

A COMPARISON OF SCRIPTED AND UNSCRIPTED ROLE PLAY TECHNIQUES ON LAO EFL COLLEGE STUDENTS' SPEAKING ABILITY

NAWAMIN PRACHANANT

Business English Program, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Buriram Rajabhat University, Thailand. Corresponding author Email: nawamin.pc@bru.ac.th

SOUK VONGVIMAN

English Department, Savannakhet Teacher Training College, Lao PDR.

LATTANA CHANTHALASY

English Department, Savannakhet Teacher Training College, Lao PDR.

Abstract

The purposes of this research were 1) to compare Lao EFL college students' English speaking ability before and after being taught by using scripted role play technique, 2) to compare Lao EFL college students' English speaking ability before and after being taught by using unscripted role play technique, and 3) to compare the speaking ability of Lao EFL college students taught by using scripted and unscripted techniques. The samples were two classes of third year English major students who studied English for Specific Purpose II in the second semester of academic year 2021 at Savannakhet Teacher Training College, Lao PDR. The former class with 25 students was assigned to be taught by scripted role play while the latter class with 25 students was assigned to be taught by unscripted role play. They were selected by using simple random sampling technique using the classrooms as a sampling unit. The instruments were lesson plans of 24 hours, pre-test and post-test of speaking performance. The obtained data were analyzed by mean, standard deviation and t-test. The findings revealed that the learning achievement using both scripted and unscripted role play techniques of students' post-test mean score was higher than pre-test mean score with statistically significant difference at .01 level. In addition, the students' mean score using unscripted role play technique was higher than those mean score using scripted role play technique with statistically significant difference at .05 level.

Key words: Scripted role play, unscripted role play, Speaking ability, Lao EFL students

1. INTRODUCTION

English has become an international language. Among nations, it is considerably used as a lingua franca; in other words, it is the world language used as a means to communicate in various countries and various career fields. When people from countries where English is not the first or official language comes together, they have to choose a language to communicate. Besides communication purpose, English is used as a tool to transfer thoughts and cultures, and to create good relationships between people in different countries. Presently, it is accepted that the English language is more powerful and increasingly significant in Thailand as well as many countries around the world. Thai people use English for business, technology, and education. We use

English in many job positions such as a tour guide, a flight attendant, a hotel receptionist, a businessperson, etc. As a result, English is being taught and learned around the world as a second and/or foreign language today.

Based on the importance of English, the Lao People's Democratic Republic (Lao PDR) emphasizes on the significance of the English language, therefore, Lao government is aware that English is considered as the first foreign language and taught formally from elementary school up to the university levels. To be successful in learning English language, the key of achievement for teaching and learning English is qualified English teachers and good methodologies. Therefore, preparing students to be qualified English teachers is very important, especially, in Savannakhet Teacher Training College. The qualified English teachers need to be fluent and to have a good command in using four language skills: listening, speaking, reading and writing.

Unfortunately, most of Lao students who will be English teachers are not good at speaking because of the different structures between Lao and English. As teaching English language at Savannakhet Teacher Training College, Lao PDR, the researchers have found that many students, especially the third year English major students cannot speak or use English well. There are several reasons why they cannot speak well, for example: they are shy to speak; they are worried about making mistakes; they are afraid of criticism or losing face; they do not know what and how to speak; they do not have sufficient opportunities to practice; and they tend to use their mother tongue rather than the target language when they practice in the class [1], [2]. These problems are considered as three factors: cultural, linguistic, and/or psychological/affective [3]. Therefore, speaking is a difficult productive skill for them.

Based on the aforementioned, the researchers consider that role play is beneficial in improving students' speaking ability where the students will have chances and opportunities to express their opinions by practicing a lot as the key of speaking. Richards [4] confirms that role play activities develop conversational skill among students. Similarly, Stern [5] also supports that role play helps students to become more flexible in many kinds of new situations in which they will use the language more easily. The strength of flexible role play forms new conversational practice and creates a positive environment in class. Students enjoy and relax while they are learning. In addition, Tompkins [6] claims that role play provides students with chances to develop and practice new language and help students act out naturally without a threatening atmosphere.

According to Byrne [7], role play can be classified into two types: scripted and unscripted role plays. To perform role plays of the scripted type, the students will have to work in pairs or small groups. They are given prompts related to the target scenarios. Then, they will have to use the prompts as the model to form the target dialogue. The students rehearse that dialogue before performing it in front of the class. In the unscripted role play, on the other hand, the students are assigned to perform the role

play activity in front of the class based on the prompts given without preparing or writing the script in advance. Livingstone [8] states that both types of role play are the classroom activities allowing the students to practice the language, the aspects of role behavior (e.g. formality, register, function, attitude, paralinguistic features, extralinguistic features, acceptability and appropriateness, and the immediacy of oral interaction), and the roles outside the classroom that they may need to know. Also, she comments that the teacher cannot accurately predict all the roles that the students may need to know in order to communicate in real life. Hence, she suggests that the teacher may help raise students' awareness and understanding of role behavior and have them extensively practice the language associated with these roles.

Despite the benefit of both types of role play, there have evidently been no studies done to compare which type is the most effective in improving speaking ability in Lao situation. This study, therefore, will be as the pioneer study in such situation.

2. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

2.1 To compare Lao EFL college students' English speaking ability before and after being taught by using scripted role play technique,

2.2 To compare Lao EFL college students' English speaking ability before and after being taught by using unscripted role play technique,

2.3 To compare the speaking ability of Lao EFL college students taught by using scripted and unscripted techniques.

3. METHODOLOGY

This research is an experimental study done in the classrooms taught by using scripted and unscripted role play techniques. The research employed quasi-experiment design. The followings are the details of methodologies.

3.1 Population and Samples

The population of this study comprised four classes of 96 third year English major students who studied English for Specific Purpose II (ESP II) in the second semester of academic year 2021 at Savannakhet Teacher Training College, Loa PDR.

The samples were two classes of third year English major students who studied English for Specific Purpose II (ESP II) in the second semester of academic year 2021 at Savannakhet Teacher Training College, Loa PDR. The former class with 25 students was assigned to be taught by scripted role play while the latter class with 25 students was assigned to be taught by unscripted role play. They were selected by using simple random sampling technique using the classrooms as a sampling unit.

3.2 Research Instruments

There were three research instruments used in collecting the data including lesson plans, performance test, and speaking evaluation form. The followings were the details of each instrument.

3.2.1 Lesson plans: 4 lesson plans for teaching speaking using scripted role play technique for the third year English major college students class “A”, and 4 lesson plans for teaching speaking using unscripted role play technique for the third year English major college students class “B”. The topics of each lesson plan for both groups are tourist attractions, tourism, travel abroad and capital cities. The whole lesson plans were totally 30 hours each class.

3.2.2 Performance test (pre-test and post-test) using role play techniques for testing English speaking ability: the scripted role play performance test with the third year English major college students class “A”, and the unscripted role play performance test with the third year English major college students class “B”. They consisted of one scripted role play and one unscripted role play.

3.2.3 Speaking evaluation form: this form was used for evaluating each student’s speaking ability in both groups. It was used by three raters (rater 1 is one of the researchers, rater 2 is English teacher who is Lao, and rater 3 is English native speaker). The form was adapted from Brown’ [2] speaking ability components which are included 5 aspects: pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, fluency and comprehension. Each aspect merits 5 marks, in a total of 50, therefore, 50 marks for scripted role play and 50 marks for unscripted role play.

3.3 Data Collection

There were 4 steps in collecting the data in the intact classroom research as follows:

3.3.1 The pre-test was used to all of the samples with pair work at the first period. This test comprised of one scripted role play and one unscripted role which the samples draw slot the topics of four lesson plan by pair works. The students who studied with scripted role play created and prepared a role play for two minutes, then presented for two minutes for scripted role play, while the students who learned with unscripted role play also created and prepared a role play for two minutes, then two minutes to present for unscripted role play.

3.3.2 The researchers oriented the samples to understand how to learn speaking by using role play techniques.

3.3.3 The researchers started teaching English speaking under four topics including tourist attractions, tourism, travel abroad and capital cities. The activities in teaching speaking following the steps of the principles of the role play techniques including situation, role and dialogue or expression [9].

3.3.4 After attending the 24-hour lecture, the post-test as similar to the pre-test was used to the samples from both groups.

3.4 Data Analysis

3.4.1 In order to evaluate the students' speaking English ability performance before and after being taught the lessons using scripted and unscripted role play techniques, the pre-test and post-test were computed to find out mean (\bar{x}) and standard deviation (S.D.). The speaking performance test was scored by three teachers; a researcher, an experience English teacher and a native speaker. The researchers used a video recorder to record what they presented and scored them later. The speaking performance from the students was scored based on the adapted rubrics of Brown [2].

3.4.2 T-test is used to compare the difference between the pre-test and post-test mean scores in each group, the pre-test mean scores between scripted and unscripted role play techniques, the post-test mean scores between scripted and unscripted role play techniques and to detect the significant difference set at .05 level.

4. RESULTS

4.1 A comparison of Lao EFL college students' English speaking ability before and after being taught by using scripted role play technique

The 25 Lao EFL college students were evaluated by three raters on their English speaking ability before and after learned through scripted role play. The comparison of their English speaking ability before and after using scripted role play computed through dependent samples t-test is shown in Table 1 below.

Table 1: A comparison of Lao EFL college students' English speaking ability before and after being taught by using scripted role play technique

Achievement	n	Total Scores	\bar{x}	S.D.	t
Pre-test	25	50	27.30	3.89	17.10**
Post-test	25	50	37.50	2.40	

**significant difference at .01 level.

As shown in Table 1, it revealed that there was statistically significant difference between pre-test and post-test in learning English through scripted role play technique at a .01 level. That means Lao EFL College students had higher learning achievement after learning speaking through scripted role play technique.

4.2 A comparison of Lao EFL college students' English speaking ability before and after being taught by using unscripted role play technique

The 25 Lao EFL college students were evaluated by three raters on their English speaking ability before and after learned through unscripted role play. The comparison of their English speaking ability before and after using unscripted role play computed through dependent samples t-test is shown in Table 2 below.

Table 2: A comparison of Lao EFL college students' English speaking ability before and after being taught by using unscripted role play technique

Achievement	n	Total Scores	\bar{X}	S.D.	t
Pre-test	25	50	27.60	2.60	33.27**
Post-test	25	50	39.25	2.12	

**significant difference at .01 level.

As shown in Table 2, it revealed that there was statistically significant difference between pre-test and post-test in learning English through unscripted role play technique at a .01 level. That means Lao EFL College students had higher learning achievement after learning speaking through unscripted role play technique.

4.3 A comparison of the speaking ability of Lao EFL college students taught by using scripted and unscripted techniques

The 25 Lao EFL college students were evaluated by three raters on their English speaking ability before and after learned through scripted role play. The comparison of their English speaking ability before and after using scripted role play computed through dependent samples t-test is shown in Table 3 below.

Table 3: A comparison of the speaking ability of Lao EFL college students taught by using scripted and unscripted role play techniques

Test	Group	n	Total score	\bar{X}	S.D.	t
Pre-test	Scripted role play	25	50	27.30	3.89	0.30
	Unscripted role play	25	50	27.60	2.60	
Post-test	Scripted role play	25	50	37.50	2.40	2.79*
	Unscripted role play	25	50	39.25	2.12	

*significant difference at .05 level.

As shown in Table 3, it was found that there is not different between the pre-test mean scores of scripted and unscripted role plays. That means the two groups were alike in speaking ability before conducting the treatment with the role play techniques. However, the post-test mean scores between being taught by scripted role play and unscripted role play showed statistically significant difference at 0.05 level. That means

the unscripted role play is more effective than scripted role play in improving the speaking ability of the Lao EFL college students.

5. DISCUSSION

5.1 A comparison of Lao EFL college students' English speaking ability before and after being taught by using scripted role play technique

The findings showed that the speaking ability of post-test mean score was higher than the mean score of pre-test by learning through scripted role play technique with statistically significant difference at .01 level. This means that the lessons through using role play technique are efficient to improve students' English speaking ability after learning. The researchers observed that students could speak more fluently, they did not worry about mistake, speak more long than before. This finding is similar to Suryani [10], Vongviman, Prachanant and Nuemaihom [9], and Neupane [11] who stated that students who learned speaking through scripted role play had higher the post-test mean score than pre-test mean score with statistical significant difference at 0.01 level. In addition, Su [12] pointed out that the Chinese EFL students who were taught through scripted role play activities become more confident and less inhibited in speaking English, as well as more willing to take part in interactions in English.

5.2 A comparison of Lao EFL college students' English speaking ability before and after being taught by using unscripted role play technique

The findings showed that the speaking ability of post-test mean score was higher than the mean score of pre-test by learning through unscripted role play technique with statistically significant difference at .01 level. This means that the use of unscripted role play technique can improve speaking ability of Lao EFL college students. The study also reveals that the students were extremely satisfied with this technique. This could be summarized that this technique enables the students to formulate their turns and give them a better opportunity to improve their English speaking. This finding is similar to Phuetphon, Chayanuvat and Sitthitikul [13] and Naksevee [14] who found that Thai EFL students who learned through unscripted role play technique had higher the post-test mean score than the pre-test mean score with statistical significant difference at 0.01 level. Furthermore, Toding, Yahrif and Sirajuddin [15] mentioned that this teaching technique could empower the students to communicate independently, made the students feel comfortable during discussing any topics, and fostered interaction with one another. Students' satisfaction was positively associated with unscripted role play.

5.3 A comparison of the speaking ability of Lao EFL college students taught by using scripted and unscripted techniques

The findings showed that the two groups were alike in speaking ability before conducting the treatment with the role play techniques. However, the post-test mean scores between being taught by scripted role play and unscripted role play showed

statistically significant difference at 0.05 level. That means the unscripted role play is more effective than scripted role play in improving the speaking ability of the Lao EFL college students. This is consistent with Chotirat and Sinwongsuwat [16] and Rodpradit and Sinwongsuwat [17] who mentioned that unscripted role plays contributed to the improvement of the participants' discrete oral performance to a more significant degree than scripted ones. Moreover, they were more self-confident and increased interaction in the classroom. This is supported by Prachanant [18] and Hoofd and Liangpanit [19] who stated that the students' self-efficacy on the speaking ability after using unscripted role play was statistical significance higher than before using that one.

6. CONCLUSION

The results of this present study show that having the Lao EFL college students practice both scripted and unscripted role plays did help to improve their overall speaking performance significantly. However, the unscripted role play apparently produced significantly better results than the scripted ones. This may be due to the fact that both types of role play allow the students opportunity to communicate in meaningful situations over the period of the study. As Ladousse [20] stated, role play is a communicative technique developing fluency in language students. Stern [5] suggested that role play helps students to be able to speak English in various daily life situations and promote active learning amongst undergraduate students. Additionally, while unscripted role play provides students more opportunity to practice holistic features of language use in naturally occurring conversation, scripted ones are mainly concerned with preparing what to say, thus helping them noticeably improve their vocabulary or word choice.

In conclusion, the results of this study indicate that the unscripted role play is effective in improving the English speaking ability of Lao EFL college students to reach the goals set out. The findings suggest that the unscripted role play (one of the models of the student-centered) is effective in promoting the English speaking ability and motivation; therefore, it should be applied in teaching and learning English, especially to improve students' speaking ability.

7. RECOMMENDATION FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

7.1 The further studies should explore the use of the two types of role-play with different groups of learners, particularly those with higher levels of proficiency.

7.2 The researchers should apply further studies to explore the effect of role play techniques on other English skills.

7.3 The effects of role-play techniques not only on language proficiency but also other variables, such as attitudes and motivation for learning the target language, should be explored.

REFERENCES

1. Ur, P. (1996). **A course in language teaching practice**. Cambridge Teacher Training and Development, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
2. Brown, H. D. (1994). **Teaching by principles: An interactive approach to language pedagogy**. New Jersey: Prentice Hall Regents.
3. Burns, A. & Joyce, H. (1997). **Focus on speaking**. Sydney: NCELTR.
4. Richards, J. C. (1985). **The context of language teaching**. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
5. Stern, H. H. (1983). **Fundamental concepts of language teaching**. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
6. Tompkins, P. K. (2001). Role playing/simulation. **The Internet TESL Journal**. Retrieved 25 December 2021, from <http://iteslj.org/roleplaying/tompkins>. TESLTEFL.htm/
7. Byrne, D. (1986). **Teaching oral English: Longman handbooks for English teachers**. Singapore: Longman Group.
8. Livingstone, C. (1983). **Role play in language learning**. Burnt Mill: Longman Group Limited.
9. Vongviman, S., Prachanant, N. & Nuemaihom, A. (2017). **The effects of using role play technique to enhance English speaking ability of Lao EFL college students**. Unpublished M.A. (English), Buriram Rajabhat University, Thailand.
10. Suryani, L. (2015, October). The effectiveness of role play in teaching speaking. **ELTIN Journal**. 3(2): 106-109.
11. Neupane, B. (2019). Effectiveness of Role Play in Improving Speaking Skill. **Journal of NELTA Gandaki (JoNG)**. 1: 11-18.
12. Su, P. (1990). The effectiveness of role-play activities in learning English as a foreign language by Chinese college students. **Dissertation Abstract International**. 51(10): 252.
13. Phuetphon, P. , Chayanuvat, A. & Sitthitikul, P. (2012). **Using unscripted role play to improve speaking ability of Thai EFL students**. Proceedings-teaching techniques of 4th International Conference on Humanities and Social Sciences, Faculty of Liberal Arts, Prince of Songkla University, Thailand.
14. Nakseevee, N. (2013). **Using non-scripted role-play to teach speaking skills: A study of English conversation of Thai college students at Yala Rajabhat University**. Unpublished M.A. (Teaching English as an International Language), Prince of Songkla University, Thailand.
15. Toding, R. W., Yahrif, M. & Sirajuddin, S. (2021). Using unscripted role-play teaching activity to improve students' speaking ability. **Professional Journal of English Education**. 4(6): 1057-1066.
16. Chotirat, S., & Sinwongsuat, K. (2011). **The effect of scripted and non-scripted role play activities on oral communication: A case study of repair organization in conversation of the Thai college students**. Proceedings-Teaching Techniques. The 3rd International Conference on Humanities and Social Science. Faculty of Liberal Arts, Prince of Songla University, Thailand.
17. Rodpradit, S., & Sinwongsuwat, K. (2012). Using scripted and non-scripted role-plays to improve English speaking performance of hotel engineering staff. **APHEIT Journal**. 18(1): 17-25.

18. Prachanant, N. (2016, August 5-7). **Using role play to improve Thai EFL university students' speaking ability on tourism and self-efficacy**. Proceedings of "International Conference on Action Research in Language Education" at Hue University of Foreign Languages, Vietnam. International Conference on Action Research in Language Education (Proceedings 131-140), August 5-7, 2016, Hue University of Foreign Languages, Vietnam.
19. Hoofd, C. & Liangpanit, C. (2022). Thai high school students' reflections on role-play activity in Thai EFL speaking class. **Journal of Modern Learning Development**. 7(6): 115-121.
20. Ladousse, G. P. (2004). **Role play**. Oxford: Oxford University Press.