

# Integrated Teaching English Speaking for Students Planning to Work in Tourism Business in Greater Mekong Subregion Area

■ Wang Jing

**Abstract.** *The purpose of this study was to investigate the communicative English activities for teaching English to college students planning to work in the tourism business in the Greater Mekong Sub-region area (GMS). The study adopted a quantitative approach to investigate teachers' opinions on integrated communicative English activities for tourism students. A sample of 44 teachers was surveyed to represent the educational English group and the tourism English group. The teachers' suggested that the following activities were suitable for college tourism students to enhance English speaking skill: they encouraged students to make presentations, perform role plays and dialogues, play communicative games and discuss and describe activities related to tourism knowledge. Career plans of tourism students indicated that students should be encouraged to do part time work in their field. The most important way to help the students was to get work experience with English usage. The Educational English group agreed that the all communicative English activities of this study were suitable for students, but the tourism English group held different viewpoints activities. Based on the results of the study, it has included recommendations for the English department heads and teachers to improve their practices.*

**Keywords:** Integrated Communicative Activities, Speaking Skills, Tourism Business, Greater Mekong Sub-region Area.

## Introduction

The world is a big family, and English becomes a bridge for most people to communicate, cooperate, and develop their globe village together. English is the main language for organizations like the United Nations, the Asia-Europe Meeting and the Greater Mekong Sub-region Cooperation (Available at <http://www.adb.org/GMS/>).

GMS is a big family in Asia. It comprises China, Thailand, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Myanmar, Cambodia, and Vietnam. In most countries in GMS, tourism has been employed as a critical means in boosting economic development with a vital aim for poverty elimination (Available at <http://www.adb.org/GMS/>).

Today, more and more students plan to be more qualified to work in tourism business in GMS countries. In the tourism and travel professions, people who work with tourists must be able to

speak English well since it has become a common language for travelers from many different countries. Although many students in Asia have learned English more than 10 years, most students cannot express themselves fluently. Students seem deficient in English speaking ability (Utawanit, 1999).

The college students who are going to work in the tourism field need oral English language learning by using communicative activities. Communicative activities include any activities that encourage and require a learner to speak with and listen to other learners, as well as with people in the program and community (Moss & Feldman, 2003). Communicative activities fulfill two important language learning needs: they prepare learners for real-life language use, and they encourage the atomization of language knowledge (Thornbury, 2008). Communicative activities also present realistic and motivating situations where students

can practices the language they have studied. English communicative activities for college tourism students should integrate tourism knowledge, student's needs and speaking skills.

In order to improve college students' tourism-English speaking ability, the speaking activities are needed based on integrated teaching method leading to the career of students. Therefore, the main purpose of this study was to investigate the integrated communicative activities to be utilized to teach speaking for college students planning to work in tourism business in GMS area.

## Objective of the Study

To investigate the communicative activities suitable for integrating into teaching English to college students planning to work in tourism business in the GMS area.

## Research Questions

What communicative activities are suitable for integrating into teaching English to college students planning to work in tourism business in the GMS area?

## Scope of Study

The scope of the study was limited to 3 areas: (1) Classroom communicative activities teaching. (2) Teaching speaking related to tourism knowledge. (3) College teaching and career plans of students.

## Literature Review

Many researchers conducted some study related to communicative activities. These opinions support this study.

In the area of communicative activities, Klanrit investigated that the effectiveness of the two communicative activities, information-gap and role-play, in developing students' speaking proficiency in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classroom. It also provides an understanding of the dynamics of the learning process in the language classroom which resulted in students' progress in speaking. The study comprises a piece of reflective practice in the teacher-researcher's own practice, drawing on an integrated set of qualitative methods

to gather data from all involved (Klanrit, 1999).

As Rivers states, "the drama approach enables learners to use what they are learning with pragmatic intent, something that is most difficult to learn through explanation" (Rivers, 1983).

Chen stated that communicative games offer students a fun-filled and relaxing learning atmosphere (Chen, 2005). After learning and practicing new vocabulary, students have the opportunity to use language in a non-stressful way (Uberman 1998). While playing games, the learners' attention is on the message, not on the language. Rather than pay attention to the correctness of linguistic forms, most participants will do all they can to win.

King stated that oral presentation is an effective communicative activity that has been widely adopted by EFL conversation teachers to promote oral proficiency. Oral presentations to EFL classrooms provides a rewarding and stimulating experience both for teachers in developing facilitating skills and for students in training themselves to have confident presentations in public. Oral presentations are a great way for students to practice their English skills. The extra pressure of knowing they're going to be in front of the classroom provides students with some great extrinsic motivation for staying on task (King, 2002).

In the language classroom, Thornbury found that a dialogue is either the text of a (usually) two-way spoken exchange, or it is the activity of having such an exchange. Dialogues have always been a popular means for presenting and practicing language, one reason being that dialogue is the most common and most widespread way that language is used in real life. Questions are the main way of performing the asking function, and they contrast with statements which do the telling. Questions are obviously essential to even the most basic communication (Thornbury, 2006).

As Thornbury states, conversation is informal talk between one or more people. Most learners identify the ability to participate in conversations as a desirable language-learning goal. A fact that many language learners feel that their most urgent need is to develop conversational competence, and they regularly choose 'conversation' as their principal objective when answering needs analysis surveys (Thornbury, 2006).

Communicative activities for tourism are designed for employees or students preparing for a

career in the travel and tourism industry that needs to improve their English language skills for use on their jobs.

To create classroom speaking activities that will develop communicative competence, instructors need to incorporate a purpose and an information gap and allow for multiple forms of expression. However, quantity alone will not necessarily produce competent speakers. Instructors need to combine structured output activities, which allow for error correction and increased accuracy, with communicative output activities that give students opportunities to practice language use more freely.

Evans found that the career plan of students to help students focus upon the tourism industry and identify where they would wish to operate within it; to identify the skills and knowledge required to enter the appropriate section of the industry and to map these against existing individual skills and knowledge bases; to enable students to set priorities within their learning and to design individual development plans to guide their future career options; to provide an ongoing forum in which students can reflect upon their learning and share experience and examples of good practice; to aid students in evaluating their reasons for enrolling upon their particular course at the university and what they are seeking to achieve at the end of their studies; to introduce the complex and heterogeneous nature of the tourism industry and the range of opportunities and niches available therein; to help students to identify relevant skills and skill deficits and to identify ways in which to develop these accordingly (Evans, 2004).

## Methodology

A quantitative research method was used for this study. Firstly, integrated communicative activities were explored from a teaching perspective to see how they can be included in integrated teaching. Secondly, using the questionnaire, the researcher got data from teachers about their reactions to communicative English activities in integrated teaching.

The population was 57 experts. The sample was 44 persons from two groups: Instructors of tourism teaching in English and educational supervisors of teaching English. These participants were from

Burapha University, Dusit Thani College and Educational Service Office of Chonburi Province, Thailand.

## Research Instruments

A 4-scale rating questionnaire was developed for teachers to provide their opinions and reactions to learning communicative English activities for tourism and integrated teaching.

## Data analysis

The objective of this study was to investigate the communicative activities suitable for integrating into teaching English to college students planning to work in tourism business in the Greater Mekong Sub-region area. The response rate of the questionnaire survey was relatively high. The researcher sent 57 questionnaires to the experts from two groups. One group is instructors teaching tourism in English and the other group are educational English teachers in educational services area. Forty-four teachers (77% of two groups) completed and returned questionnaires. This study presents the descriptive statistics of quantitative data from the questionnaire survey, supported by the experts' comments from the questionnaire feedback.

To answer research question, Mean, Standard Deviation and Rank was used to answer it. If the mean of any items of rating questionnaire is between 2.50 and 4.00, it means the experts agree to accept that item as main communicative activity to be utilized for integrated teaching speaking to college students planning to work in tourism business in GMS countries.

The concepts of classroom communicative activities, active learning of communicative activities and career plan of students seek to investigate the integrated communicative activities suitable for tourism college students in order to answer the research question:

“What communicative activities are suitable for integrating into teaching English to college students planning to work in tourism business in the GMS area?”

## Results

The answers were followed by tables to answer this research question:

In accordance with the proposed objective and research question, the analysis of data was presented in 3 sections. Section 1 is viewpoint of

classroom communicative activities for teachers; Section 2 is viewpoint of outside of classroom communicative activities for teachers; Section 3 is viewpoint on career plan of students.

Section 1: Classroom Communicative Activities

**Table1. Classroom Communicative Activities in the Tourism English Group as Perceived by College Instructors. (N=15)**

Viewpoints on Classroom Communicative Activities for Teachers	Mean Score	Std. Dev.	Rank
1.Assign students to make presentation in the class related to the tourist spots they are interested in.	3.87	0.35	1
2. Plan role play for students related to local etiquette of GMS countries.	3.80	0.41	2
3. Let students think of specific places of interest to visit in their cities and make presentation to the class.	3.40	0.63	4
4. Encourage students to ask and answer questions by using tourist information pictures.	3.20	0.77	5
5. Plan drama for students related to culture of GMS countries.	3.67	0.49	3
6. Assign students to complete the blanks of the dialogue for conversation related to travel agency questions and present dialogue to the class.	2.40	0.63	7
7. Encourage students to work in pairs and to complete the form about their partner by asking questions.	3.07	0.59	6
8. Set up a role play in the class using 2-3 languages of GMS countries based on English communication.	1.73	1.03	8

Table 1 shows the mean score of opinions of the 15 instructors has the highest mean score and the lowest mean score from its rank. The highest mean score opinion is: "Assigning students to make presentation in the class related to the tourist spots they are interested in." It illustrates 80 percent instructors strongly agree that the presentation activity should be used to teach speaking for tourism students. The second highest opinion is: "Planning role play for students related to lo-

cal etiquette of GMS countries" it illustrates the instructors also strongly agree with this opinion. The least popular opinion is "Setting up a role play in the class using 2-3 languages of GMS countries based on English communication." It illustrates the instructors in this group strongly disagree with this opinion. Follow the mean score  $\geq 2.50$ , means "agree". There is only item 6 and item 8 were not accepted by instructors.

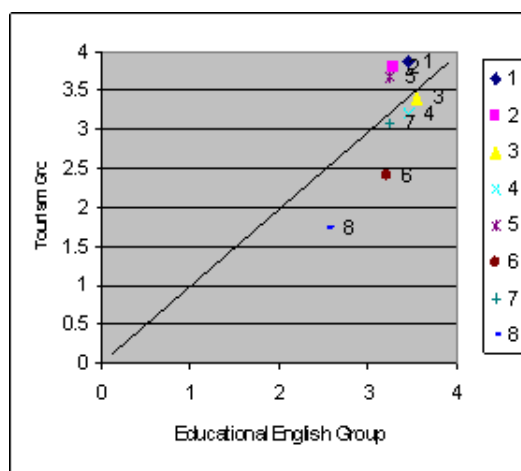
**Table 2 Classroom Communicative Activities in Educational Group as Perceived by English Teachers. (N=29)**

<b>Viewpoints on Classroom Communicative Activities for Teachers</b>	<b>Mean Score</b>	<b>Std. Dev.</b>	<b>Rank</b>
1. Assign students to make presentation in the class related to the tourist spots they are interested in.	3.45	0.51	2
2. Plan role play for students related to local etiquette of GMS countries.	3.28	0.53	3
3. Let students think of specific places of interest to visit in their cities and make presentation to the class.	3.55	0.51	1
4. Encourage students to ask and answer questions by using tourist information pictures.	3.45	0.51	2
5. Plan drama for students related to culture of GMS countries.	3.24	0.64	5
6. Assign students to complete the blanks of the dialogue for conversation related to travel agency questions and present dialogue to the class.	3.21	0.68	6
7. Encourage students to work in pairs and to complete the form about their partner by asking questions.	3.24	0.58	4
8. Set up a role play in the class using 2-3 languages of GMS countries based on English communication.	2.55	1.02	7

Table 2 shows the mean score of opinions of the 29 teachers has the highest mean score and the lowest mean score from its rank. The highest mean score opinion is: "Letting students think of specific places of interest to visit in their cities and make presentation to the class." It illustrates the teachers strongly agree that the presentation activity should be used to teach speaking for tourism students. The second highest mean score opinion are: "Encouraging students to ask and answer questions by using tourist information pictures."

and "Assigning students to make presentation in the class related to the tourist spots they are interested in." These two opinions illustrate the teachers also strongly agree with them. The least popular opinion is "Setting up a role play in the class using 2-3 languages of GMS countries based on English communication." It illustrates the teachers in this area agree with this opinion. The mean score  $\geq 2.50$ , means "agree". There were all items accepted by teachers.

**Figure 1. Comparison the viewpoint of Classroom Communicative Activities between Tourism English Instructors and Educational English Teachers.**



In Figure 1, the X axis illustrates the teachers from educational English group. Using the mean rankings  $\geq 2.5$ , we see that the Educational English group considered all items of classroom communicative English activities suitable for tourism students. Y axis illustrates the instructors from Tourism English group. They considered items 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7 suitable for tourism students.

The viewpoints of two groups were different. The teachers of Educational English group, they had no background of tourism knowledge. They focused on English speaking skill of this study. But the instructors of tourism English group

with tourism knowledge background and English background, focused on both English speaking skill and tourism knowledge. The tourism English instructors considered that “Assigning students to complete the blanks of the dialogue for conversation related to travel agency questions and present dialogue to the class” and “Setting up a role play in the class using 2-3 languages of GMS countries based on English communication” are not effective to enhance students’ speaking ability.

Section 2: Active learning of Communicative Activities

**Table 3 Active learning of Communicative Activities in Tourism English Group as Perceived by College Instructors. (N=15)**

Viewpoints on Outside Classroom Communicative Activities for Teachers	Mean Score	Std. Dev.	Rank
1. Organize communicative practices for students to give tourists’ advice on tourist attractions.	2.67	0.72	4
2. Provide communicative games for students related to cultures of GMS countries.	2.73	0.70	3
3. Provide discussion for students related to tourist information officers of GMS countries.	3.40	0.51	1
4. Organize thinking activities for students related to tourist regulation of GMS countries.	2.20	1.21	7



<b>Viewpoints on Outside Classroom Communicative Activities for Teachers</b>	<b>Mean Score</b>	<b>Std. Dev.</b>	<b>Rank</b>
5. Encourage students to describe the main culture of each GMS country.	3.27	0.70	2
6. Plan a tourism activity map for students related to reservation clerks in hotel.	2.20	1.08	6
7. Let students use the reception information on the cards to make telephone conversations with partners.	2.53	1.23	5

Table 3 shows the mean score of opinions of the 15 instructors has the highest mean score and the lowest mean score from its rank. The highest mean score opinion is: "Provide discussion for students related to tourist information officers of GMS countries." It illustrates the instructors strongly agree with the discussion activity should be used to teach speaking for tourism students. The

second highest opinion is: "Encourage students to describe the main culture of each GMS country." It illustrates the instructors also strongly agree with this opinion. The least popular opinion is "Organize thinking activities for students related to tourist regulation of GMS countries." It illustrates the instructors disagree with this opinion. The items 4 and 6 were accepted by instructors.

**Table 4 Active learning of Communicative Activities in Educational English Group as Perceived by English Teachers. (N=29)**

<b>Viewpoints on Outside Classroom Communicative Activities for Teachers</b>	<b>Mean Score</b>	<b>Std. Dev.</b>	<b>Rank</b>
1. Organize communicative practices for students to give tourists' advice on tourist attractions.	3.44	0.57	1
2. Provide communicative games for students related to cultures of GMS countries.	3.03	0.82	5
3. Provide discussion for students related to tourist information officers of GMS countries.	3.14	0.58	4
4. Organize thinking activities for students related to tourist regulation of GMS countries.	2.97	0.82	7
5. Encourage students to describe the main culture of each GMS country.	3.24	0.58	2
6. Plan a tourism activity map for students related to reservation clerks in hotel.	3.03	0.87	6
7. Let students use the reception information on the cards to make telephone conversations with partners.	3.21	0.49	3

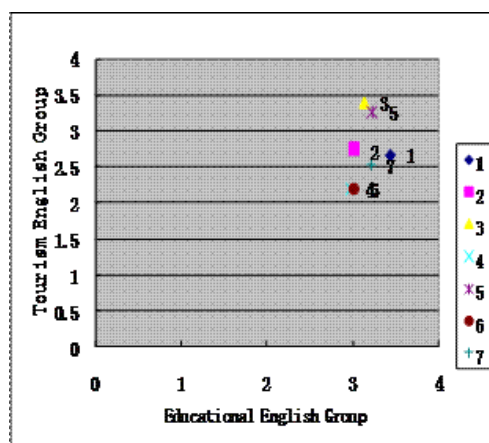
Table 4 shows the 29 teachers in Educational English group agree to all the pre-defined opinions listed. They don't have opposing opinions from it. But it also has the highest mean score and the lowest mean score from the rank. The highest mean

score opinion is: "Organizing communicative practices for students to give tourists' advice on tourist attractions." It illustrates the teachers strongly agree that this activity should be used to teach speaking for tourism students. The second highest

opinion is “Encouraging students to describe the main culture of each GMS country” This opinion illustrates teachers also agree with them. The least popular opinion is “Organizing thinking activities

for students related to tourist regulation of GMS countries.” It illustrates the teachers agree with this opinion. All items were accepted by teachers.

**Figure 2. Comparison the viewpoints of Active learning of Communicative Activities between Tourism English Instructors and Educational English Teachers.**



In Figure 2, X axis illustrates the teachers from educational English group. Using the mean ranking  $\geq 2.5$ , we see that the educational English group considered all items of classroom communicative English activities suitable for tourism students. Y axis illustrates the instructors from tourism English group. They considered items 1, 2, 3, 5, 7 suitable for tourism students.

The viewpoints of two groups were different. The teachers of educational English group, focused

on English speaking skill of this study. But the instructors of tourism English group focused on both English speaking skill and tourism knowledge. The tourism English instructors considered that “Planning a tourism activity map for students related to reservation clerks in hotel” and “Organizing thinking activities for students related to tourist regulation of GMS countries” were not related to speaking skill, these two activities should not be used to teach students.

### Section 3: Career Plan of Students

**Table 5 Career Plan of Students in Tourism English Group as Perceived by College Instructors. (N=15)**

Viewpoints on Career Plan of Students	Mean Score	Std. Dev.	Rank
1. Officially set up a mini tour company in the college managed by student committee.	3.40	0.63	3
2. Organize workshops on GMS tourism in college supported by tour agencies.	3.33	0.62	4
3. Plan with students to conduct a research on the trends of tour business in GMS.	1.60	0.74	9



Viewpoints on Career Plan of Students	Mean Score	Std. Dev.	Rank
4. Organize education trips for interested groups of students to visit tourist spots in some GMS countries.	3.33	0.72	5
5. Provide students with the opportunities of tourism business they need.	3.67	0.72	1
6. Encourage students to do part time jobs related to tourism business.	3.67	0.72	1
7. Support independent study for students to understand bird's eye view of economic development in GMS countries.	2.47	1.19	7
8. Plan with students to write comic books using tourism information of their cities.	1.53	0.74	10
9. Encourage students to imagine the outcome of tourism business development of their communities	2.33	1.18	8
10. Invite a tour guide to the class to talk on his/her career growth.	2.53	0.83	6
11. Let some students visit a tour agency and report to the class.	3.53	0.64	2

Table 5 shows the mean score of opinions of the 15 instructors has the highest mean score and the lowest mean score from its rank. The highest mean score opinions are: "Providing students with the opportunities of tourism business they need"; "Encouraging students to do part time jobs related to tourism business." It illustrates the

instructors strongly agree with these opinions. The least popular opinion is "Planning with students to write comic books using tourism information of their cities." It illustrates the instructors strongly disagree with this opinion. The items 3, 7, 8, 9 were not accepted by instructors.

**Table 6 Career Plan of Students in Educational English Group as Perceived by teachers. (N=29)**

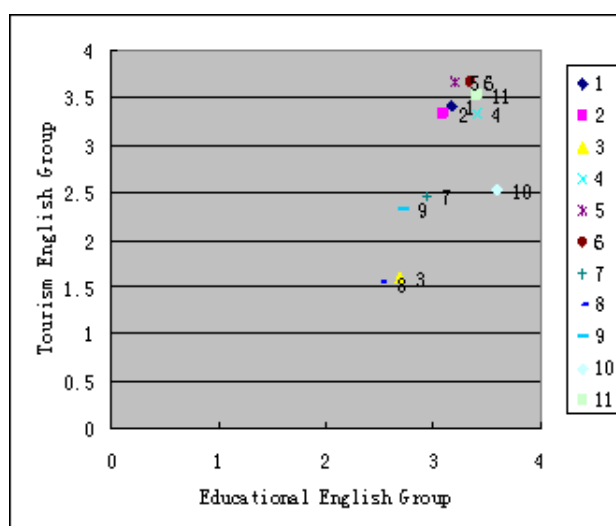
Viewpoints on Career Plan of Students	Mean Score	Std. Dev.	Rank
1. Officially set up a mini tour company in the college managed by student committee.	3.17	0.66	6
2. Organize workshops on GMS tourism in college supported by tour agencies.	3.10	0.56	7
3. Plan with students to conduct a research on the trends of tour business in GMS.	2.69	0.76	10
4. Organize education trips for interested groups of students to visit tourist spots in some GMS countries.	3.41	0.50	2

Viewpoints on Career Plan of Students	Mean Score	Std. Dev.	Rank
5. Provide students with the opportunities of tourism business they need.	3.21	0.62	5
6. Encourage students to do part time jobs related to tourism business.	3.34	0.72	4
7. Support independent study for students to understand bird's eye view of economic development in GMS countries.	2.93	0.92	8
8. Plan with students to write comic books using tourism information of their cities.	2.52	0.95	11
9. Encourage students to imagine the outcome of tourism business development of their communities	2.72	1.00	9
10. Invite a tour guide to the class to talk on his/her career growth.	3.59	0.63	1
11. Let some students visit a tour agency and report to the class.	3.41	0.68	3

Table 6 shows the mean score of opinions on the 29 teachers. The highest mean score opinion is: "Inviting a tour guide to the class to talk on his/her career growth." It illustrates the teachers strongly agree with this activity should be use to teach speaking for tourism students. The second highest opinion is "Organizing education trips for

interested groups of students to visit tourist spots in some GMS countries" This opinion illustrates the teachers also strongly agree with it. The least popular opinion is "Planning with students to write comic books using tourism information of their cities". It illustrates the teachers agree with this opinion. All items were accepted by teachers.

**Figure 3. Comparison the Perspectives of Career Plan between Tourism English Instructors and Educational English Teachers.**



In Figure 3, X axis illustrates the teachers from educational English group. Using the mean ranking  $\geq 2.50$ , we see that the educational English group considered all items of classroom communicative English activities is suitable for tourism students. Y axis illustrates the instructors from Tourism English group. They considered item 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 10, and 11 suitable for tourism students.

The viewpoints of two groups were different. The teachers of Educational English group, they do not know how to encourage tourism students to get work experiences. In theory, all items should be used to teach tourism students. But the instructors of Tourism English group focus on the activities of career plan are suitable for tourism students to get more work experiences. Tourism English instructors considered that "Encouraging students to imagine the outcome of tourism business development of their communities"; "Supporting independent study for students to understand bird's eye view of economic development in GMS countries"; "Planning with students to write comic books using tourism information of their cities"; "Plan with students to conduct a research on the trends of tour business in GMS" are very difficult for college tourism students.

## Discussion

There was no difference in mean score between tourism English group and educational English group on viewpoint of classroom, outside and career plan communicative activities for teachers. Experts in two groups agreed with the most pre-defined opinions listed. But the viewpoints of two groups were different. The teachers in educational English group agreed with the all pre-defined opinions listed, they didn't have opposing opinions from it, but there were two items that were not accepted by instructors of tourism English group. The rank of top three of classroom communicative activities between two groups also were different.

The researcher found that the samples of this study were limited and college instructors and teachers had different knowledge background. The teachers of educational English group, they had no background of tourism knowledge. They focused on English speaking skill of this study. The English teachers considered that assigning students

to make presentation and encouraging students to ask and answer questions were most important activities for college tourism students to improve English speaking ability. But the instructors of tourism English group with tourism knowledge background and English background, focused on both English speaking skill and tourism knowledge. The tourism English instructors considered that assigning students to make presentation, role play, drama related to local cultures were most effective way for students to improve English speaking skill, but "Assigning students to complete the blanks of the dialogue for conversation related to travel agency questions and present dialogue to the class" were not effective to enhance students' speaking ability. Although "Setting up a role play in the class using 2-3 languages of GMS countries based on English communication" was English role play activity, they found that use 2-3 languages of GMS countries not appropriate way to enhance students speaking ability nor were "Planning a tourism activity map for students related to reservation clerks in hotel" or "Organizing thinking activities for students related to tourist regulation of GMS countries" seen to be related to speaking skill. "Encouraging students to imagine the outcome of tourism business development of their communities"; "Supporting independent study for students to understand bird's eye view of economic development in GMS countries"; "Planning with students to write comic books using tourism information of their cities"; "Planning with students to conduct a research on the trends of tour business in GMS" were also thought to be very difficult for college tourism students by the teachers of English for tourism.

## Conclusion and Recommendations

In conclusion, to answer the research question, the researcher found that encouraging students to make presentation, role play, dialogue, communicative games, and discussion, describe related to tourism knowledge are suitable for college tourism students to enhance English speaking skill. Career plans of tourism students indicated that we should encourage students to do part time work and provide students with the opportunities they need to enter the tourism business. The most

important way to help the students is to get work experiences. The teachers of educational English group agreed with the all pre-defined opinions listed, they didn't have opposing opinions from it. But in context of tourism English group, they had different perspectives of the communicative English activities. Such as the tourism English instructors considered that "Planning a tourism activity map for students related to reservation clerks in hotel" and "Organizing thinking activities for students related to tourist regulation of GMS countries" were not related to speaking skill, these two activities should not be used to teach students. Based on the results of the study, the following are recommendations:

For the English department heads of college

1.1. The English department heads of college

should create some interesting and effective communicative activities to improve students' English speaking skill. Such as opportunities for role play, emphasizing presentation more than exams, and having sections of class set for discussion.

1.2. The English department heads of college should provide English communicative activities to be integrated into the professional curriculum with opportunities for internship or other learning experience.

For teachers of English

2.1. The English teachers should encourage students to do part time jobs related to tourism business.

2.2. Teachers of English should let students visit a tour agency and report to the class.

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