

EFL/ESL Tertiary-Level Learners are No Longer Required to Repeat the Same Dialogues in Speaking Classes: A Case Study from Thai University

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
Keywords: Dialogues, EFL learners, oral English, repetition, role-plays DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.21093/ijeltal.v9i1.1686 How to cite: Samaranayake, S.W., Kositchaivat, S., & Prasansapah, S. (2024). EFL/ESL Tertiary-level learners are not required to repeat the same dialogues in speaking classes: A Case Study from a Thai University. <i>Indonesian Journal of English Language Teaching and Applied Linguistics</i>, 9(1), 179-197	Over the past few decades, there has been a growing recognition of the positive impact of role-plays involving single events on the speaking skills of EFL learners in various teaching contexts across the globe. However, the effectiveness of role-plays involving sequential events in enhancing the oral proficiency of tertiary-level EFL learners remains unexplored. Therefore, this study aimed to determine whether role-plays involving sequential events were more effective than those involving single events in promoting the oral proficiency of tertiary-level EFL learners. This study employed a pretest-post-test research design and randomly selected two study groups (Treatment: N = 38 and Comparison: N = 38) using purposive sampling techniques. The treatment group was taught using role-plays involving sequential events, while the control group was instructed with role-plays involving single events for one semester. Data was collected through pre and post-tests, intervention tools, and focused group interviews and analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistical tests. The findings indicated that the treatment group, which practised role-plays involving sequential events, demonstrated more significant improvement in speaking proficiency than the control group, which used single events. Based on these positive outcomes, this study suggests that incorporating role-plays involving sequential events into EFL instruction can significantly enhance tertiary-level learners' speaking proficiency. Teachers and educators in the field of EFL/ESL should consider using sequential event role-plays to improve oral communication skills among learners. This approach can be particularly effective in Thai tertiary education, and the results contribute to the discussion on innovative teaching strategies.

1. Introduction

Proficient English language skills can yield significant economic and personal benefits, such as facilitating business transactions, enabling effective communication, fostering international travel, and promoting cultural awareness (Barat & Talukder, 2023). Moreover, English proficiency can enhance personal satisfaction, cognitive stimulation, and comprehension of other academic subjects (Murphy et al., 2020; Xiaoyan, 2021; Nyroos et al., 2022). Given these advantages, the primary objective for many English language learners is to attain proficiency, necessitating classroom activities that promote meaning negotiation, communication strategy employment, and communication breakdown avoidance (Tuyen et al., 2020).

However, despite receiving instruction in English-speaking skills within Thai tertiary education, numerous non-English major undergraduates encounter challenges communicating effectively in English and often fall short of the required proficiency level (Tantiwich & Sinwongsuwat, 2021; Yuh & Kaewurai, 2021; Dwijayani, 2022).

A recent study conducted by UNICEF (2023) in collaboration with the Social Research Institute at Chulalongkorn University in Thailand found that nearly 68% of the 1.4 million youths aged 15-24 lack the motivation to develop skills or seek employment due to perceived limited opportunities. This study emphasizes the difficulties in the labor market, where young graduates struggle with transitioning from education to employment due to insufficient employability skills, lack of marketable skills, and deficiencies in soft skills. Proficiency in English communication is a crucial requirement for job seekers in Thailand's job market (It-ngam et al., 2023). With the country rapidly globalizing and attracting multinational corporations and businesses, employers seek individuals with strong language skills, particularly in English and other widely spoken languages (Berlitz, 2023). A command of multiple languages enables Thai graduates to communicate effectively with clients, colleagues, and stakeholders from different cultural backgrounds, making them a valuable asset to companies looking to expand their international reach (Yanaranop, 2021). As the global lingua franca, English is essential in bridging communication gaps across borders. Companies, especially in finance, tourism, and technology, place a premium on employees who fluently converse in English. A proficient command of the language significantly increases the chances of Thai graduate students landing prestigious roles and opportunities (Wansong, 2023; Muhammad, 2023). As English practitioners, it is imperative to prioritize enhancing students' speaking skills to equip them for career opportunities and contribute to the country's social and economic advancement.

Based on their experience teaching various English courses to non-English major undergraduate students, the researchers were prompted to investigate why many of these students fail to attain oral proficiency in English despite several years of language study. Consequently, they conducted an instructional intervention supplemented with role-plays involving sequential events to enhance students' English-speaking proficiency. Additionally, the researchers aimed to assess the effectiveness of role-plays involving sequential events compared to single events.

This study aligns with previous research that utilized role plays to enhance the oral English proficiency of students in academic settings worldwide who are studying English as a foreign or second language. Role plays entail multiple characters, whether genuine or fictional,

participating in conversations about social, academic, or real-world issues and events, all based on accepted social conventions or customs within a given society (Wills et al., 2011). In the current study, role-plays were used to develop the speaking skills of EFL university learners. Unlike previous studies, the role-plays included sequential events that people encounter in daily life involving different speech situations. For instance, if you are looking for a job and find a vacancy, you will call the company and inquire about the job. If you are shortlisted, you may be called for an interview, and you will prepare for it by seeking advice from someone who can guide you on the procedure, the questions you may be asked, and how to answer them confidently. This speech situation consists of several events, but most previous studies focused on only one event, neglecting the rest. Also, the current study used teacher-prepared authentic conversations instead of scripted dialogues from a textbook or other materials. Most previous studies we reviewed have used role-plays extracted from classroom English textbooks or other similar materials. Suppose role-plays included in the textbooks are used to teach speaking. In that case, it is a common practice for most students to read the dialogues rather than speak in the classroom (refer to the discussion section for more information).

The present study endeavors to improve the oral proficiency of non-English major undergraduate students at a Thai public university by emphasizing that language acquisition is fostered through interaction and meaningful communication. To achieve this goal, role-plays involving sequential events were employed. The theoretical and socio-cultural framework underlying this approach suggests that speech situations in our daily lives often consist of a series of sequential events. Consequently, learners trained to engage in role-plays involving sequential events are afforded more opportunities to practice speaking in diverse roles than those utilizing single events, where their exposure to the target language is typically limited within EFL/ESL classroom contexts. Furthermore, engaging in role-plays featuring sequential events enables learners to participate in multiple speech events sequentially, mirroring real-world scenarios. This prevents monotony associated with repetitive roles and encourages learners to explore new roles and their relevance to future career endeavors.

Several authors (Waluyo, 2019; Wansong, 2023; Muhammad, 2023) have observed that many non-English major Thai undergraduates struggle with speaking proficiency, impeding their ability to communicate effectively in real-life situations. This challenge is underscored by Thailand's consistently low ranking in the EF EPI English Proficiency Index, where it holds the 100th position out of 112 countries and ranks 22nd out of 24 in Asia, according to data spanning from 2011 to 2021. Such persistently low rankings can harm the country's socio-economic development. The researchers conducting this study corroborate these observations based on their recent experiences.

At our university, undergraduate students are expected to attain proficiency levels of B1 or B2 in speaking, as outlined by the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (2020). Additionally, graduate students must possess effective communication skills in English to successfully navigate the competitive job market and secure positions in both government and private sectors.

Research has consistently shown that non-English major undergraduate students often lack opportunities to practice English outside the classroom, exacerbating their language

proficiency challenges. In response to this issue, the researchers conducted an instructional intervention targeting second-year students in English skills development courses. The study's primary objective was to compare the efficacy of role-plays involving sequential events versus those involving single events in improving listening and speaking skills among these students. The textbook utilized for this intervention was *World Link Level 3* (2016), which comprises 12 units supplemented with audio and video materials. The study encompassed two groups of second-year undergraduate students majoring in Life-Long Education and Engineering, intending to determine the extent to which role-plays involving sequential events increase the speaking proficiency of non-English major Thai undergraduates as measured by the IELTS Speaking rubrics.

2. Literature Review

Numerous researchers and authors have emphasized the positive influence of role-playing in teaching second or foreign languages, as it allows learners to engage in real-world scenarios within a controlled classroom setting (Fadilah, 2016; Bahriyeva, 2021; Idham et al., 2022; Aura et al., 2023). In EFL/ESL teaching contexts where English is not commonly spoken, teaching speaking skills can present a significant challenge for educators. Consequently, role-playing is vital for teachers to immerse learners in authentic situations, facilitating peer interaction in pairs or groups. This practice holds particular value for learners' future professional endeavors, enabling them to assume roles such as doctors, pharmacists, or police officers (Piscitelli, 2020; Jezhny & Bapir, 2021). The benefits of incorporating role-play activities to enhance speaking skills among EFL/ESL learners have been extensively explored and documented in the literature, as evidenced by several relevant studies.

For instance, in 2019, Neupane conducted an experimental study to determine the effectiveness of role-plays in improving the speaking skills of grade ten students from a public school in Nepal. The study involved an experimental group that was taught using 20 role-plays, while the control group was instructed through a grammar-based technique. Data were collected through a speaking test and observation. The results of the post-speaking test revealed that the experimental group showed a significant improvement in speaking skills. Based on these findings, the researcher concluded that role-plays positively affected the students' speaking skills.

Similarly, research by Zare-Behtash et al. (2018) investigated the efficacy of role-playing in enhancing the speaking skills of 24 Iranian pre-intermediate ESP learners who were selected through a pre-test and divided randomly into two groups - an experimental and a control group. The experimental group was taught role-playing techniques, while the control group was taught traditional methods. After 18 sessions, both groups took a post-test to measure their speaking proficiency, which was analyzed using inferential statistics. The findings showed that the experimental group significantly outperformed the control group in the post-test. Furthermore, the participants in the experimental group had positive feedback regarding the role-playing tasks and their involvement in language learning. The researchers suggest ESP teachers, syllabus designers, textbook writers, and material producers can use their findings to enhance their teaching methods.

Krebs's (2017) observation demonstrated that role-play significantly enhances Iraqi EFL students' speaking performance in tests. Furthermore, Khasbani and Seli's 2021 study utilized

role-plays to investigate their impact on students' oral proficiency and confidence in speaking. The experimental group exhibited higher speaking test scores than the control group, indicating improved speaking skills. Additionally, role-plays positively influenced the development of positive interaction among participants with varying levels of speaking confidence in the experimental group. Another study by Tipmontree and Tasanameelarp (2020) investigated the impact of role-playing activities on students' speaking ability and assessed the usefulness of such activities in building self-confidence. The study was conducted with undergraduate students of 50 Thai EFL (English as a Foreign Language). The data were collected using three methods: (1) pre-and post-speaking tests, (2) an assessment form to measure students' self-confidence in speaking English, and (3) an interview to identify students' opinions and self-confidence levels in speaking English before and after the course. The findings revealed that role-playing activities positively affected students' oral competence and self-confidence in speaking English. Regular practice through role-playing activities enhanced students' speaking abilities and confidence.

While numerous studies have investigated the effectiveness of role-plays involving single events in enhancing the speaking skills of EFL/ESL tertiary-level learners, research on the effects of role-plays involving sequential events is relatively scarce. Therefore, the current study aims to address this gap by utilizing role-plays involving sequential events to aid tertiary-level EFL learners in improving their speaking proficiency. The subsequent section will explore the effectiveness of role-plays involving sequential events compared to those involving single events in enhancing the speaking skills of EFL tertiary-level students, accompanied by a real-world example of sequential events (Doctor-patient interaction), as depicted in Figure 1 below.

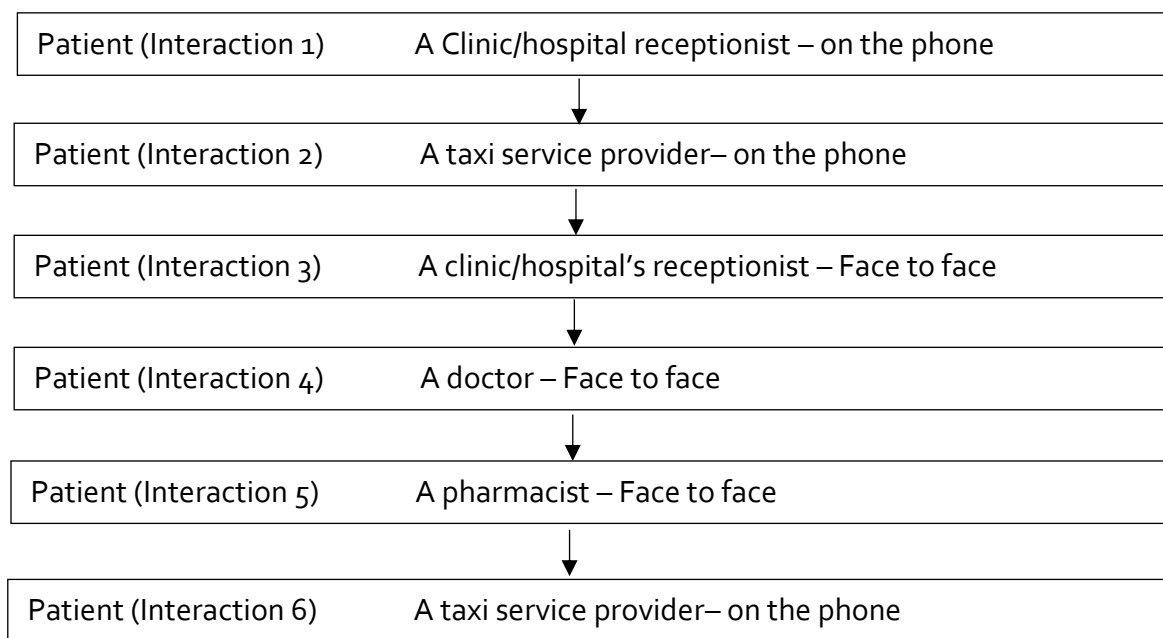


Figure 1. A series of sequential events involving a doctor-patient interaction

In Figure 1, a scenario unfolds in which a patient visits a doctor's office and undertakes a series of tasks to receive treatment. Initially, the patient contacts the clinic to schedule an appointment with the doctor. Subsequently, they journey to the clinic, possibly accompanied

by a guardian if they are a child or older adult, or if the patient's condition is severe, they may need to utilize a taxi service. Upon arrival at the clinic, the patient checks in with the receptionist and is directed to the doctor's office. The doctor proceeds to inquire about the patient's symptoms, conduct a diagnosis, and, if necessary, prescribe medication. Depending on the circumstances, the doctor may offer guidance on medication usage or refer the patient to a pharmacist for further instruction. Finally, the patient departs from the clinic and arranges transportation back home. This real-world scenario allows learners to practice the target language meaningfully.

Repetition and recycling of language are crucial components of language learning (Habtezion, 2024). Previous research has demonstrated that repeated exposure and practice aid in transferring information from short-term to long-term memory. However, most studies on role-plays to enhance oral proficiency have focused on single events. This study seeks to address this gap in the literature by examining the effectiveness of role-plays involving sequential events in fostering the oral proficiency of EFL tertiary-level learners in the target language.

This study aimed to answer the following questions:

“To what extent does practising sequential role-plays increase the speaking proficiency of non-English major Thai undergraduates as measured by the IELTS Speaking rubrics?”

3. Research Methodology

3.1. Research Design

This study aimed to determine whether role-plays involving sequential events were more effective than those involving single events in promoting the oral proficiency of tertiary-level EFL learners. This study employed a pretest-post-test research design and randomly selected two study groups.

3.2. Population and Samples

The research involved 76 non-English major first-year undergraduate students aged 21 to 22 enrolled in the English for Everyday Use course during the 2021-2022 academic year at a Thai public university. Approval for the study was obtained from the Education faculty's Ethics Committee before its commencement. Participants were selected from two different majors: Life-long Education and Sports Science. The treatment group comprised 28 students from the Life-Long Education major and 10 from the Sports Science major, totalling 38 students. The comparison group comprised 31 students from the Engineering Business major and seven from the Chemical Engineering major, totalling 38 students. Both male and female students were included in the sample, all of whom had studied English for 6 to 7 years at the secondary school level, resulting in a general proficiency in reading, writing, and listening. However, despite this background, most students lacked fluency and accuracy in speaking, both for educational purposes and in general communication.

3.3. Research Instruments

The study utilized three main instruments: speaking pre and post-tests, intervention tools, and focused group interviews. One group was instructed with role-plays involving sequential

events, while the other group was taught using role-plays involving single events, as per the textbook - World Link Level 3. The structure of the IELTS Speaking test was adopted for the speaking pretest and posttest. Specifically, parts 1 and 2 were administered for the pretest, while parts 1, 2, and 3 were utilized for the posttest. All students in both groups underwent the pretest on the second day of class, with instructors informing students about the study and requesting their participation on the first day of class. Instructors conducted focused group interviews with their respective groups during the first week of the second week.

During the speaking test, instructors posed questions derived from the actual IELTS exam (2020), covering topics such as the student's full name, university ID card, studies or work, use of technology in studies, unique clothing, special clothes from childhood, and descriptions of movies seen. In part 2 of the test, students were given a cue card and one minute to take notes, addressing a topic related to movies. The same procedure was followed for the posttest, with additional questions about the student's major, devices used for daily tasks, weekend activities, thoughts on vacation, and descriptions of times when they felt bored.

In part 3 of the speaking test, instructors engaged in discussions with test-takers, prompting extended answers on what people can do when they feel bored, whether people get bored with their daily routines, and if younger people get bored more quickly than older people. The students' responses were video-recorded and rated using the IELTS Speaking rubrics, with inter-rater reliability calculated using Pearson product-moment correlation. The study aimed to assess the effectiveness of different teaching methods in improving students' speaking skills.

Throughout the course, the first researcher taught the education major students in Group 1, while the second taught the engineering students in Group 2. Both groups followed the same teaching materials, which comprised the prescribed textbook, World Link Level 3. This textbook consists of 12 units covering various themes, with the English for Everyday Use course focusing on the first six units: Indoors and Outdoors, Milestones, Getting Information, Men and Women, Across Cultures, and Business and Marketing. Each unit included video materials, vocabulary, listening sections, grammar lessons, pronunciation tips, communication exercises, reading passages, and writing activities.

3.4. Teacher-developed Materials

The researchers created ten role-play scenarios featuring sequential events as part of the study. These scenarios included shopping, visiting a doctor, and hosting a group of foreign university students. The goal was to provide education majors with real-world situations that closely mirrored their social, academic, and work lives. This is because learners must navigate different roles throughout their lives, such as conversing with patients in a foreign language if they become doctors. Meanwhile, engineering majors were given role-plays featuring single events from a textbook during a semester-long instructional period from December 2021 to March 2022.

3.5. Focus Group Interview

Following the completion of the treatment, the first researcher selected ten students for a focus group interview from the treatment group's name list ($N = 38$). The selection was made by including every fourth student with the last name on the list. During the interview, the participants were asked to share their experiences, feelings, and perspectives regarding role-

plays that involved a series of sequential events. The researcher took note of the salient points of each student's response, which will be used later in the discussion section. (Refer to the discussion section for more details.)

3.6. Data Collection Procedure

In the first week of the study, the purpose was explained to the participants in both groups - Group A (Education majors; $N = 38$) and Group B (Engineering majors; $N = 38$). On the first day of the second week, each group was interviewed via the Zoom application by their respective instructors. The instructional intervention began in the third week and lasted for 15 weeks. In the final week of the semester, a speaking posttest was conducted, and the responses of both groups were video recorded by the researchers using their smartphones for later analysis. At the end of the study, video recordings were sent, along with IELTS Speaking rubrics, to two examiners at the Department of International Language Teaching for assessment. Inter-rater reliability was calculated using Pearson product-moment correlation ($r = 0.85$, $n = 70$, $P < 0.01$), and the rater agreement was high.

3.7. Data Analysis

The researchers thoroughly analyzed the students' data, including pretests, post-tests, and focused group interviews. Descriptive and inferential tests were utilized for this purpose. To determine which study group performed better in the post-test, an independent samples t-test was conducted to compare the mean scores of the treatment and comparison groups. Additionally, the interview data were analyzed qualitatively to gain insights into the focus group's experience and perspectives about the role-plays involving a series of sequential events.

4. Results

Table 1 shows the descriptive statistics received by each study group for speaking skills on the pre-and post-tests, while tables (2, 3, and 4) display independent samples' t-test statistics.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics of treatment and comparison groups between the pre and posttests

		Min score	Max score	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error
Pretest	Treatment group (n=38)	9	18	11.89	2.16	.35
Posttest	Treatment group (n=38)	11	18	14.18	1.73	.28
Pretest	Comparison group (n=38)	9	17	11.86	2.17	.35
Posttest	Comparison group (n=38)	10	18	13.10	1.90	.30

Table 2. Group Statistics for treatment and comparison groups' pretests

Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
1. Treat-Pre	38	11.89	2.16	.35
2. Com-Pre	38	11.86	2.17	.35

Treat-Pre = Treatment group pretest; Com-Pre = Comparison group pretest

Table 3. Group Statistics for treatment and comparison groups' posttests

Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
1. Treat-Post	38	14.81	1.73	.28
2. Com-Post	38	13.00	1.93	.31

Table 4. Independent Samples t-test

Group	Levene's test for equality of variances		t-test for equality of means							
	F	Sig.	t	df	Sig.(2-tailed)	Mean Differ	Std. Error Difference	95% interval of the difference	Lower	Upper
Treatment and Comparison Pretest	.005	.945	.053	74	.958	.026	.497	-.964	1.017	
Posttest	.297	.587	4.30	74	.000	1.81	.421	.976	2.655	

Based on the data presented in Table 4, the Independent Samples T-test reveals that there was no significant difference in means between the treatment group ($M = 11.89$, $SD = 2.16$) and the comparison group ($M = 11.86$, $SD = 2.17$), $t(74) = .053$, $p = .958$ during the pretest. This implies that both groups had a similar proficiency in speaking before the study began. However, the study results show that there was a significant difference in mean between the treatment group ($M = 14.81$, $SD = 1.73$) and the comparison group ($M = 13$, $SD = 1.93$); $t(74) = 4.30$, $p = .000$. This difference confirms that the treatment group had a more significant improvement in speaking proficiency within and between groups than the comparison group. It is worth noting that the comparison group also showed slight improvement within the group in terms of speaking proficiency.

5. Discussion

According to the descriptive statistics, there is a significant difference ($=.05$) between the mean scores of the treatment and comparison groups' speaking performance. The treatment group performed better than the comparison group in the post-test, which can be attributed to their use of role-plays involving sequential events during their instructional procedure. By practicing these role-plays, treatment group students could repeat and recycle the language they needed for grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, social interaction, non-verbal communication, and language functions specific to the activity. The treatment group's higher proficiency can be explained by two factors: the repetition of language, which helps learners acquire the expressions they need to speak, and the memory-enhancing effect of physically enacting life-related situations or events. Research has shown that humans remember information better when they engage with it than when they read or hear it (Engelkamp, 1998; Nilsson, 2000; Zhang & Zuber, 2020). This phenomenon is known as the enactment effect. Studies by Macedonia and Kriegstein (2012) and Tellier (2008) have demonstrated that enacting a situation can improve memorization and the use of words in speech production.

In the study, the students engaged in role-play exercises that involved real-life scenarios where they had to connect several events in a specific speech situation. For instance, one

student went to a local market to buy food and parked their motorbike by the roadside. Later, the students discovered that the bike was missing, so they searched for it. When they could not find it, they called someone (e.g., a parent, brother, or friend) to inform them of the situation. The person they contacted came to help, and they eventually went to the police to file a complaint. Through this exercise, the students in the treatment group exhibited diverse interaction patterns, body language, and expressions (ranging from less formal to more formal) that they would encounter in real-world situations. Furthermore, the treatment group had ample opportunities to practice and repeat the language, which allowed them to communicate effectively with their peers in an authentic communicative context.

Various studies have utilized role-plays as an effective instructional method to teach learners speaking skills within diverse teaching contexts. These contexts have included Iranian University (by Zare-Behtash et al., 2018), Nepal High School (by Neupane, 2019), Iraqi College (by Krebs, 2017), Indonesian High School (by Khasbani & Seli, 2021), and Thai University (by Tipmontree and Tasanameelarp, 2020). However, despite the success of these studies, there has been no investigation into the effects of sequential event role-plays in fostering speaking proficiency of English as a foreign language (EFL)/English as a second language (ESL) learners. Notably, all the studies mentioned above have utilized role plays based on single events extracted from course books used in the classroom.

In contrast, the study conducted by Tipmontree and Tasanameelarp (2020) shares similarities with the current study in two ways. Firstly, the study was conducted with Thai university undergraduates using role-playing activities. Secondly, the study used real-world situations/events to aid learners in practising speaking skills. These included how a flight attendant helps a passenger on board, how a hotel receptionist welcomes a guest to her hotel and provides information about room rental, how a waitress helps a customer order food in a restaurant, and how a sales assistant helps a customer to purchase goods. However, the difference between the Tipmontree and Tasanameelarp study and the current study lies in how these real-world situations were presented. Tipmontree and Tasanameelarp presented the situations as single or isolated events with no connection to one another. In contrast, the current study utilized sequential events.

Moreover, it is worth mentioning that the dialogues utilized by Tipmontree and Tasanameelarp were sourced from the textbook "*English for Hospitality Services*," which was used to teach the English for Hospitality Services course at the university. In contrast, the current study used teacher-prepared role plays, including authentic language people use daily.

5.1. An Alternative to Task Repetition

Research conducted by Van den Branden (1997), Lynch and Maclean (2000), and Bygate (2001) concluded that repeating the same task can improve the frequency of a specific item. However, in an EFL/ESL conversational English class, repeatedly asking students to perform the same activity can lead to boredom and disinterest. To combat this, role-playing is an effective alternative, as it involves a series of sequential events where students do not have to repeat the same role. This allows for the recycling and repetition of language through different speech events with varying roles. Studies have shown that boredom is a significant issue in foreign language classrooms and can lead to decreased motivation and attention. Zawodniak, Krul, and Pawlak (2023) identified language tasks as a relevant factor in student

boredom. Role-plays involving sequential events are meaningful and related to real-world situations, making them an effective solution to address boredom in language learning.

In analyzing the focus group interview data, it was discovered that all ten students had never enacted role-plays involving a series of sequential events despite having done so with single events. Five students found sequential role-play challenging as they were required to swap roles in line with speech events embedded in a specific speech situation. Nonetheless, all students agreed that enacting all speech events helped them study different language expressions, vocabulary, paralinguistic features inherent in spoken language, and an awareness of varied social roles. Seven out of ten students in the treatment group expressed boredom when repeating a dialogue more than twice, although it has some short-term benefits. This study supports recent findings on the construct of foreign language boredom experienced by most EFL/ESL students in language tasks, as reported by Pawlak et al. (2020b), Aubrey, King, & Almukhaild (2022), and Zawodniak, Krul, & Pawlak (2023).

During the focus group interview, repetition was discussed, and seven students emphasized its short-term benefits. However, it was also noted that repetition does not significantly impact in the long run as it involves rote memorization. Language learning is unlike memorizing a periodic or multiplication table, which requires repetition. According to research conducted by Reagh and Yassa (2014), other mnemonic strategies should be used with repetition to enhance learning and make it more effective in the long term, allowing for easy recollection of nuance and detail.

Table 5 below lists potential speech events while searching for a new apartment. It also outlines the different roles, participants, and interaction types that may occur during these events.

Table 5: Series of sequential events involving finding a new apartment
Speech situation: Finding a new apartment

Series of sequential events			
Speech event 1	Speech event 2	Speech event 3	Speech event 4
Nong calls her friend Joe and asks him to find an apartment	Nong meets Joe	Both Nong and Joe visit an apartment owner and inspect the apartment	Nong and Joe drink coffee at a coffee shop
Participant and interaction type	Participant and interaction type	Participant and interaction type	Participant and interaction type
Nong (a bank employee) Joe A casual conversation On the phone	Nong Joe Face to face	Nong Joe Apartment owner Face to face	Nong Joe Sales assistant Face to face

Table 6 below shows the presentation cycle of the speech event related to finding a new apartment. It also shows each character's role in the event and the approximate number of utterances each student used after swapping roles. After completing all four rounds, each student used around 125 utterances. This suggests that role-plays involving sequential events are more effective than single events in promoting EFL/ESL learners' oral English proficiency. Please see the appendix for more details.

Table 6: Presentation cycle of a role-play involving a series of sequential events

Speech situation: Finding a new apartment				
Roles: Nong (a bank employee), Joe (her friend), an apartment owner, a sales assistant				
* The approximate number of utterances each character will speak				
The presentation cycle of role-play involves a series of sequential events. (First round)	Nong *54	Joe *48	Apartment owner *19	Sales assistant *4
Second round (After swapping roles)	Sales assistant *54	Apartment owner *48	Joe *19	Nong *4
Third round (After swapping roles)	Joe *54	Nong *48	Sales assistant *19	Apartment owner *4
Fourth round (After swapping roles)	Apartment owner *54	Sales assistant *48	Nong *19	Joe *4
Each role uses the approximate number of utterances in the entire interaction in all four rounds.	Nong =125	Joe = 125	Apartment owner = 125	Sales assistant = 125
The total number of roles a student played by the time the student completed the speech situation.	4	4	4	4
Probability of a specific linguistic item (function/structure) to recur at a time	Four or more times	Four or more times	Four or more times	Four or more times

Below, we demonstrate a potential role-play presentation cycle involving a single speech event. We aim to compare the role-playing activities involving sequential events with single events. Throughout our study, the control group practiced advising someone to solve an apartment problem. The classroom text used for teaching the English skills development course was the prescribed textbook, *World Link-Developing English Fluency Level 3*, page 7, from which we extracted the dialogue. The comparison group practiced the role-plays from this same textbook.

(Emilia has just moved to an apartment. Practice the conversation with a partner)

Emilia : *Thanks for your help, Felipe.*

Felipe : *No problem. How do you like your new apartment?*

Emilia : *It's great. I love it. There's just one thing...*

Felipe : *Yeah?*

Emilia : *I found a small crack in the wall.*

Felipe : *The wall is cracked? Really?*

Emilia : *Yeah. It's not too big, but it's in the living room, and everyone can see it.*

Felipe : *Why don't you fix it yourself?*

Emilia : *Um...I don't think so. I'm not good at repairing things.*

Felipe : *I know! Try calling my friend, Sam. He can help you. He is a nice guy, and he's very capable. (4)*

Emilia : *That sounds like a great idea. Do you have his phone number?*

Felipe : *Sure. Hold on a second while I get it....*

Table 7: Presentation cycle of a role-play involving a single event

Speech event: Advising someone to solve an apartment problem			
Roles: Emilia and Felipe			
* The approximate number of utterances each character will speak			
The presentation cycle of role-play involves a series of sequential events. (First round)	Emilia *11	Felipe *12	
If roles were swapped (Second round)	Felipe *11	Emilia *12	
Each role uses the approximate number of utterances in the interaction in two rounds.	Emilia =23	Felipe = 23	
The total number of roles a student played by the time the student completed the speech situation.	1	1	
Probability of a specific linguistic item (function/structure) to recur at a time	Two times	Two times	

Table 8: Speech situations, number of speech events, and number of expressions each student in the treatment group practised during the study

Speech situation	Number of speech events	Number of roles	The approximate number of expressions each student practiced during the study
1. Shopping	4	4	78
2. Finding a new apartment	4	4	125
3. Doctor visit	5	5	84
4. Complaining at a police station	5	5	57
5. Participating in a birthday party	4	4	67
6. Visiting a foreign country	3	3	48
7. A job interview	3	3	52
8. Room reservation in a hotel	3	3	45
9. Going to the cinema	3	3	56
10. Hosting a group of foreign university students	4	4	74
Total	38	38	686

Table 9: Speech events, number of roles, and the number of expressions each student in the comparison group practised during the study

Speech event (as per the <i>World Link Level 3</i> textbook)	Number of speech events	Number of roles	The approximate number of expressions each student practiced during the study
1. Making informal suggestions	1	2	20
2. Talking about plans and needs	1	2	16
3. Interrupting someone politely	1	2	13
4. Disagreeing politely	1	2	20
5. Asking about culturally appropriate behavior	1	2	19
6. Asking about companies/Emphasizing important points	1	2	31
If roles were swapped	6X2	12X2	119X2
Total	12	24	238

5.2. A Possible Explanation of the Comparison Group's Low Performance in Oral English

Tables 8 and 9 compare speech situations, events, roles, and the number of expressions practiced by the treatment and comparison groups. The results demonstrate that the comparison group, which used the prescribed textbook (World Link Level 3), did not have the chance to practice any speech situation involving sequential events, unlike the treatment group. Additionally, the number of speech events, roles, and expressions practiced by each student in the comparison group was lower than those in the treatment group. The comparison group practiced only 35.5% of the speech events and 63.1% of the roles played by the treatment group, provided that the students swapped roles. Furthermore, the approximate number of expressions practiced by each student in the comparison group was only 34.6%. This analysis confirms that the language input received by the comparison group was insufficient to enhance their oral proficiency in the target language. Although other affective factors such as disinterest, anxiety, shyness, attitudes, self-confidence, and fear of making mistakes may have negatively impacted the acquisition process, the main reason can be attributed to the condition above.

6. Conclusion

In this study, the researchers aimed to determine whether role-plays involving a series of sequential events were more effective than those involving single events in improving oral English proficiency among non-English major undergraduate students learning English as a foreign language. Our statistical analysis revealed that the treatment groups showed a greater increase in oral English proficiency, as measured by the IELTS Speaking rubrics, than the comparison groups. Based on these findings, we conclude that the most effective way to improve the oral English proficiency of tertiary-level students is to provide context-specific teacher-prepared role-plays involving sequential events in EFL/ESL teaching contexts rather than relying on single-event role-plays found in commercially produced English textbooks that are commonly used in non-native English classrooms worldwide and require students to memorize scripts.

7. Limitations

Although the study's results may have been positive, there are still two significant limitations. Firstly, the sample size was limited to only 76 students, making it difficult to generalize the findings to non-English major undergraduates in Thailand or other locations. Therefore, the study's conclusions cannot be applied to a larger group of EFL non-English major undergraduate students. Secondly, the researchers could not control all social variables that could have influenced the study's results, such as taking English lessons outside of the university, conversing in English in social situations, and using online study resources to improve English proficiency. More research is needed in other teaching contexts to make informed decisions about using role-plays to improve tertiary-level students' oral English proficiency, with a larger sample of undergraduate students, using various research instruments such as survey questionnaires, group interviews, and observations.

8. Implications and Recommendations

The implications of this study suggest that incorporating role-plays involving sequential events into EFL instruction can significantly enhance tertiary-level learners' speaking

proficiency. This finding highlights the importance of diversifying instructional methods to better cater to learners' needs and maximize language acquisition outcomes. Educators and curriculum developers should consider integrating sequential event role-plays into language teaching practices to foster more robust oral communication skills among EFL learners. Furthermore, these results contribute to the ongoing discourse on effective language teaching strategies, particularly in Thai tertiary education, highlighting the potential benefits of innovative pedagogical approaches in language classrooms.

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Appendix 1

Speech situation: Finding a new apartment.

Nong works at a bank and has been transferred to another branch in another province. She must undertake work at the new bank in two weeks. She cannot travel from her home to the new workplace daily, so she plans to find an apartment in the new city where she has a friend (his nickname is Joe) who works in the same bank branch. She decides to seek his assistance in finding an apartment for her.

(Nong calls Joe)

Nong : Hello, Joe. It is Nong here. How are you?

Joe : Hello, Nong. I'm fine and how about you?

Nong : I'm calling to tell you that I have been transferred to your branch and have to assume duties there in two weeks.

Joe : OK. Nice to hear about it. Do you need any help?

Nong : Yes, Joe. I want to find an apartment in your city.

Joe : OK. Don't worry about it. I can help you. There are several apartments here. I will call and check them.

Nong : Thank you very much, Joe.

Joe : What kind of apartment are you looking for?

Nong : Since I'm alone, I'm looking for a small one with one bedroom, a bathroom, and the living room. I don't need a big one.

Joe : OK. How much is your expected rent per month?

Nong : Around 4000 to 5000 baht.

Joe : I will check and let you know. I think we can find one easily.

Nong : Joe, another important thing is the location. I prefer it to be a little bit far from the city.

Joe : OK. I will check and let you know.

Nong : Thank you very much, Joe. As soon as you find one, call me so I can come.

Joe : Yes. Both of us can go and check it.

Nong : Ok. Joe. Bye.

Joe : Bye, Nong.

(The next day, Joe calls Nong)

Joe : Hello, Nong. I'm Joe. I called the owner of one apartment, and he said there is one vacant apartment on the second floor, which is furnished.

Nong : Hello, Joe. That's great. How much is the monthly rent?

Joe : He said 4500, and you must deposit one month's rent with the owner.

Nong : Ok. That's great. When can we go to see it?

Joe : I told the owner I'm looking for one of my friends. I said I would come tomorrow afternoon around 3 p.m. with my friend.

Nong : Ok. How can I get to the place?

Joe : The apartment is called Janthra Palace. It is located on Rodfytawnthok, Soi 16, in Nakhon Pathom. I will send you the directions on Google Maps.

Nong : Ok. I will follow it. In case of any problem, I will contact you.

Joe : OK. See you tomorrow at 3 p.m.

Nong : Bye. Joe.

Joe : Bye.

(The next day, Nong drives to the Janthra Palace apartment using the directions on Google Maps. Nong stops her car inside the apartment and sees Joe there standing in front of the main door of the apartment)

Joe: Hi, Nong. I found the place.

Nong : Yes. I followed the directions on Google Maps. No problem.

Joe : Let's go inside and meet the owner.

Owner of the apartment: Good afternoon. Please come in.

Joe and Nong: Thank you.

Joe : This is my friend, Nong. She is a bank officer and has been transferred to the Nakhon Pathom branch.

Owner: Nice to meet you. My name's Kittipat. Let's go and see the apartment. It is on the second floor. Please follow me.

(They go to the second floor, and the owner opens the apartment)

Owner: Please check. This is the bedroom. It is pretty spacious. You can use this cupboard to keep your clothes.

Nong : Yes. That's good.

Joe : *(Opens the bathroom)* Nong. Here is the bathroom. It looks good.

Nong : *(Checks the bathroom)*. Yes. Right.

Owner: If you open this back door, you go to the balcony and can view the most famous Prapathom Cheddi in Nakhon Pathom.

Nong : Oh. I like it. Yes. A beautiful view of the Cheddi.

Joe : You may see a glamorous view at night once it is illuminated with lights.

Owner: Yes. At night it is lovely.

(After checking, they leave the apartment and go down)

Owner: When will you come to stay here?

Nong : Next Monday morning. I will come.

Owner: Ok. I told Joe about the rent and deposit yesterday. You should pay the electricity and water bills.

Nong : Yes. Ok. Is there a washer?

Owner: Yes. There are three washers on the ground floor. They are located at the back of this building. I will show you on Monday.

Nong : Ok. Thank you. See you on Monday.

Joe : Goodbye.

Owner: Goodbye.

Nong : Thank you, Joe, for your help. Is there a coffee shop nearby?

Joe : Yes.

Nong : Why don't we go there and have a coffee together?

Joe : That's a good idea. Then. Let's go to Café Amazon. It's nearby. You can follow my car.

Nong : Ok. Let's go.

(Joe and Nong drive to the café Amazon, and they go into the café and order coffee)

Nong : Joe, what would you like?

Joe : *(Looks at the menu at the counter)* I will have Espresso cold.

Nong : What about eating something?

Joe : A piece of cake.

Nong : *(orders at the counter)*

Nong : Excuse me, I would like two Espresso colds and two pieces of cake.

Sales assistant: Two Espresso colds and two pieces of cake. Anything else?

Nong : Two bottles of water.

Sales assistant: OK. 130 baht.

Nong : *(Pays the bill)*

Sales assistant: *(hands over Nong's order)*. Here you are.

Nong : Thank you.

Joe : *(Already seated at a table and calls Nong)*. Nong.... Nong... I'm here.

Nong : *(goes to Joe's table and sits opposite Joe)*. Ok. Here's your Espresso.

Joe : Thanks.

(While drinking coffee, they talk)

Nong : I forgot to ask about your Mum and Dad. How are they?

Joe : They are in good health except for minor ailments.

Nong : Same as my mum. *(Nong's father has already died)* During old age, most have some minor health problems. That is normal.

Joe : Right. Nong, do you want me to come to the apartment on Monday?

Nong : No need. Joe. I can manage. There is nothing to do. Thank you.

Joe : OK. Then, we must leave now. You drive along this road until you come to the main road. Turn right.

Nong : Ok. I can manage. Thank you, Joe. See you later. Bye.

Joe : Goodbye.

(They both leave for their respective homes)