Using Role Play in Teaching Chinese Speaking Skills for A Special Purposes: A Case Study of A Perfume Company in Thailand

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ABSTRACT

The objectives of this study were to (1) examine the effectiveness of role play in enhancing Chinese speaking skills of perfume company staffs in Thailand. (2) explore the learning satisfaction of the perfume company staffs after using role play activities in learning Chinese. Mixed methods were employed and a group of 20 working staffs who were working in a perfume company in Thailand was involved in the study. Four Lesson Plans of 120 minutes each (1 Lesson Plan = 2 Sessions) incorporating role play activities were used and taught for 8 sessions (2 sessions per week) with 20 participants within the time period of a month. The researcher collected the quantitative data through needs analysis questionnaire, pretest as well as posttest scores and the qualitative data through focus group discussion (FGD).

The quantitative data were analyzed by paired sample t-test based on mean, standard deviation and significant value.The outcome of the learning achievement test score analysis revealed significant difference between the posttest mean ($\bar{x}$ =3.51) and pretest mean ($\bar{x}$ =1.16) with the mean difference of 2.35. The significance (P) value $\leq$ 0.01 which indicated significant increase in the posttest scores as compared to those of pretest. Analysis of the qualitative data of focus group discussion proved impact on students' learning satisfaction. The result showed that the use of role play activities was effective in enhancing Chinese speaking skills of perfume company staffs in Thailand.

Key Words:role play, Chinese for special purposes, speaking skill, adult learning, learning achievement

1. Introduction

In view of the increasing economic exchanges between countries and China, it is also necessary to develop specialized business Chinese teaching for foreign workers. Business Chinese teaching involves some knowledge of Chinese business activities, information. Quite different from ordinary Chinese teaching, Business Chinese teaching is more targeted and professional.

Firstly, according to the latest data from the Ministry of Tourism and Sports of Thailand in 2018, the total number of foreign tourists to Thailand in 2017 exceeded 35 million, with the number of Chinese tourists exceeding

9.8 million, which was the highest proportion. Chinese tourists were still the biggest contributors to Thailand's tourism industry in terms of volume and revenue generation. (Punta Parnu ,2018)

Secondly, in Thailand, English and Chinese have been included at every level of education as the second or foreign language among several 19 languages taught,(Tangyuenyong & Choonharuangdej, 2010). Chinese language, in particular, has been offered as a foreign or second language, in both public and private schools in different programs of study. A research conducted by Luo & Limpapath (2016) in Thailand revealed that the students' attitudes towards the second or foreign language learning should benefit them in that the language would bring more opportunities and success to one's life. Students in Thailand who major in Chinese Language, hold more positive attitudes than the students in the program of English and Mathematics, with a minor in Chinese.

Thirdly, Chinese studying in Thailand has been facing so many difficulties compared to other second language learning in Thailand. Ronnaphol (2016) stated that the ineffectiveness of the teaching and learning was students could not apply the knowledge to the real environment. Further, teachers lack the competency to teach and attract students' attention and enthusiasm.

Fourth, according to the association of Southeast Asian Nations (referred to as the ASEAN --Association of South-East Asia: ASEAN) economic development, political development and the variation tendency of Chinese economy, trade and foreign influence, as well as the need of Chinese talent in the workplace. Narueporn & Yang (2013) states that take the student as the center to promote the practice of classroom teaching, as well as arrangement of work based learning (Work-base learning) activities. The purposes of the practice of extra-curricular learning is to help students to explore, taking innovation spirit and the practice ability, giving ideas to students to actively participate in the natural activities and social life, so as to better complete the personnel training target.

In the 21st century education, there is a role play provides the opportunity for students to develop and revise their understanding and perspectives by exploring thoughts and feelings of characters in given situations. Saskatchewan Education (2009, p.46) mentioned that it could help students to improve empathy as they examine others' ideas, feelings, and points of view.

Thus, the aims of the study were to investigate the effectiveness of using role play situations to improve staffs' speaking skills for the staffs who were not competent in Chinese as well as their learning satisfaction. Also since they did not have a lot of opportunities to practice speaking Chinese in the company, this study, therefore, aimed to help to interact with their imaginary customers in Chinese classroom. Moreover, this teaching model was expected to improve staffs' satisfaction towards Chinese language learning.

2. Research Objectives

2.1 To examine the effectiveness of role play in enhancing Chinese speaking skills of perfume company staffs.

2.2 To explore the learning satisfaction of the perfume company staffs after using role play activities in learning Chinese.

3. Research Methodology

3.1 Research Design

In this study, the research was a quasi-experimental study of a single group which was pretested and posttested design for quantitative data and qualitative data collection. The scores from both tests were analyzed by a computer program. The data were collected from various instruments including needs analysis questionnaire, pretest, posttest, assessment of speaking ability and focus group interviews. Three professors checked the appropriateness and the validity of the instruments according to research objectives. The scores of IOC were calculated and analyzed. The average score of all instruments validity (IOC) in total was 0.95.

3.2 Participants

The participants in this study were 20 participants (staff) working in the perfume company in Thailand. Participants' age were around 35 years old with mixed genders. They had limited experiences of dealing business with Chinese customers.

3.3 Research Instruments

The following research instruments were employed to gather quantitative data and qualitative data.

3.3.1 Needs Analysis

The needs analysis questions were conducted at the very beginning of the study. Participants were given a questionnaire with specified questions to figure out what they wanted to learn through this study.

3.3.2 Lesson Plans

The lesson plans were developed from the result of pre-questionnaire with staffs. These topics were about a basic conversation that could help learners easily to enhance Chinese speaking skill for a special purposes in the certain situations. The lesson plans details are as follows:

Table 3.1 Lesson Plans

Lesson	Topic	Hours
1	Greetings	2
2	Brand Name	2
3	Number	2
4	Payment Process	2

3.3.3 Pretest and Posttest

The achievement tests contained role play conversation tests for testing the participants' learning achievement before and after the study . Participants were asked to speak on the same scenarios for both pretest and posttest. There were five given scenarios for both tests, for example, there were two roles in the test. In scenario one, role A was a sale person in a perfume store, role B was a customer from China wants to buy a perfume for yourself and quite sensitive about the price. Each person has to ask three questions and answer your partner's questions.

The rubrics was used to evaluate participants Chinese Speaking skill in their pretest and posttest. There were two teachers marking the participants scores during two tests. Rubric was adapted from Spoken Chinese Proficiency Grading Standards and Testing Guideline (2010). The maximum possible score was four, the minimum possible score was one.

3.3.4 Focus Group Discussion

The focus group discussion was set after role play activities were done. Twenty participants were divided into 5 groups. The researcher and the participants conducted group discussion with specified questions to discuss what they had enhanced through this study as well as their satisfaction of the study.

4. Results

4.1 Quantitative Data Analysis

The first objective of the study was to examine the effectiveness of role play in enhancing Chinese speaking skills and their learning satisfaction of the perfume company staff. In this regards, the participants' learning achievement in vocabulary, fluency, pronunciation, and comprehension were ascertained. The pretest and posttest were administered before and after the intervention of role play activity respectively. In order to identify the discrepancy between learning achievement scores in the pretest and posttest, a descriptive statistical analysis was computed.

Table 4.1 Compare the Differences of the Result by Using T test

Comparison	Pretest		Posttest		Mean difference	t	**P-value**
Overall four aspects of assessment- vocabulary,fluency,pronunciation & comprehension	$\overline{X}$	S.D.	$\overline{X}$	S.D.	2.35	-28.687	.000*
	1.16	.186	3.51	.329			
Significance level: < 0.05							

As shown in Table 4.1, the mean of the pretest of the sample group was $\overline{X}$ =1.16 and the standard deviation was .186. In the posttest, the mean was $\overline{X}$ =3.51 and the standard deviation was .329. The mean difference between the pretest and the posttest was 2.35 showing an increase in the mean of the posttest.The significant value being 0.001, lower than 0.05 (P<0.05) indicated that there was statistically significant rise in the posttest scores compared to the pretest scores.
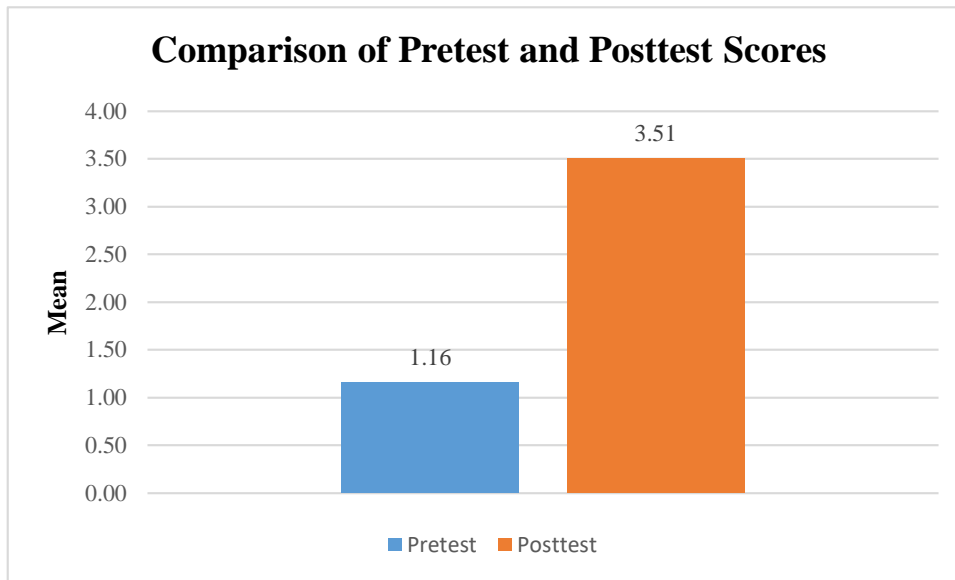
Figure 4.1 Comparison of Pretest and Posttest of 4 Aspects

2. Qualitative Data Analysis (Focus Group Discussion)

Content analysis was used to analyze qualitative information from Focus Group Discussion. Ten open-ended questions were used with five groups with four students in each. The responses from the discussion were analyzed and the result of analysis was presented below:

All 5 focus groups agreed that doing role play activities helped them in learning Chinese. Some of them stated that while they played different roles, they were able to listen and talk to each other. Role play activities helped teach students in the class about certain situation in a related and dramatic fashion or role play activities allowed them to play the roles of sales and customer in different situation. Below are some of the statements from participants:

"Yes. Role play activities allows us to play the roles of sales and customer in different situation, so we are able to see things from a new perspective. And also give us enthusiasm in learning new language". Focus Group 3(FDG-3).

"Yes, in role play activities, we can get the opportunity to practice skills we might not use on a regular basis. Skills such as debating, reasoning and negotiating can be fixed in hypothetical situations". Focus Group 4(FDG-4).

"Yes, when teacher use role playing as instruction, we can have the capability of developing deeper involvement and knowledge about the issues at hand. And we have more chance to "act" and "interact" in different situation". Focus Group 5(FDG-5).

5. Discussion

5.1 Analysis mean score of Pretest and Post-test by Paired - Sample T- Test

The result of the study showed the effectiveness of role play in enhancing Chinese speaking skills of the participants from the perfume company staffs which resulted the posttest mean score had significant difference compared to the pretest mean score. This may be assumed that the role pay had an effectiveness in enhancing the participants' Chinese speaking skills. This result was in line to the study of Niraula (2007) who had an investigation on effectiveness of role play technique in teaching imperative. The research found out that role play technique was more effective than usual classroom teaching. It was as well as in line with the study of Irianti (2011) who carried out a research on using role play in improving students' speaking ability. This research used classroom action research (CAR). The research concluded that role play activities could improve students' speaking ability, as it was shown by the score. It also proved that the positive response of the students toward the teacher's professionalism and their interest in learning speaking through the role playing technique.

5.2 Satisfaction of participants after using role play activities in learning Chinese

The result of the study above showed the satisfaction of participants after using role play activities in learning Chinese. The result of this study was found in line with the result of the study of Lin (2009) who conducted a research on investigating role play implementation. The researcher tried to explore how Chinese EFL teachers made an effective use of role-play in their classroom teaching. The research explained that role play activities created an enjoyable and interesting learning environment in which students were encouraged to use their imaginations in designing and performing different roles and plots while employing authentic communication in the target language. It also stated that role play facilitates students' learning of the four language skills including listening, speaking, reading and writing, but it was apparent that the use of role play was more frequently involved in speaking and reading.

6. Conclusion and Recommendation

6.1 Conclusion

The results by the analysis of mean score and standard deviation revealed that the pretest of Chinese speaking skill on the overall aspects was found in a low level since mean score was only 1.16. By Analyzing each aspect of each speaking skills, it was found that all aspects were in the low level, being sorted by the level of mean scores from the highest to the lowest: Pronunciation, Vocabulary, Fluency, and Comprehension respectively.

Posttest result of Chinese speaking skills on the overall aspects was found in a high level as the mean score was 3.51. By analyzing each aspect, it was found that all aspects were in the high level. This could sorted by the level of mean scores from the highest to the lowest which were Vocabulary, Pronunciation, Comprehension, and Fluency respectively.

Most of participants agreed that the role play was a good activity. Approximately a half of the class liked it the most. Some of the participants agreed and liked working in pairs because they could talk and learn from each other as it was the two-way of learning. They also liked teacher's teaching methods such as when teacher gave an example; and the teacher allowed them to talk more and talk most of the time.

6.2 Recommendation

6.2.1 Using role play activities in learning Chinese could prove the learning satisfaction of the participants therefore it would be recommended to any interested Chinese teachers and Chinese schools. It should be emphasized to the teachers who teach Chinese language and use role play as one of the important teaching techniques in the classroom to improve the students' speaking ability and also enhance student satisfaction.

6.2.2 The next research may apply role play technique in the other groups of participants such as young students or other industry staffs in Thailand or other country which consider Chinese as second language. In order to see that if the result of the study will be the same or difference with this study which can be confirm further about the effectiveness of the role play teaching technique in enhancing Chinese speaking skills.

Acknowledgment

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