

*Original Paper*

# Development of English Communication Competence of Learners in Educational Institutes in Nakhon Ratchasima Province for Joining AEC

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## **Abstract**

*This research interpreted data from 4 research topics 1) Development of a New Method of English Instruction for Higher Secondary School Learners for Joining AEC, 2) Development of Basic English Communication for Occupational Progress of Non-Formal Education Learners in Nakhon Ratchasima Province, 3) Development of English Competence for Communication of higher Secondary School Learners in Nakhon Ratchasima Province for Joining AEC and 4) Development of English Skills of Tertiary Level Learners in Nakhon Ratchasima Province for Jobs and Occupational Opportunity.*

*The purposes of this study were to (1) study ability of English speaking for communication of higher secondary school learners from Boonluawithayanusorn, and Baanluamwithayakhom higher secondary schools for joining AEC, (2) compare ability of English speaking for communication of higher secondary school learners from Boonluawithayanusorn and Baanluamwithayakhom higher secondary school for joining AEC for joining AEC, (3) study basic English speaking ability for occupational progress of non-formal education learners, (4) compare basic English speaking ability for occupational progress of non-formal education learners, (5) study the English speaking skill of the tertiary level learners in Nakhon Ratchasima in order to add up a chance of jobs and occupation and (6) compare the English speaking ability of the tertiary level learners in Nakhon Ratchasima in order to add up a chance of jobs and occupation.*

*The population in this study consisted of 290 learners from higher secondary schools, from non-formal education department, and tertiary level who took English course during the second semester of the academic year 2015. Samples consisted of 140 learners from higher secondary schools, non-formal education department, and tertiary level who took English course during the second semester of the*

*academic year 2015 through the purposive sampling random. Eight weeks were spent on this research. The instruments were (1) the questionnaire related to students' problems about the English instruction, (2) classroom observation, (3) semi-structured interview, and (4) English speaking ability test (pre-test and post-test). The scores of English speaking ability were analyzed and interpreted statistically in terms of mean ( $\bar{x}$ ), standard deviation (S.D.), and t-test (pretest and posttest) with the criterion of 60%.*

**Keywords**

*development, communication, competency, AEC*

**1. Introduction**

English has been considered as an international language and widely used for communication in the age of AEC because it is used for communication by the majority of people around the world as media of communication. More importantly, English has been used as both a second language and a foreign language in many countries. As a result, many countries including Thailand incorporate English into the curriculum wishing their citizens to have ability to communicate well in English. Communication is ability of speakers to convey their ideas and information through creation of visual representations. Speaking and listening do comprise much of what is often referred to as communicative competence because the communication competence is even more multi-faceted and complex including knowledge (what a student should know), motivation (how a student should feel about communicating), and skills (what a student should be able to do) (Moghadam & Adel, 2011).

Thailand may encounter both crises and opportunities after the implementation of the ASEAN Economic Community in 2016 if some Thai people still encounter communicating to ASEAN members including foreigners. Thus, Thailand should have a concrete move towards preparing for the AEC and act as soon as possible. Otherwise, Thailand would be left behind other countries rather than be able to take the advantages of the AEC over other ASEAN countries. Foreign languages, English in particular, are Thai people's big problem I (ASEAN Economic Community, 2012, p. 2). English instruction in Thailand aims to improve learners' speaking communication ability by providing them useful learning processes and strategies to enhance the use of English for social and academic purposes. Moreover, the English curriculum adopted a learner-centered approach and focused on communicative language teaching as key approaches to facilitate the language learning process and improve communicative ability in order to prepare Thai learners for regional and international workplaces (Ministry of Education, 2004). Although English is very important for communication in the age of AEC, it appears that Thai learners lack the skills to use English in real situations, especially in speaking and listening outside the classroom after graduation. In fact, learners are able to communicate in English in the classroom because the communicative situations are set. In the real setting, they hardly have a chance to speak English with native speakers. Moreover, they have do not have the ability to interact with the foreigners because of lacking of self-confidence and opportunity to deal with foreigners. Besides, some teachers of English have focused on applying the traditional approach which emphasizes memorization,

grammatical structures and a teacher-centered approach rather than a communicative approach resulting in less confidence in communicating with foreigners in English.

In order to solve the above mentioned problems, TCRS (Teaching Communication through Reading, Writing and Storytelling) approach of teaching English can encourage learners to be skillful in basic English conversation for Joining AEC because this approach focuses on activities involving the interaction in real communication and performing meaningful tasks. Learners are assigned to perform communicative activities, while the teachers have a duty as consultants or facilitators to facilitate and guide the communicative activities.

## **2. Method**

### *2.1 Research Method*

This research aimed to investigate the basic English speaking ability of learners from higher secondary schools, non-formal education department and the tertiary level through the TCRS approach which was developed and implemented by the researcher. This research also aimed to study and compare English speaking ability of learners from higher secondary schools, non-formal education department and the tertiary level. Moreover, learners' opinions towards learning English through the TCRS approach were investigated.

The TCRS approach was developed and implemented by the researcher to develop English speaking ability of learners from higher secondary schools, from non-formal education department and from the tertiary level. The objectives of the study were to 1) study English speaking ability for communication of higher secondary school learners from Boonlua with ayanusorn and Baanluam with ayakhom higher secondary schools for joining AEC, 2) compare ability of English speaking for communication of higher secondary school learners from Boonluawithayanusorn higher secondary school and Baanluamwithayakhom higher secondary school for joining AEC, 3) study basic English speaking ability for occupational progress of non-formal education learners, 4) compare basic English speaking ability for occupational progress of non-formal education learners, 5) study the English skill of the tertiary level learners in Nakhon Ratchasima Province in order to add up a chance of jobs and occupation, and 6) compare the English speaking ability of the tertiary level learners in Nakhon Ratchasima Province in order to add up a chance of jobs and occupation.

This research also aimed to investigate the following questions: 1) Will learners who have studied English via the TCRS approach of English speaking training achieve significantly higher average scores on the speaking post-test than the pre-test?, 2) Will the TCRS approach enable learners to improve their English speaking ability?, 3) What are the non-formal education learners' achievements in their speaking ability after being taught by the TCRS approach? and 4) Will non-formal education learners who are taught by the TCRS approach improve their speaking ability? The population in this study consisted of 290 learners from higher secondary schools, non-formal education department, and tertiary level who took English course during the second semester of the academic year 2015. Samples

consisted of 140 learners from higher secondary schools, non-formal education department, and tertiary level who took English course during the second semester of the academic year 2015 through the purposive sampling random. This was an experimental research design. It aimed to investigate the effects of learning through the TCRS approach on students' English speaking ability and explore learners' opinion towards learning English speaking ability.

The TCRS approach consisted of five steps. They are 1) Teacher/learners-oriented communication, 2) A story reading and a story retelling process, 3) Teacher-learners communication, 4) Learner-learner communication, and 5) Complete communication (Adapted from Kramsch, 1986; Nunan, 1991; Shumin, 1997; Savignon & Berns, 1997; Murray, 2000; Harmer, 2005).

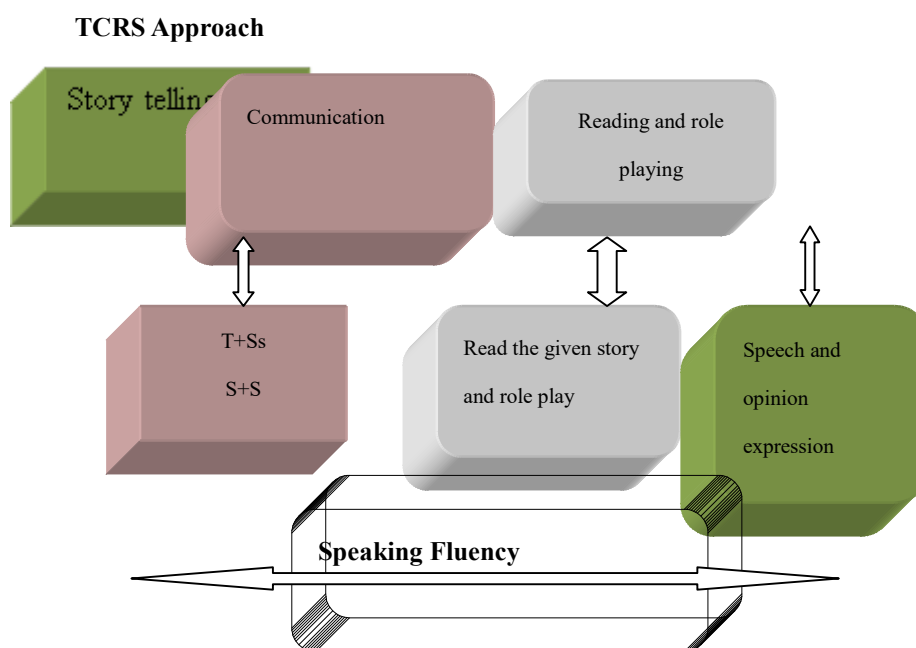


Figure 1. TCRS Approach

Source: Created by ThawaschaDechsubha based on CLT and TPRS, 2015.

### 2.1.1 Research Instruments

This study was a pre-experimental, quantitative research that used one experimental group, and a treatment of 8 lesson plans which were created for 8 weeks. A pre-test of speaking ability was administered to the samples before the treatment. In contrast, the post- test of speaking ability was administered to the samples after the treatment. A questionnaire was given to the samples at the end of 8 weeks. Moreover, the samples were interviewed one by one through the process of semi-structured and focus-group interviews in order to reach the core of the matter rather than administrating questionnaire sat the end of the treatment to check their attitudes.

Instruments in research procedure consisted of 1) eight lesson plans based on the TCRS approach with 8 communication competency were designed. Each lesson plan lasting approximately three hours was

carried out over a period of 8 weeks, 2) instruments for data collection from both pre-test and post-test of speaking ability, 3) the questionnaire, 4) interview based on learners' attitudes on 8 lesson plans of communication competency and 5) the TCRS approach.

### 3. Results

The results of this study revealed that the post-test mean score of English speaking ability of learners who studied eight contents through the TCRS approach process were significantly higher than the pre-test mean score. More importantly, they had a positive opinion towards studying eight contents in English through the TCRS approach process. This could be interpreted that studying English speaking through the TCRS approach process will enhance learners to speak English easily.

The conclusion also drawn from the results of the research indicated that the post-test mean scores (36.17) from Table 1, (36.17) and from Table 3, (36.15). The results supported research hypothesis number 1 (Learners who have studied English via the TCRS approach of English speaking training will achieve significantly higher average scores on the speaking post-test than the pre-test) number 2 (The average scores of English speaking post-test of learners who have studied English via the TCRS approach of English speaking training are significantly higher than the criterion of 60% ) number 3 (The learners who are taught by the TCRS approach focusing on speaking ability improve their English speaking skill), and number 4 (The learners of the experimental group are proficient in their speaking ability). It could be interpreted that learners' English speaking ability was significantly improved after studying English through the TCRS approach process which encouraged them to improve their English speaking ability. The data drawn from six objectives of research also provided the evidence that the TCRS approach process enhanced learners' English speaking ability. Moreover, they had positive opinions towards studying English through the TCRS approach process. The results of learners' response to the questionnaire and interview revealed that they agreed that developing English speaking ability of learners through the TCRS approach process enhanced their more life skills and more experiences which could be adapted to their lives.

According to the research hypothesis number 5 which said that the opinion of learners who are taught by the TCRS approach focusing on language communication is in a good level. The findings from the questionnaire also supported the third hypothesis because the majority of them agreed by checking "agree" for nearly every item. The results of this study emphasized the beneficial effects of studying English through the process of the TCRS because their English speaking ability was improved.

**Table 1. The Pre-Test and Post-Test**

English speaking ability	N	Mean	Mean Difference	S.D	T
Pretest	35	22.62	29.40	3.07	31.03
Post test	35	36.17		4.85	

The English speaking ability of 35 learners was tested and scored both in the pre-test and post-test. There was a comparison between the results of pre-test and post-test including the mean score, standard deviations and mean difference. As illustrate in Table 1, it was found that learners' English speaking test scores were higher the pre-test scores. The learners' mean scores (36.1714) and standard deviation scores (4.85971) were higher than the mean scores and standard deviation scores of the pre-test scores (22.6286, and 3.07825).

**Table 2. Showed Learners' Opinions towards the TCRS Approach**

Item	$\bar{x}$	S.D	Interpretation	Rank
1.Learning to speak English through the TCRS makes me speak English easier than in the past	4.59	0.67	Strongly agree	1
2.I like to practice speaking English through the process of the TCRS	4.45	0.60	agree	2
3.The TCRS process helps me improve my speaking skill	4.45	0.60	agree	2
4. I feel that my English speaking ability has improved after studying English through the process of the TCRS	4.41	0.59	agree	3
5. The teacher encourages students to speak freely.	4.41	0.59	agree	3
6. The TCRS process makes me want to learn more English	4.41	0.59	agree	3
7. Teaching 8 occupations through the process of TCRS interests me the learning activities a lot.	4.36	0.56	agree	4
8. The TCRS process encourages me to speak English all the time	4.36	0.58	Agree	4
9. I feel more confident to speak English after learning about the occupations through the TCRS process	4.23	0.61	agree	5
10. I enjoy participating in this course.	4.23	0.63	agree	5
11.I want to have longer time to study	4.14	0.71	agree	6
12. I feel more confident in speaking English	4.14	0.71	agree	6
13. I have more confidence to speak English with native speakers.	4.14	0.71	agree	6
14. Studying English related to the linguistic competence encourages to speak English.	4.00	0.62	agree	7
15. Studying English enables my life to be better	4.00	0.62	agree	7

because of communicative competence.				
16. I feel happy every time I speak English.	4.00	0.62	agree	7
17. Practicing English through the TCRS process encourages me to speak more and more.	4.00	0.62	agree	7
18. Studying English through the TCRS process creates my idea.	4.00	0.62	agree	7
19. English speaking ability enables to have a good job in the future.	4.00	0.62	agree	7
20. I want to study English more and more through the TCRS process.	4.00	0.62	agree	7
Total	4.00	.17	agree	

From the results of questionnaire to examine learners' opinion towards studying English through the TCRS approach, it was found that all learners strongly agreed with item 1. Learners agreed with items 2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9,10,11,12,13,14,15,16,17,18,19, and 20. The results of the total of 20 items showed learners' agreement with a statistical rating of  $\bar{x} = 4.00$  and S.D.= 0.61. It could be concluded that the majority of learners had a positive opinions towards studying English speaking through the TCRS approach. The score results of English speaking ability of 45 samples from Baanluamwithayakhom higher secondary school showed the similar things. The mean score of the pre-test and post-test of 45 samples from Baanluamwithayakhom higher secondary school were also shown in the table 3.

**Table 3. The Pre-Test and Post-Test Scores of Baanluamwithayakhom Higher Secondary School Learners'**

English speaking ability	N	Mean	Mean Difference	S.D	T
Pretest	45	22.48	29.32	3.09	34.77
Post test	45	36.15		4.93	

The English speaking ability of 45 Baanluamwithayakhom higher secondary school learners was tested and scored both in the pre-test and post-test. There was a comparison between the results of pre-test and post-test including the mean score, standard deviations and mean difference. As illustrate in table 6, it was found that Baanluamwithayakhom higher secondary school learners' English speaking test scores were higher than the pre-test scores. The learners' the mean scores (36.15) and standard deviation scores (4.935) were higher than the mean scores and standard deviation scores of the pre-test scores respectively (22.48, and 3.09).

**Table 4. Learners' Opinions Towards Learning English through the Process of the TCRS**

Item	$\bar{x}$	S.D	Interpretation	Rank
1. Learning to speak English through the TCRS makes me speak English easier than in the past	4.59	0.67	Strongly agree	1
2. I like to practice speaking English through the process of the TCRS	4.45	0.60	agree	2
3. The TCRS process helps me improve my speaking skill	4.45	0.60	agree	2
4. I feel that my English speaking ability has improved after studying English through the process of the TCRS	4.41	0.59	agree	3
5. The teacher encourages students to speak freely.	4.41	0.59	agree	3
6. The TCRS process makes me want to learn more English	4.41	0.59	agree	3
7. Teaching 8 lessons through the process of TCRS improve me English skill	4.36	0.56	agree	4
8. The TCRS encourages me to speak English	4.36	0.58	agree	4
9. I feel more confident to speak English after learning about the occupations through the TCRS process	4.23	0.61	agree	5
10. I enjoy participating in this course.	4.23	0.63	agree	5
11. I want to have longer time to study	4.14	0.71	agree	6
12. I feel more confident in speaking English	4.14	0.71	agree	6
Total	4.00	.17	agree	

From the results of questionnaire to examine learners; opinion towards studying English through the TCRS approach, it was found that all learners strongly agreed with item 1. Learners agreed with items 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, and 12. The results of the total of 12 items showed learners' agreement with a statistical rating of  $\bar{x} = 4.00$  and  $S.D.= .17$ . It could be concluded that the majority of learners had a positive opinions towards studying English speaking through the TCRS approach.

**Table 5. Learners' English Speaking Ability in Four Aspects on the Pretest and Posttest after the Application of the TCRS Approach**

Aspects of English speaking ability	Test	N	Total scores	$(\bar{X})$	S.D	t	df	P
Communication	Post-test	25	5	3.81	0.53	8.32	32	.000



	Pre-test	25	5	2.47	1.12			
Pronunciation	Post-test	25	5	3.88	0.60	7.77	32	.000
	Pre-test	25	5	2.46	1.11			
Comprehension	Post-test	25	5	3.71	0.59	10.33	32	.000
	Pre-test	25	5	2.19	0.96			
Vocabulary	Post-test	25	5	3.93	0.51	10.21	32	.000
	Pre-test	25	5	2.41	1.04			

\*p < .05

The results of Table 5 showed that learners' speaking ability post-test in four aspects: comprehension, pronunciation, communication, and vocabulary was higher than the pretest with the statistical significance at .05.

#### 4. Discussion

The findings of the analyzed data were discussed in each research question. The learners also improved their English speaking ability after being taught by the TCRS approach process.

**Research question 1:** Can the TCRS approach develop learners' English speaking ability after being taught? According to the experimental group data, the results showed that the mean scores of the post-test were higher than the mean score of the pre-test which was supported by the research hypothesis 1.

**Research Hypothesis 1:** Learners who have studied English via the TCRS approach of English speaking training will achieve significantly higher average scores on the speaking post-test than the pre-test. According to the experimental group, the results in Table 4, 6, 8 and 12 showed that the mean scores of the post-test were higher than the mean score of the pre-test. Based on the result of the pre-test, the learners had difficulty in speaking English in front of the class. Most of them were shy and lacked self-confidence and fluency. When they were assigned to provide or create the dialogue, most of them struggled with their English speaking ability before talking to the researcher and their friends. They used only simple vocabulary and short sentences.

After the post-test, the majority of them improved their English speaking ability. They were skillful and spoke more fluently without worrying about mistakes. They also felt more comfortable to express their ideas and interact with their friends in English better regardless of mistakes. The result of this study was in accordance with VorachaiPiata (2004) and PhutthachartYuanjitpiya (2005 who said that learners' speaking skills including fluency and comprehensibility were improved after studying English through dialogue process. The TCRS approach was also related to conversation practice between the teacher and learners, and between learners and learners. The teaching model also developed learners' favorable behaviours in learning English. It meant that learners had an opportunity to share ideas and information before beginning communicative activities.

**Research hypothesis 2.** The average scores of English speaking post-test of learners who have studied English via the TCRS approach of English speaking training are significantly higher than the criterion of 60%.

The post-test score of learners improved English speaking ability by studying eight contents in English through the TCRS process. Moreover, the results of the study in Table 9 and 10 about learners' English speaking ability in four aspects on the pre-test and post-test mean scores (communication, pronunciation, comprehension, and vocabulary) indicated that the samples improved their English speaking ability from learning English through the TCRS process activities. In the post-test of the samples, it showed that the majority of learners spoke English with more confidence and fluency. Additionally, they could use longer sentences with more new words and more fluency. Even though they made some grammatical mistakes, they could communicate their idea fluently. Furthermore, the scores of the post-test showed that a few learners had low or same scores. This might be because they were very shy and they did not like to speak. The result of this study was in accordance with Abe (1994) who said that communicative activities would enable learners to practice speaking, and also help speakers and listeners become productive partners in EFL or ESL classrooms. It meant that learners had an opportunity to share ideas and information before beginning communicative activities. Furthermore, Levis and Grant (2003) found that the communicative activities not only help learners improve speaking and pronunciation ability but also enable them to develop the pronunciation skills in the activities. According to the TCRS approach process, the pronunciation skills were taught in their English class, thus learners enjoyed expressing their concepts in English by ignoring pronunciation errors. Additionally, the TCRS activities helped promote learners to have careful planning and thinking of the speech patterns.

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