teaching approaches, techniques to create the learning atmosphere for learners to be interested and eager practicing speaking and enabling them to use it without any concern which will change their attitude for their study. From document and research study, the researcher found that teaching speaking English through dramatic activities from experts also language teachers who have applied drama in their teaching and found that the activities could be effective in teaching English especially in listening skill teaching as Khaemane (2011) mentioning that dramatic activities can make the activities lively and meaningful for students and at the same time they have more fun involving in the activities and also Thongnuan (2011) disclosing that the benefit of the dramatic activities in that they can improve the students' listening and speaking skills effectively. The students can express themselves in terms of emotion, tone, facial expression, acting appropriately and they can use those conversations in their daily lives. Furthermore, this dramatic activity in English instruction in the educational institutes of the Ministry of Education which is correspond to the One Dream School in One District of the Office of Commissioner of Basic Education (Ministry of Education, 2003) mentioning that the schools should provide dramatic activities for external curriculum to develop students potential in using language for communication enabling them to use English as an important means to search for their knowledge and to find jobs in ASEAN as well as in the global markets.

From the aforementioned reasons, the researcher as the teacher of English at a higher secondary school has learned the problems for the students well; therefore, she is interested in studying the ability of English communicative speaking skill of grade 11th students at Thungsaliachanupatham School, Thungsaliachan District, Sukhothai Province. The researcher believes that the students will acquire the communicative speaking skill from dramatic activities apparently they will be interested and eager to practice the language, develop their communicative speaking skill effectively since they can learn from their active learning, experience with their full potential, they can use the conversation in their daily lives. Moreover, this can help the teacher teach smoothly especially with the mixed abilities under the cooperation among the groups.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Language Learning Theories

One of the second language learning theories which become very well-known today is Kreshen's (1987) mentioning the hypotheses on language acquisition and learning as follows: there are two kinds of language learning: Language acquisition; that is, the child acquires the mother tongue or first language subconsciously which is not concerned with the rules of the grammar but for the communication; on the other hand, Language learning: the child learns the target language consciously with the learning of rules enabling them to describe the rules of the language but may not necessarily use in communication. Second, the Natural Order Hypothesis is the systematic process of the child's learning; that is, he is learning some of the primary rules of the language such as singular and plural, -ing form before learning subject-verb agreement and apostrophe. Third, the Monitor Hypothesis saying that learning the language enables the learners to use the language in different situations. Forth, the Input Hypothesis: the input of the language needs to be comprehensible, interesting and the content

must be knowledgeable of $i+1$ and finally the Affective Filter Hypotheses which is necessary for the learners' attitude such as motivation, worry. These will reinforce and hinder the language learning of the learners.

2.2 Philosophy of Progressive Education

Sinlalal (2009: 67-72) disclosed that the progressive education was to oppose the traditional one which focused on the content with the rote learning style and lack of societal linkage. The main purpose of this educational philosophy is that education is to develop learners not just for mental ability but also the relationship of the society since they have to live and adapt themselves in the society happily.

2.3 Curriculum on Foreign Language Strand in Upper Secondary School as the Basic Core Curriculum in 2008 (Ministry of Education, 2009)

In the current global society, learning foreign languages is essential in the daily life due to the fact that language is used as the means of communication, education, knowledge seeking, career, etc. This enables the learners to understand themselves and others in terms of language and culture, socio economy, politics, etc. Therefore, the curriculum should focus on the strands that emphasize on building good attitude towards learning foreign languages enabling them to use in communication in different situations, to seek knowledge, to make a living and to further higher education including understanding various cultures in the global society.

2.4 Lesson Plans

Many educators in Thailand have stated about lesson plans Mulkham (2006), Thaoktrakun (2010) and Sikhrankhrun (2009) in that lesson plans should be implemented for the effective result and achieve the learning objectives. The benefits of lesson plans will help teachers to implement the activities which have been set and students gain the skills expected, in addition, the lesson plans help prioritize the importance and continuation of the contents appropriately. They do not only give confidence to teachers in teaching and evaluating but media and teaching aids are well selected to suit the lesson plans.

2.5 Communicative Language Teaching

Communicative Language Teaching was first developed in America and Europe in 1970 (Kwangswat, 2006) during those times, millions of people migrated within Europe so the Council of Europe had to develop teaching English as a second language focusing on functional notional syllabus design to assist the migrants in communication; whereas, in America Hymes (1978) who initiated the language teaching, Communicative Competence, based on the social interaction. Moreover, Canale, and Swain, (1980) and Savignon, (1991) classified the communicative elements as follows: 1) grammatical competence, 2) social-linguistic competence, 3) discourse competence, and 4) strategic competence. In addition, communicative language teaching will be successful depends on many factors such as learner's role, teacher's role, instructional material role (Richards, & Rogers, 1995) and instructional activities (Nunan, & Lamb, 1996).

2.6 Communicative Language Teaching in English

Finocchiaro and Brumfit (1983) stated that speaking is the reaction related to the message, situation, articulation, by using the appropriate language, grammar rules, meaning and culture properly. The speaker sends the message using the appropriate stress, intonation, facial expression, gesture to help convey the meanings for the listeners. Sometimes the speech might lack the completion or improper grammar; however, speaking occurs between two people by using the language as the means of communication.

In teaching speaking skill, many techniques are introduced such as dialogues, drills, question and answer, language games, discussion, questionnaire and quiz, problem-solving activities, drama activities.

2.7 Dramatic Activities

Dramatic activities have been used in language teaching in many names such as creative play activities, drama techniques, dramatic activities. However, the sub characteristics of drama activities is the integration of various activities by using mime, role-playing, improvisation, simulation, language games, story-telling, dramatization (Praputkit, 1983). Maley and Duff, (2001) defined dramatic activities that they provide the opportunity for learners to use their personal characters in speaking skill; they can role-play via gestures, facial expression, imagination, memories and potential experience in the past to act the roles assigned. In addition, Davies (1990) mentioned that dramatic activities, if the teachers know how to use them effectively, they will help reinforce the individuals to develop their communicative skill though the dramatic activities are only the role plays.

2.8 Satisfaction

Satisfaction is one of the factors affecting the success of effective goal setting. It results in the motivational response or individual needs. Some researchers in Thailand have defined satisfactions as the good feelings or attitude towards the work (Kulayanee, 1999), or as the appreciation when the needs and objectives were met and succeeded. The happiness showed by speaking and gestures (Jumnongkit, 2005), individuals were satisfied in their jobs if the jobs paid well enough for their living, and well secured French (1964). According to Maslow (1970) saying that human beings are stimulated by their needs in the following hierarchy (Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs) as follows: physiological needs, security of safety needs, social or belonging needs, esteem needs, self actualization needs. In short, the satisfaction means the action or preferred behavior or students' satisfaction towards the English language by using dramatic activities via showing verbal activities or physical behaviors such as their eagerness in performing the activities and their continual performing with fun and self confidence.

2.9 Research on Teaching English by Dramatic Activities in Thailand

In terms of research in Thailand, Punyaruang (2012) studied the Creative Dramatic Activities to promote students' speaking and writing skills for Classical Dramatic Arts college students in Angthong Province. She found that students' speaking skill was higher than the setting criteria and they were more motivated in learning. Furthermore, Jaiharn (2013) who studied and compared the English speaking ability by using dramatic activities of grade seventh students at Barn Yang Tia School in Surin found that the students who studied with the dramatic activities were able in speaking also highly motivated than the non-dramatic class and Thepsuriwong (2014) who studied the dramatic activities with grade eleventh students of Santhithamwittayakhom, Yasothorn Province and found that the students' speaking abilities were improving significantly different at .01.

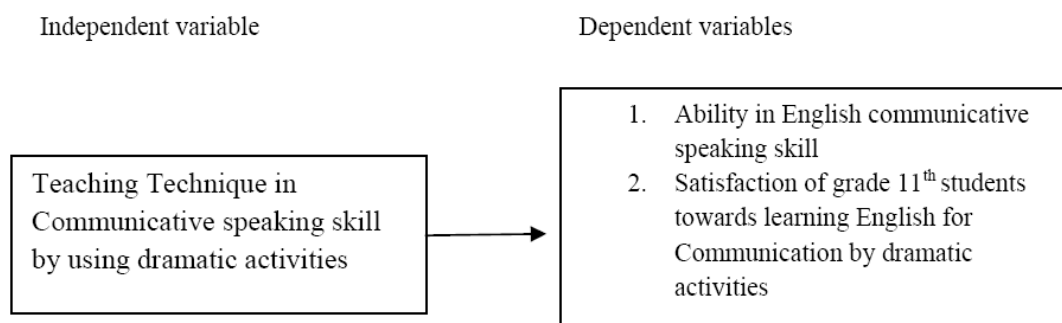
2.10 Research on Teaching English by Dramatic Activities Overseas

Ridel (1975) explored "An Investigation of the Effects of Creative Dramatics on Ninth Grade Students" by using dramatic activities to survey the students' opinions towards English and looked into students' behavioral changes and he found that dramatic activities resulted in students' imaginary development and effective communication significantly different at .01. Besides, Maranon (1981) studied "A Descriptive Analysis of Program of Creative Dramatics with a Bilingual/Bilingual Content (Spanish/English): Implications for English Oral Language of Mexican American Children" to compare the use of English by dramatic activities from the two groups: regular and interested group and found that the students who were treated with the dramatic activities were more fluent in terms of speaking skill and writing skill than the non-dramatic class significantly different at .01. In addition, Singh (2000) who studied English teaching by using dramatic activities found that the dramatic activities were partially used with the students who studied Malay as their mother tongues. The students were more interested in joining activities than the conventional teaching and they had fun in doing the activities.

From the studies both in Thailand and overseas showed that communicative speaking skill by dramatic activities enables learners to have confidence in performing their roles and develop their communication more fluently and efficiently.

2.11 Research Conceptual Framework

This study, the researcher would like to compare the communicative speaking skill before and after learning by using dramatic activities and to examine students' satisfaction towards the dramatic activities. Here's the research conceptual framework:



2.12 Objectives of the Study

- 1). To study the effect of dramatic activities on improving English communicative skills of grade eleventh participants,
- 2). To examine students' opinions towards the use of dramatic activities in their speaking class.

2.13 Hypothesis of the Study

The students' abilities on English communicative speaking skill of grade ^{11th} students after attending the teaching class using dramatic activities were higher than before attending the teaching and the students' opinions towards dramatic activities on speaking were highly positive.

3. Method

This is an experiment study with a single group pre-posttest design due to the fact that the researcher wants to see the development of the students' speaking abilities and since it is a small school whose students share the similarity in terms of language ability.

3.1 Samples

Samples: The samples were 26 eleventh graders who study in Language-Social program which focuses in English of Thungsaliachanupatham School, Thungsaliachan District, Sukhothai Province, enrolling English for Communication 2 (Eng 0213) in the second academic year of 2012 only 1 class by simple random sampling.

3.2 Material and Instruments

Lesson plans for English communicative speaking skill through dramatic activities adapted from Davies, (1990: 88-89), were made by the researcher covering expected learning result from the class of English for Communication 2 (Eng30213).

Test measuring English communicative speaking skill covered the topics taught by the researcher with 4 multiple choices for 40 items for example: Your friend is complaining about the traffic jam in Bangkok. You also agree with her that traffic in Bangkok is terrible. What would you say? A. I'm afraid I agree a lot. B. That's believable. C. I couldn't agree more. D. That's agreeable. within 20 minutes including the checking criteria; that is, 1 point for a correct answer, 0 for incorrect answer. The test items have been tried out with the other group who is not a sample group of Thungsaliachanupatham School.

The second test type is to measure English communicative speaking skill (practical one) from the role play by 3 students in each group. They draw a lot from 10 topics to act in the role play. They need 5 minutes to prepare for the 3-5 minute role play. Then they have to put the lot back into the hat for the others to draw with equal chance. They perform the role play with the teacher, a researcher herself, with the criteria how to assess their role plays made by the researcher by using the rubric with the weight of 4, 3, 2 and 1 classifying in five areas: pronunciation; vocabulary, expression and structure of the language use; content; fluency and gesture and facial expression. For example: under the item of pronunciation: the student gets 4 if he can pronounce words correctly and with the correct intonation in the sentence; he gets 3 if he can pronounce words and intonation in the sentence most correctly; he gets 2 if he can partially pronounce words with the partially correct intonation in the sentence; he gets 1 if he can pronounce words and intonation in the sentence with the least correct. The criteria are as follows: 34-40 points=Excellent, 27-33 points= Good, 20-26= Fair, below 20=Poor.

The 5-rating-scale questionnaire checking the students' opinions towards dramatic activities on English communicative skill was developed by the researcher and it has been assessed by three experts who check the IOC (Index of Item Objective Congruence). The opinion questionnaire covered three sections: Section 1 refers to instructional activities (5 items), Section 2 refers to contents and media (6 items), and Section 3 refers to the usefulness and applicability (4 items). For example in section 1 on instructional activity: The activities are suitable with the students' knowledge and ability. Section 2 on contents and media: content in the activity promotes students on problem solving; media is easy to use. Section 3 on usefulness and applicability: Students have self-confidence and be brave enough to show off.

3.3 Data Collection

After obtaining the samples and the research instruments, the researcher started the try out the experiment and collected data as follows:

- 1). Give orientation to students for the understanding of the expected outcome, learning activities, and

evaluation.

- 2). Pre test on English communicative speaking skill on both copies developed by the researcher and be assessed by the experts.
- 3). The researcher taught the lessons as planned to measure the ability on English communicative speaking skill towards dramatic activities created by the researcher and assessed by the experts for 6 lesson plans for 7 weeks, 3 hours for each week totally 21 hours.
- 4). After the lesson plans have been tried out, the samples would have a post test with the test measuring the ability of English communicative speaking skill which is the same set as pre test but alter the questions and choices.
- 5). After the first test having been conducted, the students would be tested on satisfaction towards the use of dramatic activities in their speaking class.
- 6). Analysis of data gained from the tests and questionnaire.

4. Data Analysis

Compare the ability differences of English communicative speaking skill before and after using the dramatic activities by utilizing t-test.

Analyze the satisfaction values of the sample group towards the English communication 2 by using dramatic activities by using mean and standard deviation.

4.1 The Statics Used for Analysis

Data were analyzed by utilizing mean, standard deviation and t-test.

4.2 Findings

Section 1: Result of the comparison of ability in English communicative speaking skill before and after using dramatic activities

Table 1 showing the comparison of ability in English communicative speaking skill of eleventh grade students before and after using dramatic activities

Testing	N	Total score	\bar{x}	$\sum D$	$\sum D^2$	$(\sum D)^2$	t
Pre test	26	80	32.46	638	16132	407044	28.66*
Post test	26	80	57.00				

$t(0.05, df 25) = 2.060$ *statistically significantly different at .05.

From Table 1 showing that the pre-test mean score by using dramatic activities was 32.46 and the post test mean score was 57; that is, the ability of English communicative speaking skill of eleventh graders after using the dramatic activities was higher than the pre-test mean score significantly different at 0.05 which was according to the first hypothesis.

Section 2: Showing the results of eleventh grade students' opinions towards the English Communication 2 by using dramatic activities

Table 2. Showing the results of eleventh grade students' opinions towards the English Communication 2 by using dramatic activities

Evaluation items	\bar{x}	S.D.	Level of satisfaction
1. Activities			
1.1 The activities are appropriate for the students' ability	4.47	0.43	Much
1.2 The activities open opportunity for students' participations	4.88	0.33	Very much
1.3 The students are having fun with the activities and learnable	4.85	0.37	Very much
1.4 The students have a good relationship among themselves and with the teacher via these activities	4.73	0.45	Very much
1.5 The students understand better and are not bored with the lessons	4.65	0.49	Very much
Total	4.78	0.41	Very much
2. Contents and media			
2.1 Contents in the activities are appropriate with the level and ability of students' knowledge	4.58	0.50	Very much
2.2 The contents in the activities promote students to be developed in English communicative speaking skill	4.73	0.45	Very much
2.3 The contents in the activities promote students to develop problem solving skill	4.69	0.47	Very much
2.4 The contents enable students to gain knowledge on ASEAN	4.73	0.45	Very much
2.5 Media are suitable with the contents	4.85	0.37	Very much
2.6 Media are not complicated, easy to use and virtual	4.81	0.40	Very much
Total	4.73	0.44	Very much
3. Usefulness and applicability			
3.1 Enable students to communicate in English	4.77	0.43	Very much
3.2 Promote the students to have problem solving skill	4.85	0.37	Very much
3.3 Students are confident and brave to show off	4.77	0.43	Very much
3.4 Students are having hands-on experience and can apply the speaking skill in their daily lives	4.65	0.49	Very much
Total	4.76	0.43	Very much
All Total	4.76	0.43	Very much

From Table 2 showing that students were very satisfied with the dramatic activities ($\bar{x}=4.78$, S.D. =0.41), contents and media ($\bar{x}=4.73$, S.D. =0.44), usefulness and applicability ($\bar{x}=4.76$, S.D. =0.43), and all total ($\bar{x}=4.76$, S.D. =0.43).

From the activities, it was found that students were very satisfied with every item ranking except for 1.1 from the highest mean score to the least mean score as follows: the activities open opportunity for students' participation, the students are having fun with the activities and learnable, the students have a good relationship among

themselves and with the teacher via these activities, the students understand better and are not bored with the lessons and the activities are appropriate for the students' ability. From contents and media, it was found that the students were very satisfied with every item ranking from the highest mean score to the lowest mean score as follows: Media are suitable with the contents, Media are not complicated, easy to use and virtual, the contents enable students to gain knowledge on ASEAN and the contents in the activities promote students to be developed in English communicative speaking skill, the contents in the activities promote students to develop problem solving skill and contents in the activities are appropriate with the level and ability of students' knowledge.

From usefulness and applicability, it was found that students were very satisfied with every item ranking from the highest mean score to the least mean score as follows: Promote the students to have problem solving skill, students are confident and brave to show off, and students are having hands-on experience and can apply the speaking skill in their daily lives.

5. Discussion

The reasons why the sample group was able to speak English for communication by using dramatic activities from the mean score of post test may result from the dramatic activities which emphasize the students' practice in speaking, students are confident and brave to act out and also they can use English in communication. They can apply the conversations into their daily use. In addition, they work in group and they can prepare the role play before hand enabling them to act out according to their assigned roles which was consistent with Maley and Duff (2001) stating that drama can stimulate the students to learn in other subjects, they want to communicate in different situations with natural communication and meaningful context. They know themselves better and can evaluate their own abilities. This can result in the students' self confidence in using a second language. They can feel more relaxed and minimize their tension. Each time they present their role plays, they are interested in the roles given to them; they experience their emotion and their friends' as well because they try their best to play the roles as given and they can transfer their emotions and meet with the role plays.

This study also was consistent with Davies (1990) stating that drama can connect the classroom situation with the actual situations. The students have a chance to rehearse their roles, their language use and they can practice listening skill at the same time. The dramatic activities enable students for the language behavior and they can use the language fluently for their interactions and this study was also consistent with Ridel (1975) whose study entitled "An Investigation of the Effects of Creative Dramatics on Ninth Grade Students" by using dramatic activities to survey the students' opinions towards English and looked into students' behavioral changes and he found that dramatic activities resulted in students' imaginary development and effective communication significantly different at .01 and this research also accorded with Maranon (1981) who studied "A Descriptive Analysis of Program of Creative Dramatics with a Bilingual/Bilingual Content (Spanish/English): Implications for English Oral Language of Mexican American Children" to compare the use of English by dramatic activities from the two groups: regular and interested group and found that the students who were treated with the dramatic activities were more fluent in terms of speaking skill and writing skill than the non-dramatic class significantly different at .01. In addition, this study was also consistent with Singh (2000) who studied English teaching by using dramatic activities and found that the dramatic activities were partially used with the students who studied Malay as their mother tongues. The students were more interested in joining activities than the conventional teaching and they had fun in doing the activities.

In terms of research in Thailand, this study was consistent with Punyaruang (2012) who studied the Creative Dramatic Activities to promote students' speaking and writing skills for Classical Dramatic Arts college students in Anghong Province. She found that students' speaking skill was higher than the setting criteria and they were more motivated in learning and also this study was consistent with Jaiarn (2013) who studied and compared the English speaking ability by using dramatic activities of grade seventh students at Barn Yang Tia School in Surin and she found that the students who studied with the dramatic activities were able in speaking also highly motivated than the non-dramatic class and this study was consistent with Thepsuriwong (2014) who studied the dramatic activities with grade eleventh students of Santhithamwittayakhom, Yasothorn Province and found that the students' speaking abilities were improving significantly different at .01.

The eleventh grade students from the sample group were very satisfied with the English Communication 2 by using dramatic activities at a highest level could be the reason from the activities which provided the practice for students as well as the role plays and at the same time they also practiced listening skill. These could result in the students' confidence in using English for their communication since it allowed students to join in every activity

prior to their performance; they had to write the scripts, set the situation, the characters. They could work in pair or in group which resulted in group work atmosphere with such cooperation and they could rehearse their roles and learned how to solve the problems in different situations. They had fun in doing the role plays under the teacher's facilitation. This was consistent with Iamphitak (2002) who studied and compared the speaking achievement between using dramatic activities and regular teaching of first year accountancy students in Nakhonprathom Technology School and found that the speaking achievement of students who studied with dramatic activities was higher than the one with regular teaching significantly different at .05., and their opinions towards the dramatic activities were also good.

6. Suggestions for Further Study

- 1). This study can extend to other level in order to compare the study and to promote dramatic activities in teaching.
- 2). The dramatic activities are time consuming and need the continuity; therefore, the hours should be allocated evenly for the continuity.
- 3). The researcher should spend at least one semester to do this kind of research.

7. Conclusion

- 1). The ability of English communicative speaking skill of a sample group by using dramatic activities after attending the course was higher than the prior to attending the course significantly different at .05.
- 2). The eleventh grade students' satisfactions towards English for Communication 2 by using dramatic activities overall and in each aspect were at the highest levels.

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