Simulation as a Strategy to Teach English for Tourism

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Abstract

The purpose of this research is to develop lesson plans for English for Tourism using simulation strategy, to find out the result of teaching it on the students' oral English proficiency and to study the students satisfaction on the use of this strategy in the classroom. The subjects were 21 first year Tourism students, studying in the first semester of the 2008 academic year. They were selected by purposive sampling. The research instruments consisted of (1) 6 lesson plans, (2) a pre and post communicative oral English proficiency test, (3) a self-evaluation form, (4) an observation form, and (5) a specially designed opinion form on simulation strategy. The study was carried out for 36 periods (60 minutes/period). The statistics used were mean, and t-test dependent samples. The findings were as follows: 1. Communicative Oral English proficiency of the subjects was significantly improved at the 0.05 level after being taught through simulation strategy. So it can be concluded that teaching English by simulation strategy can be applied to develop communicative oral English proficiency in the target group. 2. The students considered that studying English through simulation strategy enabled them to apply the knowledge they had obtained in class to the real situation because simulation was very close to the real world. In addition, its stages were easy to understand and practical. Furthermore it provided them with a great opportunity to exchange opinions and fully participate in the activities. Lastly it promoted cooperation among group members and stimulated them to work in team.

Keywords: Simulation, Communicative English Proficiency

บทคัดย่อ

การวิจัยครั้งนี้มีวัตถุประสงค์เพื่อพัฒนาบทเรียนภาษาอังกฤษท่องเที่ยว โดยใช้สถานการณ์จำลอง ศึกษาผลการสอนภาษาอังกฤษท่องเที่ยว โดยใช้สถานการณ์จำลองที่มีต่อความสามารถด้านการพูดภาษาอังกฤษ และศึกษาความพึงพอใจของกลุ่มตัวอย่าง ใช้วิธีคัดเลือกแบบเจาะจง (Purposive-Sampling) ซึ่งได้แก่ นักศึกษาระดับปริญญาตรี ปีที่ 1 สาขาวิชาการท่องเที่ยว กลุ่ม 2 คณะศิลปศาสตร์ มหาวิทยาลัยเทคโนโลยีราชมงคลกรุงเทพ จำนวน 21 คน เครื่องมือที่ใช้ในการศึกษาครั้งนี้ได้แก่ (1) แผนการสอน จำนวน 6 แผน (2) แบบทดสอบวัดความสามารถด้านการพูดภาษาอังกฤษเพื่อการสื่อสาร ก่อนและหลังการทดลอง (3) แบบประเมินตนเองด้านการพูดภาษาอังกฤษเพื่อการสื่อสาร (4) แบบสังเกตพฤติกรรมด้านการพูดภาษาอังกฤษเพื่อการสื่อสาร (5) แบบสอบถามความคิดเห็นในการเรียนวิชาภาษาอังกฤษ โดยใช้กิจกรรมสถานการณ์จำลอง ใช้เวลาในการทดลองจำนวน 36 คาบ ๆ ละ 60 นาที โดยทดสอบความสามารถด้านการพูดภาษาอังกฤษ ของกลุ่มตัวอย่างก่อนและหลังการทดลอง สถิติที่ใช้ในการวิเคราะห์ข้อมูลได้แก่ค่าเฉลี่ย และ t-test แบบ Dependent Samples ผลการวิจัยสรุปได้ดังนี้ 1. นักศึกษามีความสามารถด้านการพูดภาษาอังกฤษเพื่อการสื่อสาร หลังการทดลองสูงกว่าก่อนการทดลองอย่างมีนัยสำคัญทางสถิติที่ระดับ 0.05 ซึ่งแสดงว่า การจัดการสอนโดยใช้กิจกรรมสถานการณ์จำลองส่งเสริมให้นักศึกษาพัฒนาความสามารถด้านการพูดภาษา อังกฤษ 2. นักศึกษามีความคิดเห็นโดยรวมว่า การเรียนการสอน โดยใช้กิจกรรมสถานการณ์จำลองทำให้นักศึกษาสามารถนำความรู้ไปใช้ในสถานการณ์จริงได้ เพราะสถานการณ์จำลองที่เรียนใกล้เคียงชีวิตจริง ขั้นตอนของสถานการณ์จำลองเข้าใจง่ายและสามารถปฏิบัติได้ เปิดโอกาสให้นักศึกษาได้แสดงความคิดเห็นอย่างเต็มที่ รวมทั้งช่วยกระตุ้นให้นักศึกษาทุกคนมีส่วนร่วมในการทำกิจกรรม และรู้จักการทำงานร่วมกัน

คำสำคัญ: การใช้สถานการณ์จำลอง, ความสามารถด้านการพูดภาษาอังกฤษเพื่อการสื่อสาร

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1. Introduction

The Tourism Industry provided the main income of Thailand, dating back to the year 1992, which was promoted as VISIT THAILAND YEAR. As a matter of fact, the number of tourists was increased from 2 million at that time to 10.80 in 2002 and then to 13.38 million in 2005 [1]. Up till now, the number tends to increase continuously. This is the reason why Tourism Industry is recognized as the most important policy of the Thai government. In addition to the enormous amount of income, there are many other benefits such as the increase in jobs for local people, the conservation of natural resources, the promotion of Thai culture and traditions, the quality of Thai products (OTOP) and so on. However, there is one thing to consider above these points, it is the communication between tourists and Thais. The skill needed by people in this area is English especially communicative oral English proficiency. From Watchree's research, it can be seen that both career paths and most students were in need of this skill and she expressed that there should be enough compulsory courses of English in Colleges and Universities [2]. In fact, English is our foreign language and English is the international language that is used the most, therefore people who deal with tourists have to use English as a medium of communication effectively. If communication is broken down or mistakes are made, its effect will be obviously serious. There may be misunderstanding among tourists about rules, regulations, prohibitions and laws [3]. Furthermore, when communication fails, the service which is the heart of tourism is unimpressive and disadvantaged. This will cause market share to be lost.

Accordingly, this leads to bad impressions and causes tourists to find new paths to our competitor countries nearby such as Vietnam, Singapore, Malaysia, Laos, Cambodia or China. As a result, our national income will be severely decreased.

To handle the problem of communication is the work of every sector which is concerned to put hands, heads and hearts together. In the Education sector, teaching and learning of English as communicative approach have been accepted and used for many years. However, there are remaining obstacles that teachers who teach English face today. For instance English is not the medium of communication in our daily life. Moreover the method of teaching is teacher-centered and grammar-translated method is mostly used.

As a teacher of English at Rajamangala University of Technology Krungthep, I have realized that most lecturers use commercial materials of which contents are Western, therefore this seems to be difficult for students to be familiar with and it is hard to remember the names of places and products. As the result, when they finish their education and enter in the work place as tour guides or tourist officers, they have to deal with foreign customers and the lack of communicative oral English proficiency may cause them fail in their career because they can not use the language appropriately.

The reason that simulation is selected because it is an activity that is set like a real world situation. The teacher is not the only one who says only "Right" or "Wrong" but is a controller or a manager who organizes the class and the students who are the main characters, act the roles of real people. They can argue, give opinions or

make decision freely. Actually, the final result is to use language appropriately. The use of simulation in class will help students understand the language usage and use it well when they are faced with real situations [4].

In the research of Pavana, the result concluded that using simulation in teaching students in the field of Tourism, Hospitality and Secretary helped improve their learning achievement [5]. On this basis, the researcher would like to develop lesson plans with a Thai setting, Thai places, Thai tradition and Thai products and use simulation strategy as an activity for first year Tourism students in the Faculty of Liberal Arts, Rajamangala University of Technology Krungthep in order to develop their communicative oral English proficiency.

2. Purposes of the Study

The purposes of this paper were to develop the lesson plans for English for Tourism using simulation strategies, to find out the result of teaching it on the students' communicative oral English proficiency and to study the students satisfaction in the use of this strategy in the classroom.

3. Research Instruments

Six lesson plan was developed by using simulation strategy focusing communicative oral English proficiency. Each unit consisted of language points, reading passage, situation and role cards The subjects were 21 first year Tourism students studying in the first semester of the 2008 academic year. They were selected by purposive sampling. The research instruments consisted of 1) 6 lesson plan 2) a pre and post communicative oral English proficiency test, 3) a self-

evaluation form, 4) an observation form, and 5) a specially designed opinion form on simulation strategy. The study was carried out for 36 periods (60 minutes/period). The statistics used were mean, and dependent t-test.

4. Methodology

4.1 Subjects were undergraduate students at Rajamangala University of Technology Krungthep, who have never studied English for Tourism before and sampling group was selected from first year tourism students, academic year 2008.

4.2 The research instruments were tried out by students in other group with the same knowledge level. After trying out, they had been checked, and approved by three English lecturers

4.3 Data were gathered from pre and post test, self-evaluation form on communicative oral English proficiency, and opinion form on simulation activity done by students and observation form recorded by a lecturer and the researcher after the second, fourth and sixth lesson.

4.4 The data were summarized and concluded by mean, and dependent t-test.

5. Results, Discussion and Conclusion

From the results, it can be presented in four aspects:

5.1 The result of pre and post test using simulation strategy

5.1.1 In order to interpret the mean score of each issue, the criteria should be stated first.

4.51 – 5.00   means   very good

3.51 – 4.50   means   good

2.51 – 3.50	means	medium
1.51 – 2.50	means	low
0.00 –1.50	means	very low

5.1.2 Mean should be reported with Standard deviation (S.D.) so that the dispersion of the score can be seen.

Table 1 The result of comparison between Pre and Post test using simulation strategy

Oral Proficiency	State of Test	$\overline{X}$	S.D.	n	t-value	t-prob
Fluent and continuous conversation	Pre test	2.26	0.44	21	19.32	<0.001
	Post test	4.26	0.34	21		
Giving information on provided situation	Pre test	2.17	0.46	21	14.67	<0.001
	Post test	3.93	0.40	21		
Selecting language for conversation appropriately and occasionally	Pre test	2.07	0.36	21	22.59	<0.001
	Post test	4.12	0.27	21		
Good pronunciation	Pre test	2.07	0.36	21	23.60	<0.001
	Post test	4.17	0.33	21		
Being confident in acting the assigned role	Pre test	2.21	0.34	21	30.03	<0.001
	Post test	4.26	0.37	21		
Problem solving and fluent dialogue	Pre test	1.93	0.18	21	32.49	<0.001
	Post test	4.26	0.34	21		

From Table 1, the result from dependent t-test at 0.05 significance level revealed that the average scores of pre and post test using simulation strategy were significantly different. It can be seen that the average mean of post-teaching was higher than pre-teaching in every aspect. Furthermore, the average mean of fluent and continuous conversation, having confidence in acting the assigned role, problem solving and making dialogue quickly was highest at 4.26. The average mean of good pronouncing, selecting language for conversation appropriately and occasionally and giving information on provided situation was at 4.17, 4.12 and 3.93 respectively.

Table 2 The result of comparison of the students' self evaluation scores in each stage

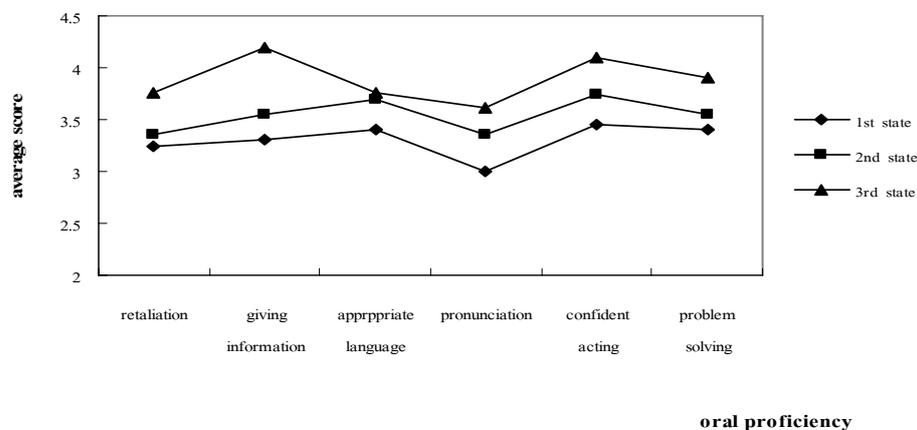| Test period	$\overline{X}$	S.D.	n	t-value	t-prob
First stage	3.30	0.16	21	6.10	0.002
Second stage	3.54	0.17	21		
First stage	3.30	0.16	21	8.00	0.000
Third stage	3.89	0.22	21		
Second stage	3.54	0.19	21	4.50	0.006
Third stage	3.89	0.22	21		

Figure 1 The result of the students' self evaluation scores in communicative oral English proficiency

Table 3 The result of the students' self evaluation scores on communicative oral English proficiency

Oral proficiency	First stage		Second stage		Third stage	
	means	meaning	means	meaning	means	Meaning
Fluent and continuous conversation	3.25	medium	3.35	medium	3.76	good
Giving information on provided situation	3.30	medium	3.55	good	4.19	good
Selecting language for conversation appropriately and occasionally	3.40	medium	3.70	good	3.76	good
Good pronunciation	3.00	medium	3.35	good	3.62	good
Being confident in acting the assigned role	3.45	medium	3.75	good	4.10	good
Problem solving and prompt dialogue	3.40	medium	3.55	good	3.90	good
Average	3.30	medium	3.54	good	3.89	good

According to Table 2, the result from dependent t-test at 0.05 significance level revealed that the average scores of the students' self evaluation in each stage of testing were significantly different. Apparently, after having experienced the learning process with simulation strategy, the students evaluated themselves increasingly at later stages. As the result from Table 3 and Figure 1, after having compared the result of the students' self evaluation on their communicative oral English proficiency in each behavioral aspect, it was found that at the first stage, they evaluated themselves medium in every aspect. At the second stage, they evaluated themselves good except in fluent and continuous conversation aspect as medium. Finally at the last stage, they evaluated themselves at good level in every aspect. Therefore, it can be concluded that using simulation in teaching communicative oral English proficiency is enable students to use English more confidently.

5.2 The result of behavioral observation on communicative oral English proficiency

The students' behaviors were observed by a lecturer and the researcher during teaching at three stages of the second, fourth and sixth lesson, data presented were average mean of each behavioral aspect and total by showing mean at a 1-5 scale, testing the differences of mean from behavioral observation by two lecturers in each stage as shown in Table 4 and Figure 2. With data analysis of students' observation on communicative oral English proficiency, the results were shown in Table 5.

Table 4 The result of testing to compare means on behavioral observation by lecturers in each stage

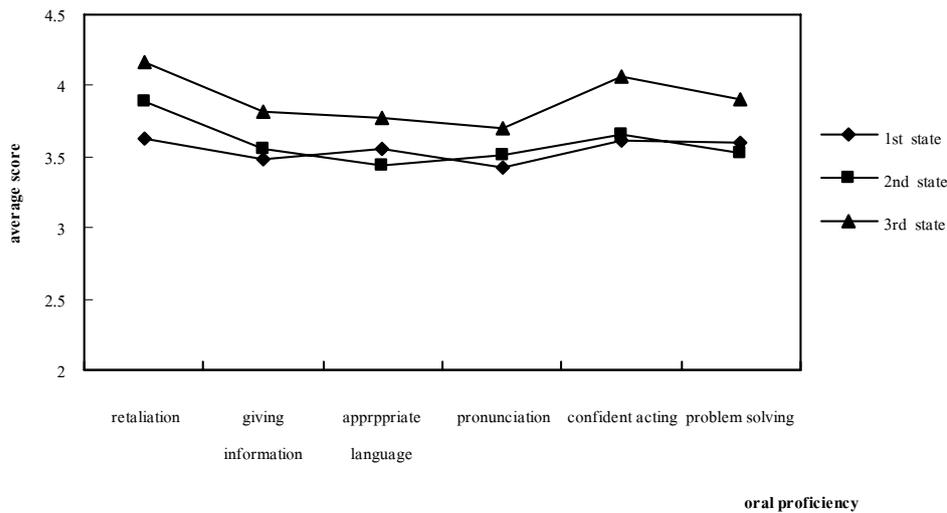| Test period	$\overline{X}$	S.D.	n	t-value	t-prob
First stage	3.55	0.08	21	0.815	0.452
Second stage	3.60	0.16	21		
First stage	3.55	0.08	21	6.986	0.001
Third stage	3.91	0.18	21		
Second stage	3.60	0.16	21	9.285	<0.001
Third stage	3.91	0.18	21		

Figure 2 The result of behavioral observation on communicative oral English proficiency

Table 5 The comparison of the result on behavioral observation in communicative oral English proficiency at three stages

Oral proficiency	First stage		Second stage		Third stage	
	$\overline{X}$	meaning	$\overline{X}$	meaning	$\overline{X}$	meaning
Fluent and continuous conversation	3.63	good	3.89	good	4.17	good
Giving information on provided situation	3.48	medium	3.56	good	3.82	good
Selecting language for conversation appropriately and occasionally	3.56	good	3.44	medium	3.77	good
Good pronunciation	3.43	medium	3.51	good	3.70	good
Being confident in acting the assigned role	3.61	good	3.66	good	4.07	good
Problem solving and fluent dialogue	3.60	good	3.52	good	3.90	good
Average	3.55	good	3.60	good	3.91	good

From Table 4, the result from dependent t-test at 0.05 significance level revealed that the average mean of behavioral observation by two lecturers at the first and the second stage were not different but the result between the first and the third stage as well as the second and the third stage were significantly different. In addition, the result from Table 5 and Figure 2, with comparison of the result on observation by two lecturers in communicative oral English proficiency in each aspect, it was found that at the first stage, most students were at good level in all aspects except in giving information on provided situation and good pronunciation which they were able at medium level. While at the second stage, most students were as well at good level except in selecting language for conversation appropriately which they were at a medium level. However at the last stage, they were at a good level on every aspect.

5.3 The comparison of the result on students' self evaluation and observation by lecturers

To find out the differences of mean between students' self evaluation and observation by two lecturers with dependent t-test, it was concluded as shown in Table 6 and Figure 3

Table 6 The comparison of the result between students' self evaluation and observation by lecturers

| Test period	Comparison of results	$\overline{X}$	S.D.	n	t-value	t-prob
First stage	The result of students' self evaluation	3.30	0.16	21	5.11	0.004
Second stage	The result of lecturers' observation	3.55	0.08	21		
First stage	The result of students' self evaluation	3.54	0.17	21	0.49	0.644
Third stage	The result of lecturers' observation	3.60	0.16	21		
Second stage	The result of students' self evaluation	3.89	0.22	21	0.16	0.876
Third stage	The result of lecturers' observation	3.91	0.18	21		
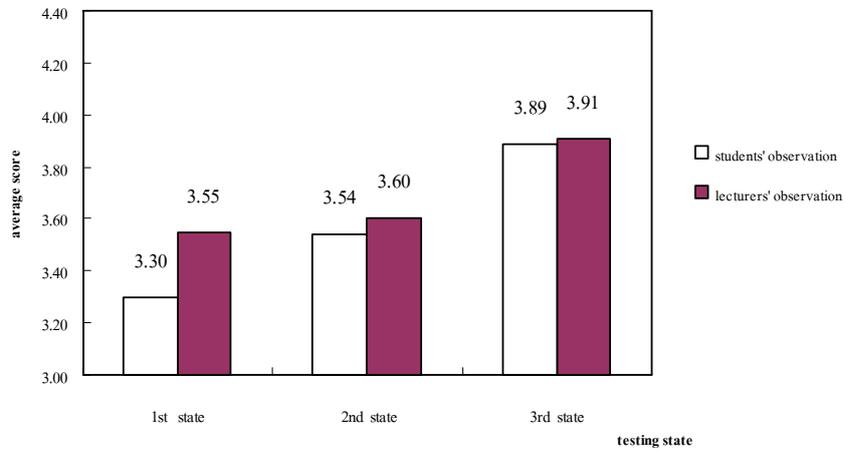
Figure 3 The comparison of the results between student's self evaluation and lecturers' observation

From Table 6, the result from dependent t-test at 0.05 significance level revealed that at the first stage, the result of students' self evaluation and lecturers' observation were significantly different but at the second and third stage, they were slightly different. From Figure 3, when compared the total results of students' self evaluation and lecturers' observation at three stages, it could be seen that the average scores raised up increasingly at every stage. The results of observation at the first and the second stage were nearly the same, slightly different only at 0.05 but at the third stage, the total mean of students' self evaluation and lecturers' observation were apparently increased. From the figures, it can be estimated that at the first stage which students had just learned about simulation strategy, their evaluation was shown significantly different from lecturers' observation. Obviously after having learned more at the second and third stage, the results were quite close and accordant. Therefore it can be concluded that using simulation strategy in the classroom can help develop the students' communicative oral English proficiency.

5.4 The result of the students' opinions in learning through simulation strategy

From this study, the students were asked for their opinions after having learned English through simulation strategy. The five- rating scale averaged data were shown in Table 7.

Table 7 The result of the students' opinions in learning English through simulation strategy

Learning through simulation strategy	$\overline{X}$	S.D.	meaning
1.The atmosphere is pleasant	4.00	0.63	good
2. Teaching stages are easy to understand and practical.	4.10	0.54	good
3. The duration of each activity is appropriate.	3.24	0.54	medium
4.The presentation of each topic in the activity is clear and easy to understand	3.86	0.66	good
5. The teaching material and aids are appropriate.	3.71	0.96	good
6. The role playing in group is appropriate.	3.81	0.81	good
7. The situation set in class is close to real life situation.	4.19	0.81	good
8. Students can practice language in various situations.	4.00	0.78	good
9. Simulation strategy provides students to express opinion.	4.10	0.83	good
10. Simulation strategy stimulates students to participate in the activities.	4.10	0.83	good
11.Students can apply the knowledge in class with the real situation	4.43	0.60	good
12.The result of learning through simulation enables students to develop oral English proficiency	4.48	0.60	good
Total average	4.00	0.78	good

Table 7 revealed that the students' opinions in learning English through simulation strategy were averaged at 4.00. The highest average was at item 12 which showed that the use of simulation in teaching English could develop students oral English proficiency [6] more and they could apply the knowledge in class with the real situation as the second highest mean at 4.43[7]. They thought that situations set in class were close to real life situation[8] with averaged score at 4.19. Moreover, their opinions in teaching stages which were easy to understand and practical [8] were at 4.10. In addition simulation strategy that enabled them to express opinions and stimulated them to participate in the activities [9] [8] had the same average at 4.10. As for the duration of each activity which was the least average at medium, it might be assumed that they had heavier loads in other subjects especially at the end of the semester which were near the final examination. As a matter of fact, there are many lecturers who tried to finish their lessons and asked students to hand the assignment within a period of time. They were possibly worried with the limited time in building the dialogue assigned in class. Furthermore, in the researcher's opinion, some students need more time in preparing the dialogue especially the ones who are weaker in English. However, since simulation stimulate pair works, the stronger students could help their partners to keep on communication which is the goal of teaching and learning.

Conclusion

On this basis, with analysis of the four aspects of the data, it can be inferred that:

1. Using simulation strategy in teaching English to the target group could develop students' communicative oral English proficiency. The result of posttest scores was higher than pretest ones at statistic of 0.05 significance.

2. The students thought that learning through simulation strategy was beneficial because it enabled them to apply the knowledge in class to the real world since it was close to the real life situation its stages were easy to understand and practical. It also enabled them to express opinions and stimulated them to participate in the activities.

6. Suggestion

6.1 There should be research performed on using simulation with other subjects as Hospitality, Engineering and Business Administration and so on. The reason is that simulation is student-based. They act the roles of real people according to the situation provided while lecturers are organizers who set the situations, prepare teaching aids such as authentic materials and role cards. The final result is the skill and knowledge that students can apply effectively to the real world.

6.2 To carry on the research effectively depends on a lower teaching load which the researcher should have in order to devote enough time to prepare the lesson plan, material and teaching aids appropriately. Therefore the administrators are the real supporters who take research works as important as academic work.

7. Acknowledgement

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