

THE PERCEIVED NEEDS OF THE FOURTH YEAR STUDENTS FOR EXTRACURRICULAR ENGLISH-SPEAKING ACTIVITIES IN SUAN SUNANDHA RAJABHAT UNIVERSITY.

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ABSTRACT

University students need English speaking skill to be successful in their academic lives. Rajabhat Universities strive to develop students' skill to meet readiness standards. This study aimed to explore the perceived needs of fourth year students of English and non-English majors on extracurricular English-speaking activities employed in the Faculty of Education in a Rajabhat University. The study tools were questionnaires and interviews to collect both qualitative and quantitative data. The sampling groups were invited to participate in this study on systematic and purposive sampling technique included 217 and 6 of fourth year students in 6 majors in the Faculty of Education, respectively. The questionnaires elicited the overview of perceived needs of the sampling's speaking activities they experienced in classrooms, interviews asking specific details of the perceived needs of the activities. The findings of this study revealed that groups of activities requiring the students' hand-on practices were most needed while those that did not require students' participation to take actions in class perceived to be the least needed.

Keywords: Academic English, English-speaking, Extracurricular activities

INTRODUCTION

Due to the modern global society, English is used worldwide as an instrument for communication. It is generally known that English has become increasingly important these days. Thailand is one of a number of developing countries in Southeast Asia that is accelerating its entry into joining a globalized world. Thai students study English in lecture courses for 12 years since primary through secondary levels; however, results are questionable. The Education First (EF) ranks Thailand at 64th out of 80 non-native countries in 2018. Among the many reasons behind their low English proficiency level, it is Thailand is an EFL context, where English is spoken as a foreign language: classroom is the only place where students get exposed to the language. It is argued that more efforts need to be made to encourage students to use the language beyond the classroom walls [1].

As being said that English language is an essential tool for connecting to other countries which use different languages. To be more understandable, people from these countries use English to express and exchange their ideas. Therefore, speaking is the first way to interact with others in the social community. Speaking skill is the ability to talk in situations for exchanging ideas and communicating between people. Speaking is a complex skill requiring interaction between the speaker and the listener in an active way. Additionally, the speaking skill consists of six components: grammar, vocabulary, fluency, comprehension, pronunciation and task. Furthermore, speaking is a skill that need practices, the more students practice through sharing their idea, the better speaker they become [2] [3].

English speaking activities allow students to be active and interactive in the classroom. According to Knowles (1970) stated that teaching by lecture and assigned reading tend to fade in favor of discussion, laboratory, simulation, field experience, team project, and other action-learning techniques. It could be stated that hands-on activities that requires student to demonstrate English speaking skills for instance, task-completion, information gathering, opinion-sharing, information transfer and role playing. These activities can promote a more active and interactive learning environment. Since these kind of activities let student to work on pair and/or group, so it motivates them to participate and speak with the members in their group [4].

Extracurricular English-speaking activities are a useful part of education as it provides positive gains for students. The extracurricular programs can help them to improve knowledge and skills of English language in more efficient and certainly interesting way. We can find out students' speaking achievement from students' performance. English teachers or instructor must be encouraged to foster a learner-centred environment focusing on hands-on experience drawn from the needs of the community. Students can practice speaking and learn particular language and culture through different activities organized by the extracurricular English activities [3] [5] [6] [7].

Unfortunately, the scope of English curriculum based on the 2016 curriculum of the faculty of Education, Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University, non-English major students' compulsory English subjects include 3 to 6 credits. The contact hours per week in English class then limits to only 3 to 6 hours a week in a 4-month period of the curriculum plan. Thus, those in non-English majors are less exposed to the target language due to the limited time stated by the curriculum. They have limited opportunity to practice English speaking both in and outside classrooms. To be specific, there are 6 majors which are Science, Early childhood, Thai, Social Studies, Mathematics, and English. Students in each major, except English major, have to study 2 general studies subjects that relate to English communication. Those subjects are English for Communication and Information Retrieval (GEL0102), English for Communication and Study Skills (GEL0103). Each general studies subject has 3 credits. Furthermore, the non-English major students have to enroll in required major subjects that associating with English communication. Overview, each major has 3 credit hour which allows students to expose to English instruction not over than 3 hours a week. Thus, it can be suggested that to obtain more practices to speak English outside the class is to corporate English speaking activities through extracurricular program which are supportive and satisfied the students' needs.

OBJECTIVES

According to the problem above, the researchers would like to conduct the study which aimed to explore the perceived needs of fourth year students in English and Non-English major for extracurricular English-speaking activities needed in the faculty of Education in a Rajabhat University and to compare the perceived needs of the students in the two different programs in the faculty of Education in Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University by using questionnaires and interview.

To achieve those objectives, the questions of the study were set up as follows; what are the perceived needs of fourth year English-major and non-English-major students for extracurricular English-speaking activities? And what are the differences between the perceived needs of them from the two different programs?

METHODOLOGY

A. Participants and Instruments

The participants in this study comprised 2 sampling groups. They were fourth year students from 6 majors in the Faculty of Education, including, Thai, Social Studies, Science, Mathematics, Early Childhood and English major. The first sampling group was 217 students selected by systematic sampling technique to do questionnaires asking the English-speaking activities they experienced and need it to perform it regularly. The second sampling group was 6 students: one student from each major was selected by purposive sampling technique. They were invited to interview asking for specific details of the perceived needs for the activities they are experienced in classrooms and suggestions for future extracurricular English-speaking activities.

The two sets of qualitative and quantitative data from the two instruments were compared to find out perceived needs for the extracurricular English-Speaking activities to be necessary useful for academic success in English speaking skill.

B. Data Collection Procedure

The fourth year students' perceived needs for extracurricular activities were explored by using questionnaires and interviews. The details of data collection procedures are as follows:

- a) After the permission given by the advisors of sampling group, the questionnaires were handed out and completed.
- b) The quantitative data from the questionnaires were analyzed resulting frequencies and percentages of the activities perceived to be needed in English classes. Then, the researchers designed interview questions related to the answers from the questionnaires.
- c) One participant from each major were invited to interview. They were asked the questions relevant to the English-speaking activities they faced in class, and their needs in improving speaking skill.
- d) The qualitative data obtained from the interview were analyzed by qualitative content analysis, and to compare perceived needs for extracurricular English-speaking activities between English and non-English majors students

FINDINGS

The sampling groups were 217 and 6 of fourth year students of the Faculty of Education. They were invited to do questionnaires and interview regarding perceived needs of English activities they experienced in English courses during study programs. The results are presented in two parts, as follows:

Part 1: Questionnaires

Table 1: The perceived needs of English and Non-English major students on needed English-speaking activities

English-speaking Activities	Total frequencies	Percentages
1. Interview	76	35
2. English to Thai translation	74	34.10
3. Idea sharing (group/pair work discussion)	78	35.9
4. Recitation	45	20.7
5. Role playing	124	57.1
6. Story strips activity	61	28.1
7. Speaking activities	53	24.4
8. Listening and oral answering	122	56.2
9. Reading and summary	49	22.6
10. Storytelling	27	5.6

Table 1 illustrated the frequency and percentage of the activities perceived to be needed in English classes. The results yielded that 124 of the frequency (57.1%) and 122 (56.2%) viewed role playing and listening and oral answering are needed respectively. Additionally, the least needed activity was storytelling. This activity was chosen by 27 students (5.6%) out of 217 students.

Part 2: Interviews

Table 2: Students’ opinions on the current English-speaking activities used in the Faculty of Education and suggestions for extracurricular English-speaking activities

Majors	Current English-speaking activities	Suggestions for extracurricular English-speaking activities
English	Information gap activities (e.g., sharing information provided by teacher)	- Interview foreigner (e.g., attitudes toward the LGBT, educational system) - Public speech (e.g., debate)
Thai	- Translation English articles to Thai and presentation - Grammar and structure lecture	- Role playing (e.g., creating our story and dialogue) - Idea sharing (e.g., discussion)
Science	Recitation and singing (i.e., conversation and structure repetition)	Interview foreigner (e.g., what has attracted you to come to Thailand?)
Social Studies	- conversation practice - Semi-speech (i.e., what’s your worst experience of your life?) - Grammar and structure lecture	- Role playing - Idea sharing (e.g., group discussion in historical or political topics)
Mathematics	- Translation English mathematical research papers - Grammar and structure lecture	Listening and oral answering (e.g., listen to conversations and answer by speaking)
Early Childhood	- Grammar and structure lecture - Recitation (i.e., conversation and structure dills)	- Listening and oral answering (e.g., listen to short stories and answer by speaking) - Role playing

Table 2 revealed that lecture courses focusing on grammar and structure were mentioned by 5 out of 6 respondents. All of the respondents also mentioned that it could benefit for them, if there are extracurricular English speaking activities provided in the university, for instance, role playing, public speech, idea sharing and interview.

CONCLUSION

In this section, findings are considered and followed by a discussion of the implications related to theory and pedagogy from the current literatures.

The result presented in table 1 and 2 showed the quantitative and qualitative data regarding to perceived needs for extracurricular English-speaking activities. It found that 124 of the sampling (57.1%) and 122 (56.2%) viewed role playing and oral answering needed, respectively. This could be the result of the fact that the activities were hands-on demonstrations and motivating to speak. Role playing and oral answering to the questions can improve students' speaking skills as it requires all of the students' interaction. Moreover it allows students to communicate with and understand others in new ways, and put the students in situations in which they need to communicate. [8] [9].

In addition, the respondents of 6 majors mentioned the current English-speaking activities were grammar and structure lecture which tend to fade in favor of discussion, laboratory and simulation. In the other point, the perceived needs for extracurricular activities received from 6 respondents are in the same way: they viewed role playing, group discussion, listening and oral answering, interview project and public speech could be beneficial for them as it requires students' hands-on and demonstrate English speaking skills. [8] [10].

As a result, the perceived needs of fourth year students between English major and non- English-major on extracurricular English-speaking activities needed in the faculty were not different as those mentioned activities require the students' hand-on practices in order to motivate them to speak English.

FUTURE RESEARCH

Results from the study have led to recommendations for future research as follows.

a) As this study aimed to explore students' perceived needs for English speaking activities, it would be interesting to conduct this research with communication skills that relates to 21st century skills.

b) To help understand what students need in English courses, it is suggested that the hands-on demonstration activities (i.e., interview project and design thinking activities) are the most needed extracurricular activities. That allows course designers or teachers for forming English clubs in the future.

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