

DEVELOPMENT OF ENGLISH ORAL COMMUNICATION FOR MARKETING COURSE USING THE PROJECT-BASED LEARNING APPROACH (PBLA)

Thanyalak Sunaratn

Burapha University
Chanthaburi, Thailand
tsunaratn@gmail.com

Abstract

In business contexts, English oral communication is beneficial not only as a means to communicate with colleagues and clients, but also to build reputation, rapport, and trust. This study aimed to develop an oral communication course based on the Project-based Learning Approach (PBLA) to enhance students' oral communication abilities in a marketing context and to investigate the opinions of the students toward the developed Project-based Learning (PBL) course. The subjects were 20 third-year marketing students at a public university in Thailand. The instruments included needs analysis questionnaire, structured interview, oral communication abilities test, opinions survey, and teacher's diary. Data analysis included content analysis and descriptive statistics.

The findings revealed that after participating in this course, the students' oral communication abilities in most investigated areas including comprehensibility, fluency, functional competence, vocabulary, and grammar improved at 0.05 level. Only the area in pronunciation was not significantly improved due to time limitation of the course and students' deficient English proficiency background. However, the students' opinions towards the course were positive since they claimed that PBLA was interactive, enjoyable, and could enhance their oral communication abilities.

Keywords: curriculum development, needs analysis, oral communication abilities, Project-based Learning Approach

Introduction

The importance of English is increasing in this present world due to the development of world economy and technology. As a result, learning English in countries where English is not a native language is significantly increasing; therefore, a number of ESL and EFL speakers are rapidly growing. Consequently, the development of English language teaching acquires the privileged responsibility that people in educational systems must pay attention to sharpening and enhancing the English proficiency of their citizens. Similarly, numerous language practitioners and stakeholders in the Thai educational system pay more attention to a new curriculum development emphasizing business English teaching university level (Wiriyaichitra, 2001: 4-9).

However, the level of business English skills, especially oral communication abilities, of Thai graduates is unsatisfactory and rather low comparing with other Asian countries, such as Malaysia, Philippines, and Singapore (Foley, 2005: 131-146; Wiriyaichitra, 2001: 4-9). This oral communicative deficiency is obviously related to a number of Thai graduates who have difficulties in employment, especially in the areas of information technology, business, and tourism. Employers and business owners are generally interested in hiring qualified graduates who have acquired not only knowledge and skills in the particular areas of subject matter, but also communicative skills: speaking and listening. In addition, a lot of research reveals that academic knowledge and English language skills taught in Thai universities cannot meet the needs of English used in the workplace (Wiriyaichitra, 2001: 4-9). Listening and speaking skills are needed in professional contexts but they are not the focused skills in Thai university's curriculum. English courses offered in the universities should focus on teaching students' knowledge and skills related to future professions (Wiriyaichitra, 2001: 4-9).

This present study employs Project-based Learning Approach (henceforth PBLA) as a pedagogical framework for developing the course investigated with the purposes to enhance students' English oral communication abilities in the marketing context and to explore the students' opinions toward this developed business English oral course. Project-based pedagogical strategy focuses on encouraging learners to participate actively in classroom activities to develop their own learning outcomes and later present them in the forms of project works. Students articulate, investigate, and regulate their own learning through a sequence of activities. Consequently,

students are encouraged to communicate actively with other peers or participants and participate in small group activities to accomplish their group projects (Coffey, 2007; Epstein and Ormiston, 2007; Tipplet and Amorós, 2004; Stoller, 1997).

Course Development

Course development is to design a new course or revise the interrelated components in the existing course. This development expects to serve the needs of the students and other related audiences, such as teachers, parents, and societies as well as to enhance the effectiveness of the course. It is also developed in order to encourage students to develop their learning skills as well as social skills for living in this changing world properly (Graves, 2000).

Various frameworks of course development have been designed and developed by expertise educators. For example, a deductive model of course development proposed by Tyler (1949: 131-133 cited in Oliva, 2009); a five-step sequence of course development proposed by Taba (1962: 133-134 cited in Oliva, 2009); a systematic approach to designing and maintaining language curriculum proposed by Brown (1995); and a framework of course development processes by Grave (2000). From the frameworks previously mentioned, it is explicitly concluded that most of the frameworks contain similar processes starting from investigating needs analysis, formulating goals, objectives, content, and materials, teaching, assessment, and evaluation; however, some differences in sequence of sub-processes are observed.

Project-based Learning Approach (PBLA)

PBLA can be summarized as a systematic approach that shifts away from a traditional classroom and instead emphasizes authentic and active learning activities that are interdisciplinary, student-centered, and integrated with real world issues. PBLA relates to knowledge acquisition and knowledge transfer. Knowledge acquisition is when students engage in the learning process directly to accumulate and formulate their learning outcomes. Knowledge transfer happens when students acquire or process their knowledge through the teacher's mediation and peers' collaboration (Anderson-Cruz and Vik, 2007; Fried-Booth, 1986; Tipplet and Amorós, 2004).

PBLA possesses some interrelated theoretical foundations: social constructivism, student-centeredness, and cooperative learning. All of these

theories focus on emphasizing students to actively participate in various cooperative teaching and learning activities with other peers or group members to enhance their content knowledge and language skills which are transferred and expanded when students interact or communicate with others. Students have the priority to process and formulate their learning outcomes and present them later.

The Project-based framework of this study is developed based on the preceding studies (Ellis and Hafner, 2008: 167-190; Epstein and Ormiston, 2007; Tipplet and Amorós, 2004) and could be described as follows:

Orientation stage

The Orientation stage is intended to connect students' interests to the contents of the units or the course and to make a commitment to the final project work. For the final project assignment, orientation stage is to negotiate and discuss topics and types of project outcomes, scope, tasks, language skills, as well as the criterion for assessing the students' final project.

Preparation stage

The Preparation is to provide students the opportunities to learn and practice knowledge, skills, and activities needed prior to the active implementation. These facilitating activities can be performed through practicing language skills focusing on oral business communication abilities. Another support is to introduce technology regarding computer programs and websites which could be used to search for relevant information or knowledge and to develop their project outcome as well as their presentations.

Information gathering stage

This involves the handing over students the opportunities to have direct experience in planning, searching for needed information, analyzing the gathered information, and formulating their group projects. External participants will engage in processing project activities depending on tasks and activities used.

Evaluation stage

The Evaluation is to help the students in the presentation their group projects. The teacher records, monitors, and evaluates the presentation

focusing on learned language skills, oral communication abilities, content, and objectives stated, associated with the criterion assigned.

Follow-up stage

The Follow-up part of the program is to give constructive feedback regarding the project and the presentation to the students.

Oral communication abilities

Rahman (2010: I-II) defines oral communication abilities as a dynamic process of interaction that involves the ability to transmit facts, ideas, opinions, feelings, and information effectively. Besides, oral communication refers to the ability of the speaker to deliver spoken messages or information to communicate in the face-to-face interaction to express the ideas or the intended message in both basic communicative and academic purposes. Proficient oral communicative speakers must be able to think critically about how to transfer their intended message and how to function it in a variety of speaking environments. Murphy and Hidebrandt (1991) also point out the importance of oral competence in a business context that to know the content areas of business is important, but to transfer or convey those ideas effectively requires an effective oral communicative competence.

In the business world, oral communication can be categorized into two groups: within and outside an organization. Oral communication commonly used within the organization includes staff meetings, personal discussions, presentations, telephone conversations, and informal conversation. For outside the organization, oral communication might be performed in face-to-face meetings, telephone calls, speeches, teleconferences, and oral presentations.

English for Specific Purposes (ESP)

ESP is based on the proposition that all language teaching should be designed to match the specific learning and language needs of particular groups of learners. Thus, the sociocultural contexts in which these learners use their English have to be taken into consideration. ESP focuses on the function of English used in any particular settings. It is an English course which is mainly designed and developed from the identified learning and language needs of specific groups of learners, then the syllabus is designed accordingly to serve these requirements (Dudley-Evans and St. John, 1998; Hutchinson and Waters, 1987).

Business English is regarded as one of ESP courses that require systematic and organized pedagogical course components to design and develop the course for specific groups of learners to meet the actual needs in diverse business settings.

Needs Analysis

Needs analysis refers to the scientific process that helps the teacher to investigate the learners' information in an educational context. It provides meaningful information of the learners including their current level of knowledge, skills and competence, reasons for studying a language, learning deficiency, learning goals, and especially learning needs. Conducting a needs analysis is regarded as one of the vital responsibilities of the teacher for designing a proper language course. The data from the needs analysis could be used to reveal the information of the informant to design or develop the course components of the existing or prospective courses to better serve the needs of the target groups for better curriculum the curriculum and organizations advancement (Bachman and Palmer, 1996; Nunan, 1999; Witkin and Altschuld, 1995).

Research Design

This study is a mixed-method research which employed the quasi-experimental research using a one-group pre-test, post-test design to elicit quantitative and qualitative data. The research procedures could be divided into three phases considering developing the course based on the findings from needs analysis instruments, implementing the developed course based on the PBLA and the findings from the needs analysis instruments, and evaluating the developed course.

Population and Samples

The population of the needs analysis instruments was fourth year marketing students in the public universities in the east of Thailand and the employees who work in the field of the marketing in the east of Thailand. The sample of the needs analysis instruments included 30 fourth-year marketing students from Science and Arts Faculty, Burapha University (henceforth BUU), Chanthaburi Campus and another 100 marketing employees in the nearby settings considering Chonburi, Rayong, and Chanthaburi.

The sample of the main study was 20 third-year marketing students

from Science and Arts Faculty, BUU, Chanthaburi Campus who enrolled in the listening and speaking course entitled “Listening and Speaking for Careers” in the first semester of the academic year 2012.

Research instruments

The instruments could be divided into three categories i.e. needs analysis, course implementation, and course evaluation. All research instruments were validated by three experts in the related fields using the content validity of Item Objective Congruence (IOC). The instruments could be described as follows:

Instruments for the Needs Analysis

Needs analysis instruments were used to elicit the data regarding the learning needs of marketing graduates and marketers. The two needs analysis instruments were:

Questionnaire

The items and the constructs of the questionnaire were developed based on the previous studies and from commercial textbooks for business English for marketing. The questionnaire was designed using the means of the five-point Linkert scale. The construct of the questionnaire was classified into five parts: background information, oral communication topics that are useful in the field of marketing, useful skills for doing project activities, learning activities for enhancing oral communication abilities, and additional suggestions.

Structured Interview

Structured interview was designed with the aim to collect the in-depth information and opinions from the experienced marketers. There were five open-ended questions. Thai and English languages were used in the interview sessions depending on the interviewees with the aim to make this interview comfortable for the interviewees and to simplify the answering process.

Instruments for Course Implementation

English oral communication for marketing course has been developed based on the findings collected from the needs analysis instruments and the underlying theories of PBLA. Contents, activities, and materials used in the

course were developed and sequenced based on the framework of this present study. The course was validated by three experts and two units were piloted in the second semester of academic year 2011.

Instruments for Course Evaluation

Instruments for Course Evaluation consisted of oral communication abilities test, teacher's diary, and opinions survey. The instruments were described as follows:

Oral communication abilities Test

The oral communication abilities test was used as the pre- and post-test with the aim to compare the students' oral communication abilities before and after the main study was implemented. The test composed of four tasks i.e. greeting and introducing yourself, OTOP product presentation, company profile, and marketing, based on the content taught in the implemented course.

The Analytical Rubric for Assessing Oral Communication Abilities used in this test was adapted from the SOLOM developed by San Jose Unified School District, San Jose, California (2000) and the Analytical Rubric for General Oral Communication of GPST developed by Sirithararatn (2007). This analytical rubric was a 5-Point Linkert Type Scale, range from 1 to 5 which was the highest. The six dimensions of the criteria included comprehensibility, fluency, functional competence, vocabulary, pronunciation, and grammar.

Teacher's Diary

This teacher's diary was a free form instrument with no guiding questions designed for collecting the qualitative data from the teacher researcher. The data from this instrument reflected the teacher's perspective on the students' performances when engaging in the project work activities in the classroom setting. The data from this instrument was considered to be accepted and reliable because it would be triangulated with the data from other research instruments later to prevent bias.

Opinions Survey

Opinions survey was conducted to investigate students' opinions toward the English oral communication for marketing course which was

developed based on PBLA. The survey focuses on investigating the effects of PBLA on enhancing students' oral communication abilities, students' opinions toward the project activities, instructional materials used in the implemented course, and the assessment instruments. All of the questions were written in Thai and the students were asked to complete the survey in Thai.

Data Collection

Data collection of this study could be described as follows:

Needs Analysis Instruments

During October-December 2011, 130 copies of questionnaires were distributed, 117 were returned. Later, 40 experienced people who work in the marketing field at the nearby settings were interviewed by using a convenient sampling method.

Data Collection for Course Implementation

The course goals, course objectives, course contents, classroom activities, and materials were designed and developed based on the data obtained from the needs analysis and the underlying theoretical framework of PBLA. The developed course entitled English oral communication for marketing course was conducted for three consecutive hours for 15 weeks in the first semester of the academic year 2012.

Data Collection for Course Evaluation

Procedures for collecting both quantitative and qualitative data could be described as follows:

Quantitative data were collected from oral communication abilities pre-and post-tests in June and September 2012. Besides the teacher-researcher, another two raters were invited to rate the recorded of oral communication abilities test both pre-test and post-test to ensure the inter-rater reliability. All raters were trained before rating the records. Additionally, intra-rater was conducted by the teacher researcher. The results of the intra-and inter-rater reliability were calculated to find out the mean scores and calculated later by using the SPSS program.

At the same time, qualitative data were collected from teacher's diary and opinions survey. The teacher's diaries were conducted for 10 weeks, from June to September 2012 while opinions surveys were conducted in September 2012.

Data Analysis

The data in this present study were categorized and analyzed as follows:

Data Analysis for Needs Analysis Instruments

Descriptive statistics, such as frequency, percentage, and mean was used with quantitative data in part 1 to part 4 of the questionnaire. In the meanwhile, qualitative data in part 5 of the questionnaire was categorized and categorized by using content analysis.

Data Analysis for Course Evaluation

For quantitative data, a paired sample *t*-test was used to compare the mean scores of each descriptor in the pre-test and post-test of the students' oral communication abilities tests. At the same time, content analysis was used with qualitative data which was collected from the teacher's diaries and opinions surveys. The key extracts were depicted and categorized into themes.

Results

The results from two research instruments could be presented in different parts as follows:

Part I: Needs Analysis Instruments

The results from the needs analysis instruments shared some significant similarities that the contents which focus on diverse business English oral communication situations related to the accountability of the marketers (e.g. talking about products/services, talking about prices, brand and strategies, promotion), interactive and cooperative activities which are relevant to the real situational context (e.g. simulation, role-play, small-group discussion, and oral presentation), and concrete and authentic materials should be included in the developed English oral communication course.

Part 2: Translating Needs Analysis to Course Development

This part related to the steps to transfer the data from the needs analysis instruments to course development. The steps consisted of:

1. Studying the framework of course development.
2. Analyzing the significant findings from the needs analysis instruments.
3. Developing course goals and objectives based on the underlying theories of PBLA and the data attained from the needs analysis (see Table I below).

Table I: Goals and objectives of the English oral communication for marketing course

Goals	Objectives
1. Students are able to enhance their oral communicative abilities in different authentic marketing -context.	By the end of this course, students should be able to: 1. enhance their oral communicative abilities in the marketing context. 2. enhance the effectiveness and the appropriateness of their oral communicative abilities in authentic marketing situations
2. Students are able to develop their social skills, e.g. interpersonal, self-management, and organization skills	3. use appropriate and effective social skills when communicating with other people. 4. enhance the effectiveness of their communication by using the appropriate social skills.
3. Students are able to perform the basic skills necessary for developing the project, such as group discussion, brainstorming, searching for the information, learning how to use the Internet, and presentation skills.	5. enhance their knowledge and skills through cooperative learning activities. 6. use the Internet effectively to search for the related information from for developing the project. 7. deliver the oral presentation effectively. 8. develop their oral presentation skills
4. Students will learn how to develop the projects and be able to accumulate their learning outcomes in the forms of the projects.	9. understand the characteristics of the Project-based learning classroom. 10. make plans on the project activities. 11. perform several effective tasks in processing the project as planned.

4. Constructing course contents and instructional activities.

Based on the data from the needs analysis, the contents were designed and developed as presented in the following table. However, due to the limitation of the teaching time, some topics of English oral communication in the marketing context ranked in the needs analysis instruments were grouped together (see Table 2 below).

Table 2: Contents of the English oral communication for marketing course

Contents of the English oral communication for marketing course	
Unit 1: Introduction to the Project-based classroom	
Unit 2: Greeting and introducing oneself in a business context	
Unit 3: Company profile	
Unit 4: Describing OTOP products	
Unit 5: Marketing strategies	
Unit 6: The 4P's of marketing	
Unit 7: Business telephone conversations	
Unit 8: A short presentation	

Part 3: Course Evaluation

The instruments for course evaluation included oral communication abilities test (pre-and post-test), teacher's diary, and opinions survey. The results from these instruments could be presented as follows:

Oral communication abilities Tests

The results of the paired sample *t*-test are presented in the following table.

Table 3: The paired sample *t*-test of the mean pre-test and post-test scores of the oral communication abilities test

Pair Differences						
Mean	Std.	Std Error		Sig.		Effect
Difference	Deviation	Mean	<i>t</i>	df	(2-tailed)	size
10.95	3.25	.727	13.68	19	.000*	1.71

**P*<0.05

This table revealed the statistic difference between the mean pre-test scores and post-test scores in the oral communication abilities tests. The t -value was 13.68 and the effect size calculated by using Cohen's d (Cohen, 1988) was 1.71. This indicated that the students have made the significant gain scores in oral communication abilities at .05 level. The statistics led to the conclusion that the students' oral communication abilities were successfully enhanced after participating in this experimental course.

Another supportive evidence was the mean scores of two developmental observations observed from two speaking activities which were collected in week 3 and week 8 during the implementation and rated by the teacher researcher and other two raters by using the analytical rubric for assessing students' oral communication abilities. The results from these developmental observations could be presented in the table below.

Table 4: The different mean scores of two speaking activities collected in week 3 and week 8

	Mean scores Week 3	Mean scores Week 8	Mean Difference
Comprehensibility	3.4	3.7	0.3
Fluency	3.3	3.6	0.3
Functional competence	3.7	4	0.3
Vocabulary	3.4	3.8	0.4
<i>Pronunciation</i>	<i>3.4</i>	<i>3.1</i>	<i>0.3</i>
Grammar	3.3	3.7	0.5

The findings revealed that the students' oral communication abilities were improved in light of comprehensibility, fluency, functional competence, vocabulary, and grammar after 8-week implementation. However, the findings also pointed out that the students' pronunciation was not statistically improved.

Teacher's Diaries

Qualitative data from the teacher's diaries revealed corresponding phenomenon that after participating in this developed course, the students were able to improve their oral communication abilities regarding all comprehensibility, fluency, functional competence, vocabulary, and grammar. Nevertheless, there was no significant improvement in the aspect of pronunciation. In addition, other interesting findings considering

collaborative and problem-solving skills as well as self-confidence of the students were outstandingly observed.

The sentiments from the teacher's diaries could be presented as follows:

- * *Students could speak longer and could express their ideas better. They could give more explanation in their sentences by giving some examples in English.*
- * *Students could make longer sentences. They used less pauses and disfluency markers in their speeches than before but still had some repetitions.*
- * *Students could select the appropriate language to address different functions in their conversations and use more complete sentences.*
- * *Most of the students used more vocabulary in their sentences but still limited to the vocabulary exemplified in the worksheet. Some students still switched to speak Thai once they could not think about English vocabulary, but less than the beginning of the course.*
- * *Most of the students could communicate with more correct forms of basic grammar usage obviously in the present form of verb be, wh-questions, present simple, and future simple tenses. However, some mistakes in word order could be detected.*
- * *Many students seemed like they had more confidence to orally communicate. They had less hesitation, spent less time to start their sentences. They, at the same time, had more comfort and dared to take risks in their oral English communication.*

These sentiments highlighted the fact that the students' oral communication abilities in comprehensibility, fluency, functional competence, vocabulary, and grammar were gradually improved. The students could perform effective and informative oral English communication better, had more confidence, and felt more comfortable when communicating in English than the beginning of the course.

In the teacher's diaries, some of the teacher's comments on the students' pronunciation were:

- * *Similar to the first few weeks of the course, most of the students still had difficulties in pronouncing the final sounds correctly. They*

still pronounced /s/ for /d/ in “good afternoon”, /d/ for /st/ in “first” and forgot to pronounce /s/ or /es/ endings in plural words. They still made monotonous intonation and their pronunciation was still influenced by their first language pronunciation was still influenced by their first language (week 12).

The above excerpts showed that the students could not significantly improve their pronunciation after the implementation of this oral communication course. The findings of the pronunciation from the teacher's diaries were consistent with the difference of the mean pre-test and post-test scores of the oral communication abilities test that the improvement of the students' pronunciation was not statistically significant at .05 level.

Opinions Surveys

Qualitative data from the opinions surveys were categorized and concluded that most of the students have had positive opinions toward the course which was developed based on PBLA. They revealed that PBL could effectively enhance their oral communication abilities. They also claimed that the course was exciting, interactive, enjoyable, and could help them enhance their oral communication abilities. They had more confidence, motivation, and proud in their learning abilities. They, further, pointed out that the instructional materials were interesting and variety, while the evaluation of the course and the criteria were clearly explained and relevant to the main focus of the course.

Some of the excerpts taken from the surveys were presented below.

English Translation

- * *S1: I thought my oral communication ability was better than before. At the beginning, I could not communicate well but after learning, practicing, and discussing with friends throughout the classroom activities. I felt I understood what my teacher and other friends said better and I could communicate in English more in classroom activities. I had a little more confidence to talk and felt more comfortable.*
- * *S3: I like this course because it gave me the opportunities to practice my speaking abilities and small-group working abilities to formulate my learning goals. This course was very challenging and enjoyable. It made me became an active learner. I also had to*

motivate myself to participate in group activities... I was proud and happy when I could finally accomplish the final project presentation.

Conclusions

PBL is a comprehensive instructional approach starting from designing a preconceived idea as an end product and later formulating diverse systematic activities to accomplish that agreed-upon end product. The objectives of this present study were to investigate the effects of PBLA in enhancing BUU marketing students' oral communication abilities and to explore the students' opinions toward the implemented course.

The findings revealed that after participating in this Project-based instruction, the students' overall oral communication abilities significantly improved in light of comprehensibility, fluency, functional competence, vocabulary, and grammar. Correspondingly, the obtained findings in this study were identical with the findings mentioned in the previous studies which conclude that a series of teaching and learning activities in PBL are effective to enhance students' oral communication abilities in the target language (Gabaret and Miron, 2010: 5130-5138; Hosie, 1999; Patthamalai, 2008; Sirithararatn, 2007). However, the finding in this study revealed that the Project-based Learning Approach was not significantly improved in terms of the students' pronunciation which was different from the studies of Gabaret and Miron (2010: 5130-5138) and Sirithararatn (2007) which claim that PBLA helps to improve students' pronunciation. The possible reasons for this phenomenon could be the limitation of the experimental time and the deficiency English proficiency background of the students.

For the students' opinions toward the developed course, the students revealed that they had positive opinions toward the course since they claimed that this PBL instruction was interesting, practical, and beneficial for their future careers and effectively enhanced their oral communication abilities. The findings revealed in this study harmonized with the findings in Poonpon's study (2011:1-10) which point out that the PBL is appropriate for enhancing students' language skills and knowledge which are the advantageous for learners' performance in their future careers. In addition, Asan and Haliloglu (2005: 68-78), Srikrai (2008: 85-111), and Sirithararatn (2007) mention similar findings in their studies that PBL classroom is interesting and pleasurable. Additionally, the findings from the

opinions surveys in this present study could lead to the conclusion that the characteristics of the PBL classroom could help the students to enhance their collaborative working skills, pride in their learning abilities, motivation, as well as self-confidence. Agreeing with the findings in the previous studies which mentioned that PBL could enhance students' collaboration and communication, motivation, confidence, and pride in their learning success (Aiedah and Audery, 2012: 37-46; Asan nad Haliloglu, 2003: 68-81; Doppelt, 2003: 255-272).

The findings of this study implied that:

It is reasonable to employ PBLA in the ESP courses which focus on enhancing learners' active engagement to formulate their learning outcomes in the forms of authentic products rather than the traditional examination. That is because PBLA is process-and product-oriented (Stoller, 1997). It equips the learners the opportunities to process and formulate both content knowledge and language skills through planning, investigating, analyzing, and processing the project. Therefore, in PBL classroom, students could enhance and expand not only their content knowledge and language skills, but also other critical skills (e.g. problem-solving skills, project-management skills, self-confidence, experiences) which are meaningful factors of their learning achievement, higher education, and future careers.

PBLA is also applicable for teaching English in EFL contexts which the learners have limited opportunities to expose to either native English speakers or the opportunities to use English in their real life settings. In the PLB classroom, the students could practice both content knowledge and the target language through the authentic simulations provided as teaching and learning activities. In addition, PBLA also encourages students to reflect their learning abilities in the forms of constructive products which could be regarded as the meaningful learning experiences for their future careers.

Based on the results and information from the study, the recommendations for future research are:

Though the findings pointed out that the students were able to improve their overall English oral communication abilities and social skills after attending the course implemented in this present study, this group of samples represented only the marketing students at this particular setting, BUU Chanthaburi Campus. As a result, similar courses should be conducted

in other settings with a large number of participants for a generalizability of the study.

Conducting the ice-breaking session at the beginning of the course is recommended to accelerate the familiarity among the students so that the students' engagement in group interaction and communication would start since the beginning of the course and they would be able to start improving their oral communication abilities and social skills earlier.

This experimental study was not able to raise the awareness of the students' pronunciation. Therefore, specific pronunciation course should be designed and developed with appropriate and effective teaching and learning activities to enhance the pronunciation aspect.

Students' log could be used as another qualitative research instrument along the experimental time to collect in-depth information from students' perspectives regarding their learning abilities and performance. Therefore, the findings in future research may be more powerful and directly represent the students' voices in the course.

References

- Aiedah, A. K. and Audrey, L. K. C. 2012. Application of Project-Based Learning in Students' Engagement in Malaysian Studies and English Language. *Journal of Interdisciplinary Research in Education (JIRE)* 2(1) 2012: 37-46. [Online]. Available from: <http://www.taylors.edu.my/jire/downloads/03.pdf> [2013, March 1]
- Anderson-Cruz, H., and Vik, N. G. 2007. *Using Project-Based Learning to Connect Theory to Practice in Teaching Accounting Communication*. Doctoral Dissertation, San Diego State University, 2007. Available from: <http://www.businesscommunication.org/conventionsNew/proceedingsNew/2007New/washingtonNew/07ABC07.pdf>. [2009, September 18]
- Asan, A., and Haliloglu, Z. 2005. Implementing Project-based Learning in Computer Classroom. *The Turkish Online Journal of Educational technology*. 4 (3): 68-81. [Online]. Available from: <http://www.tojet.net/articles/v4i3/4310.pdf> [2012, December 14]

- Bachman, L.F. and Palmer, A.S. 1996. *Language testing in Practice*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press).
- Brown, J.D. 1995. *The Elements of Language Curriculum: A Systematic Approach To Program Development*. (US: Heinle & Heinle Publishers).
- Coffey, H. 2007. *Project-Based Learning*. Available from: <http://www.learnnc.org/pages4753>. [2009, August 22]
- Doppelt, Y. 2003. Implementation and Assessment of Project-Based Learning in a Flexible Environment. *International Journal of Technology and Design Education* 13 (2003): 255-272. [Online]. Available from: <http://cedu521-k-f07.pbworks.com/f/Implementation+and+Assessment+of+Project-Based+Learning+in+a+Flexible+Environment.pdf> [2011, August 20]
- Dudley-Evans, T., and St. John, M. 1998. *Development s in ESP: A multi-disciplinary approach*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).
- Ellis, T. and Hafner, W. 2008. Building a Framework to Support Project-Based Collaborative Learning Experiences in an Asynchronous Learning Network ; *Interdisciplinary Journal of E-Learning and Learning Objects* 4 .2008: 167-190. Available from: <http://ijello.org/Volume4/IJELLOv4p167-190Ellis454.pdf>. [2009, August 29]
- Epstein, R. and Ormiston, M. 2007. *Tools and Tips for Using ELT Materials: A Guide for Teachers*. (MI: University of Michigan).
- Foley, J. A. 2005. English in ...Thailand ; *SAGE Journal* 39.1: 131-146. Available from: <http://rel.sagepub.com/content/39/1/131/full.pdf+html>. [2010, August 29]
- Fried-Booth, D. 1997. *Project Work*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 8th edn).
- Graves, K. 2000. *Designing Language Courses: A Guide for Teachers*. (Boston, MA: Heinle & Heinle).
- Hutchinson, T. and Waters, A. 1987. *English for Specific Purposes: A Learning Centered Approach*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).

- Murphy, H. A. and Hidebrandt, H. W. 1991. *Effective Business Communications*. (New York: McGraw-Hill).
- Nunan, D. 1999. *Second Language Teaching and learning*. (Boston, MA: Heinle & Heinle Publishers).
- Oliva, P. F. 2009. *Developing the curriculum*. (New York: Pearson Education, Inc., 7th edn).
- Patthamalai, C. (2008). *A Development of English Competence for Project Work of Local Tourism Products Presentation by Peer Assist Approach of Mattayomsuksa 4 Students of Loei Pittayakom School in Loei Province*. [Online]. Available from: http://researchs.in.th/file/loepit/chaleow_research.pdf [2010, August 10]
- Rahman, M. 2010. Teaching Oral Communication Skills: A Task-based Approach; *ESP World* 1.27: I-II. Available from: <http://www.esp-world.info>. [2010, August 31]
- Siritaratn, N. 2007. *A Development of the English Oral Communication Course Using the Project-Based Learning Approach to Enhance English Oral Communication Ability of Kasetsart University Students*. Doctoral Dissertation, English as an International Language Program, Graduate School. Chulalongkorn University.
- Srikrai, P. 2008. Project-based Learning in an EFL Classroom. *Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences, Khon Kaen University* 25: 85-111.
- Stoller, L. 1997. *Project Work: A Means to Promote Language Content*. Available from: <http://eca.state.gov/forum/vols/vol35/no4/p2.htm>. [2010, August 8]
- Tipplet, R. and Amorós, A. 2004. *Theory and practice of the project-based method*. Available from: http://www.inwent.org/imperia/md/content/bereich4-intranet/abteilung4-01/10_theory_and_practice.pdf. [2009, August 8]
- Wiriyaichitra, A. 2001. English Language Teaching and Learning in Thailand in the Coming Decade; *Thai TESOL Focus* 15.1: 4-9.
- Witkin, B. R. and Altschuld, J. W. 1995. *Planning and Conducting Needs Assessments: A Practical Guide*. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications).