

**Dramatizing a Northeastern Thai Folklore to Lessen High  
School Students' Communication Anxiety**

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**Abstract**

This paper aims at examining the extent to which the English drama inspired by the Northeastern Thai folklore “*Pachit-Oraphim*” in an English classroom can reduce high school students’ classroom anxiety in speaking English. The participants were thirty-six students in the tenth and eleventh grades, who were enrolled in an English class under the School-Based Management for Local Development (SBMLD) program at a local high school in Bua Yai district, Nakhon Ratchasima province. Based on Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) questionnaires (Horwitz, Horwitz, & Cope, 1986) and focus-group interviews, the results reveal that the participants showed a significant increase in their self-confidence to speak English by lowering their classroom anxiety. The results also suggest that the use of folk drama could potentially alleviate their anxiety of speaking English and promote their positive attitudes toward English communication in the classroom. Moreover, students appreciated their local culture by performing this folk drama in authentic sociocultural situations. This study will be potentially beneficial for

English teachers who would like to enhance students' speaking skills through a fun and meaningful folk drama performance. Culturally-responsive English language teaching through folk drama familiar to students can be an adaptable language pedagogy to increase their confidence to engage in the English classroom.

**Keywords:** culturally responsive English language teaching, folk drama, Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS), Northeastern Thailand, *Pachit-Oraphim*

### **Background of the study**

Based on the 2008 National Basic Education Core Curriculum in Thailand, the speaking skill is a fundamental domain of English language learning and teaching in Thai schools. High school students are required to acquire spoken English for communication, language and culture, language and its relationship with other learning areas, and language and its relationship with community and the world (Ministry of Education, 2008; Nomnian, 2013; Nomnian & Arphattananon, 2018). Wongdaeng and Hajihama (2018), for instance, suggest that project-based learning can promote 21<sup>st</sup> century skills and motivate Thai language learners to use English. Thai students' communication in English is, therefore, an expected learning outcome and necessary language skill that will be advantageous for them to communicate for local use and international encounters.

Studies regarding Thai students' communication in English language classrooms, however, have shown their reticence to speak because they are too passive and shy to use the language to communicate in class (Nomnian, 2008; Suwannasri & Nomnian, 2016; Tuan & Mai, 2015; Wiriyaichitra, 2002; Wongsothorn, Hiranburana, & Chinnawongs, 2002). Such difficulties are viewed as internal or affective challenges for English learners (Hosni, 2014; Punsiri, 2011). Nomnian (2009) suggests that teachers need

to take Thai students' classroom behaviors, attitudes, expectations, values, and beliefs into consideration in order to identify appropriate pedagogical approaches to promote their confidence and engagement in the English language classroom.

Affective factors including attitudes, emotions, motivations, and anxiety have long been researched, well-documented, and considered as essential and instrumental in second and foreign language acquisition (Basic, 2011; Dörnyei, 1998, 2005; Krashen, 2009; Petchan, 2012). Anxiety in particular is the focus of this study because it causes negative impacts on language learners who are likely to withdraw themselves from classroom interactions. Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) questionnaires (Horwitz, Horwitz, & Cope, 1986) have been developed and employed in language learning research in various educational contexts in order to determine language learners' levels of anxiety and various teaching approaches to lessen their anxiety. Research regarding FLCAS has illustrated that language learners' anxiety can be lowered and their confidence heightened by the use of drama in language classrooms (e.g. Atas, 2015; Gorjian, Moosavinia, & Jabripour, 2010; Kao & O'Neill, 1998; Punsiri, 2011).

Culturally responsive language teaching has recently been considered as an alternative approach to engage students in language use in relation to their everyday lives (Kozleski, 2010; Mitchell, 2019). Few studies, however, focus on language learners' local sociocultural contexts as a basis to their drama activities and materials; and thus, they are unable to connect their classroom learning and practices to their out-of-class experience and language use (Coleman, 2005; Nomnian & Thawornpat, 2015; Tomlinson & Masuhara, 2004). Consequently, English is merely considered as a subject rather than a tool for real-life communication. This study, therefore, aims to narrow existing gaps in the literature and teaching practices by examining how and the extent to which the use of folk drama may be used to lessen Thai high school students' levels of anxiety in the English language classroom.

### **Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety in English Language Learning**

Anxiety, a lack of confidence, and a resulting reduction in motivation towards learning English, is a challenge for English language learners (Wood, 2008; Worde, 2003; Young, 1999; Zhiping & Paramasivam, 2013). Krashen's affective filter hypothesis states that a student's self-image, motivations, and emotional state can affect how well that student can successfully acquire a second language (Krashen & Terrell, 1983). If a language learner is anxious and upset in any type of instruction, he/she will have difficulty learning English, especially with listening and speaking skills (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1991; McDonell, 1992). It is important for educators to find ways to motivate learners, reduce their anxiety, and increase their confidence in the classroom in order for them to successfully learn English (Wood, 2008).

Most teenage language learners generally become embarrassed, anxious, reticent, and humiliated when making mistakes in front of their peers and teachers; and therefore, when learners are anxious, they are not likely to speak, and vice versa (Atas, 2015). English language learners in Thailand are not motivated to learn English and practice speaking English. Thai students are good at grammar, but when they have to speak English, they fail to utter the language correctly (Toolsiri, 2005). Similarly, Janudom and Wanthanasut (2009) found that Thai students were afraid of making mistakes when speaking English with others as they might be misunderstood.

One possible way to reduce anxiety and increase confidence and motivation is to use drama in the English classroom (Wood, 2008; Zarina 2014). Drama as action is an essential part of learning a language because it develops body language, increases motivation, and keeps students involved in the learning process (Atas, 2015; Gorjian, Jabripour & Moosavinia, 2010; Miccoli, 2003). Drama itself has become a teaching technique, which encourages students to learn a new language in a creative and effective way (Maley & Duff, 2005; McCaslin, 2006; Sağlamel &

Kayaoğlu, 2013; Stern, 1993). This means that drama techniques create an atmosphere where students learn in context, use their imagination, and react spontaneously (Atas, 2015; Stinson & Freebody, 2006; Wagner, 1998).

There is a strong relationship between drama and speaking anxiety reduction in the foreign language classroom. For instance, 12<sup>th</sup> grade Turkish language learners were active and enjoyed learning as their anxiety and prejudices were reduced when engaging in drama activities, which significantly promoted their positive attitudes and confidence to speak English without fear of making mistakes (Atas, 2015).

This present study employed a story of folklore called *Pachit-Oraphim* as the plot for a drama in an English class. *Pachit-Oraphim* is one of the most renowned Thai local legends in Northeastern Thailand. It explains and describes the origin of ancient architectural sites at the Phimai Sanctuary. It is also a love story in which the protagonists make a long journey in their quest to find their beloved. The various locations to which this legend is set provide the origin for the names of actual places along the route from the city of Phimai in Thailand to Wat Phu in the district of Champasak in the Laos PDR and further to Angkor Wat in Cambodia, covering several Thai provinces on the way. Silverman (2016) states that Prasat Hin Phimai, the largest ancient Khmer temple outside Cambodia, located in the northeastern region of Thailand, has been on Thailand's tentative list for inclusion as part of UNESCO's World Heritage. Figure 1 illustrates the transnational route representing locations related to *Pachit-Oraphim*.

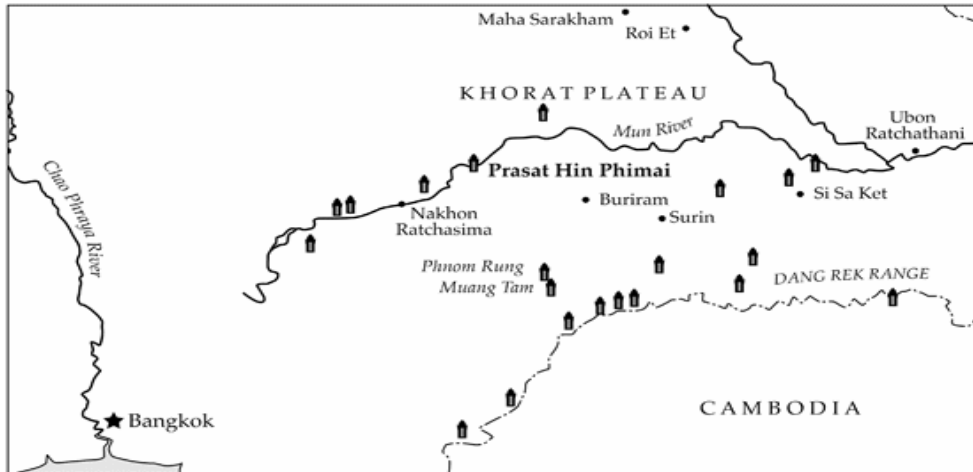


Figure 1. The Ruinscape: UNESCO, the State, and the Construction of Identity and Heritage in Phimai, Thailand (Silverman, 2016, p.35).

Because of the transnational development of the *Pachit-Oraphim* story, via both land and water, the route has become a “must-visit” for tourists in order to preserve the significance of the Phimai Sanctuary as well as to generate income for communities referenced in local legends (Kullapat, 2014). Sun (2014) states that non-native English teachers need to include multicultural content both from local and global contexts to enable learners to become better-rounded, critical, and more aware of existing language and cultural diversity. Raising non-native cultural awareness from local contexts has become essential in English language teaching as it shifts the teaching paradigm from native to non-native so as to be more meaningful to language learners and teachers (Kanoksilpatham, 2015; Nomnian, 2018; Snodin, 2016).

Regarding studies in community-based English language education in Thailand, Kanoksilpatham (2016) values community-based instructional innovations by integrating language learners’ Northeastern Thai sociocultural aspects into English language instruction that can transform learners to become autonomous and independent in using language to address regional identity, local community, and knowledge issues. Kanoksilpatham and Channuan (2018) further researched community-based English

language instruction in Northern Thailand and found that locally-produced materials and tasks encourage young learners and their teachers to take pride in and be optimistic about their local cultural identity, which can enhance Thai learners' English proficiency and help maintain respect for their Northern Thai identity.

This study not only addresses the historical background of native sociocultural contexts, but also integrates it into the English class where learners can learn to fully appreciate their local community, knowledge, and wisdom. This in turn can serve as the basis for communication with foreign tourists and visitors to highlight the value and importance of their cultural heritage and traditions.

## **Methodology**

### ***Research Setting and Participants***

This study was undertaken at one school of Provincial Administrative Organization (PAO) in Bua Yai district, Nakhon Ratchasima Province. The school under the Department of the Local Administration forms part of the School-Based Management for Local Development (SBMLD) policy aiming to develop the locality of the school to promote students' knowledge, abilities and skills in English to be applicable in their daily lives, for life-long learning, and to promote excellent talents (Department of Local Administration, 2017). It is also beneficial for students and the locality because the school receives special funding to support English language teaching and learning. There are few Thai English teachers who teach Basic English, Communicative English, and SBMLD classes, and this school's locality is not blessed with tourist sites that attract foreign tourists, so the students have very few opportunities to use English in daily life; the only chance they get to use English is at school studying and practicing in the class. The participants comprised thirty-six students. Thirty-one students were in tenth grade (twenty-four females and seven males) and five students were in eleventh grade (four females and one male). In this study, the *Pachit-Oraphim* folk

drama script of each character was provided to the participating students.

Based on Janudom and Wasanasomsithi's (2009) integration of drama to enhance students' speaking abilities, the teaching steps applied for this study were divided into four consisting of (1) working on a drama script, (2) drama rehearsal, (3) drama production, and (4) drama evaluation. The teaching procedures were used as the conceptual framework of E-Sarn folk drama English language instruction. Scripts for the first and the second scenes were communicated to the students describing the events that would occur in the following scene, and students were instructed to create their own script in groups together with the plot to guide them for the next two scenes. The creativity tasks to develop the E-Sarn folk drama script was able to stimulate the students to advance to plot for the following scenes.

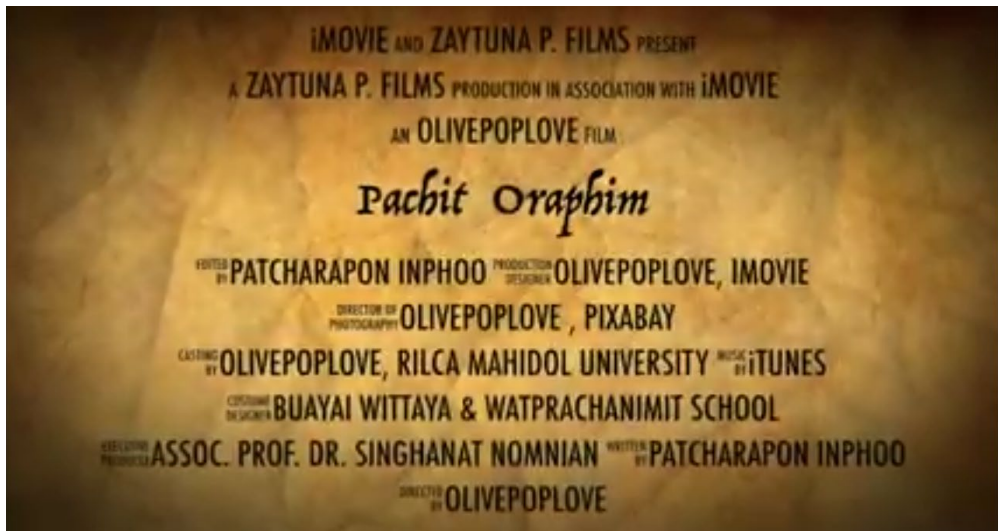
Simultaneously, their English skills improved noticeably and they learned how to work in groups. Eleven scenes for *Pachit-Oraphim* E-Sarn folk drama were used and students endeavored to get to learn their chapter and predict the plot of each subsequent scene. Over the two weeks, they learned how to perform, act, and express emotions followed by three weeks of rehearsals. The final performance was held at premises in their local district (Buayai district, Nakhon Ratchasima Province of Thailand) and each scene being recorded on video with the students dressed up in Thai E-Sarn and historic Khmer costumes (see Picture 1 below).





Picture 1. A screen shot from YouTube  
(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XkVs6Cjd6QY>)

It took four days to record the videos and around one month to edit all the videos before the full drama production was uploaded onto YouTube (See Picture 2 below).



Picture 2. A Screen Shot from YouTube  
(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XkVs6Cjd6QY>)

**Research Ethics**

Prior to data collection, ethical considerations were approved by the Ethics in Human Research Program, Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities, Mahidol University, Thailand under the project number COA. No. 2017/11-242. The approval included the data collection and research instruments, submission form, research proposal, questionnaire, focus group discussion guidelines, participant information sheet and informed consent documents. All participants and their parents or guardians were provided with informed consent forms in Thai. All participants and the setting were anonymous. Instructions on how to conduct the drama-based activities were provided to all participants. Students in the class who did not wish to participate in the research were still allowed to participate in the drama activities with their classmates. Participants were also able to withdraw from the research at any time (Wood, 2008).

**Data Collection**

A mixed-method approach was employed in this study, which combined both quantitative and qualitative data in order to increase the research's validity and reliability (Clark & Creswell, 2007; Creswell, 2003; Sechrest & Sidana, 1995; Yippikun, 2017). A triangulation of research tools including Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) questionnaire (see Appendix) and guided questions for focus-group interviews were employed.

**Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS)**

Based on Punsiri's (2011) FLCAS questionnaire, the study comprised thirty-three items for measuring overall anxiety based on three scales for determining foreign language classroom anxiety: communication apprehension (being afraid of using a foreign language to communicate with another person); fear of negative evaluation (fear of being criticized both verbally and non-verbally); and test anxiety (fear of failure or poor performance in both formal and informal tests). Moreover, components included means by which teacher's influence, the influence of friends and

others, and students' self-confidence could be measured as shown in Table 1 below.

**Table 1. Components of Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale**

No.	Components	Item Number on Questionnaire	The Number of Items
1.	Test Anxiety	1, 3, 4, 6, ,7, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 15, 16, 17, 19, 20, 21, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 29, 30, 31, 33	25
2.	Communication Apprehension	1, 4, 9, 14, 18, 24, 27, 29, 32	9
3.	Fear of Negative Evaluation	7, 13, 15, 20, 23, 25, 31,32	8
4.	Students' Self-Confidence	2, 5, 8, 14, 18, 22, 28, 32	8
5.	Teacher's Influence	6, 7, 17, 19, 26	5
6.	Influence of Friends and Other People	13, 23, 24, 31	4

According to Table 1, "test anxiety" includes most items, whereas "influence of friends and other people" covers the least. It should also be noted that one FLCAS item may be included in several components due to its effects on students' communication anxiety. For instance, item 32 "*You would probably feel comfortable around native speakers of English*" is found in three components, namely "communication apprehension", "fear of negative evaluation", and "students' self-confidence".

### ***Focus-Group Interviews***

In terms of qualitative approach, focus-group interviews were employed to collect the qualitative data for this study in order to understand the details of information provided by participants not available from questionnaire. Based on Punsiri (2011), the purpose of the guided questions was to collect data on self-reported levels of the students' foreign language classroom anxiety. The questions were as follows:

- 1) Before taking this course, how did you feel about the course?
- 2) Do you think that the level of your FLCA has reduced after taking this course with E-Sarn folk drama English language instruction?
- 3) What are your perceptions in E-Sarn folk drama?
- 4) What are the advantages of E-Sarn folk drama instruction for the English class?
- 5) What activities do you think can reduce your anxiety the most?
- 6) Why do you think that those activities can reduce your anxiety the most?
- 7) What activities do you think can reduce your anxiety the least?
- 8) Why do you think that those activities can reduce your anxiety the least?
- 9) How can drama techniques be improved in order to reduce FLCA the most?
- 10) Do you think that the use of E-Sarn folk drama instruction to reduce anxiety can be integrated with other subjects? If so, how?
- 11) Would you like to promote your experience of the use of E-Sarn folk drama English language instruction to reduce anxiety to your local community? If so, how can this be done?

The focus-group interviews were conducted in the classroom after participants had finished the class. Ten

participants (three 10<sup>th</sup> grade students and seven 11<sup>th</sup> grade students) participated in the focus-group interviews.

### **Data Analysis**

The collected data from the questionnaires and focus-group interviews were analyzed and categorized into quantitative and qualitative data. The quantitative data were self-ratings from FLCAS questionnaire while the qualitative data were transcripts from the focus group discussion (Punsiri, 2011).

### **Quantitative Data Analysis**

The data obtained from the thirty-six questionnaires were interpreted in the form of the descriptive statistics that helped to organize, analyze and categorize the participants' foreign language classroom anxiety into six aspects: communication apprehension, fear of negative evaluation, test anxiety, teacher's influence, influence of friends and other people, and student's self-confidence. The descriptive statistics were classified into groups by using a basic formula of class interval for quantitative interpretation of data (see Table 2). The formula used was:

$$\text{Class Interval} = \frac{\text{highest value} - \text{lowest value}}{\text{number of classes}}$$

**Table 2. Interpretation of the Quantitative Response (Score Range 1-5)**

<b>Scale</b>	<b>Score Range</b>	<b>Mean Rating</b>	<b>Interpretation</b>
5	4.44-5.00	Strongly agree	Very high
4	3.58-4.43	Agree	High
3	2.72-3.57	Moderate	Moderate
2	1.86-2.71	Disagree	Low
1	1.00-1.85	Strongly disagree	Very low

### Qualitative Data Analysis

Using content analysis technique to sort the qualitative data obtained from the focus-group interview transcripts, the results were classified according to the research questions of the study.

### Results

The results of this study will be presented by survey results and focus-group interview transcripts. First of all, the comparative data of the students' FLCAS average scores according to the pre- and post-surveys is shown in Figure 2 below.

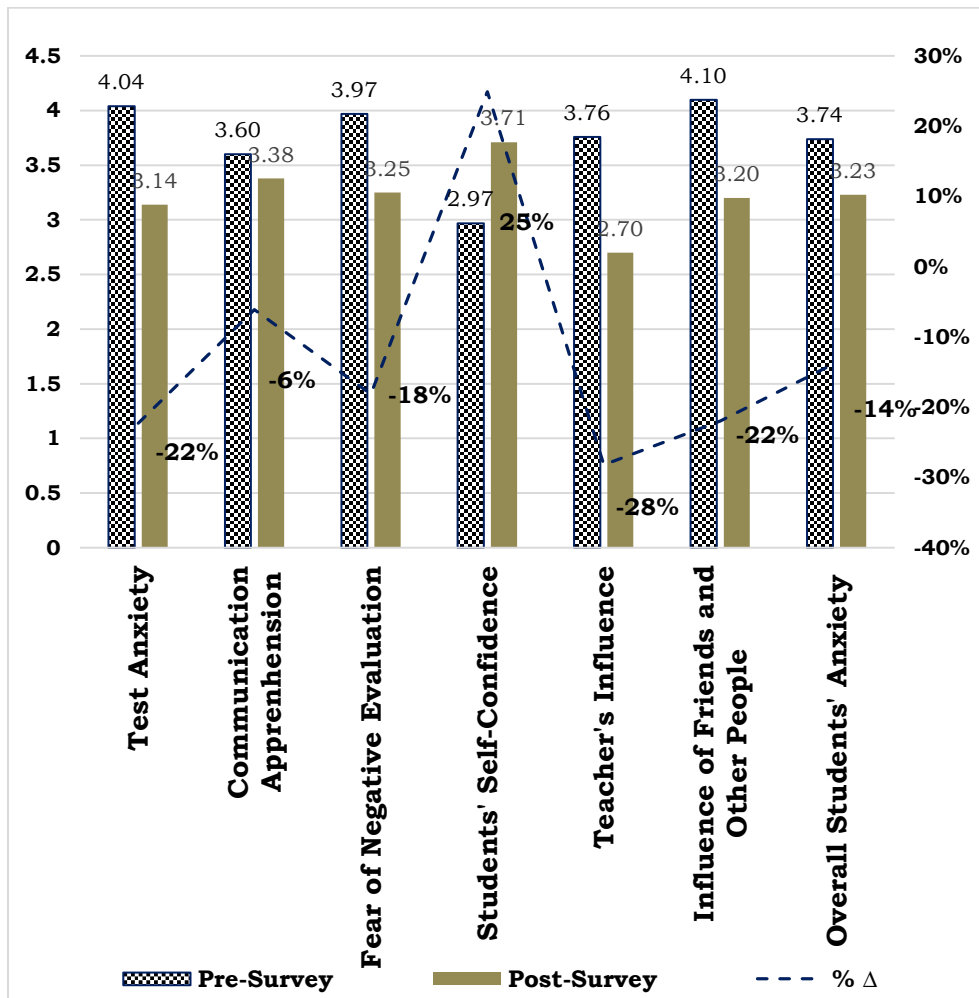


Figure 2. Comparison of the Average Scores of Students' FLCAS Based on Pre- and Post-Surveys

According to Figure 2, the findings of the pre-survey scores of the participants showed that their overall anxiety level was high ( $\bar{x} = 3.74$ ). They had high anxiety levels to speak English in almost all components, including test anxiety ( $\bar{x} = 4.04$ ), communication apprehension ( $\bar{x} = 3.60$ ), fear of negative evaluation ( $\bar{x} = 3.97$ ), teacher's influence ( $\bar{x} = 3.76$ ), and influence of friends and other people ( $\bar{x} = 4.10$ ). Students' self-confidence in speaking English was also relatively low ( $\bar{x} = 2.97$ ).

The results suggest that the students in the SBMLD class had high levels of anxiety in the foreign language classroom before joining the drama-based instruction. They were very anxious and had low self-confidence to speak English because they did not have opportunities to join in English activities and competitions. Some students had high anxiety to speak English for fear of their teachers' criticisms, peer pressure, or exam failure.

The post-survey scores, however, reveal a decrease in most components regarding the students' classroom speaking anxiety, which were test anxiety ( $\bar{x} = 3.14$ ), communication apprehension ( $\bar{x} = 3.38$ ), fear of negative evaluation ( $\bar{x} = 3.25$ ), teacher's influence ( $\bar{x} = 2.70$ ), and influence of friends and other people ( $\bar{x} = 3.20$ ). In addition, there was an increase in the students' self-confidence to speak English ( $\bar{x} = 3.71$ ). The overall anxiety score was at a moderate level ( $\bar{x} = 3.23$ ).

The percentage change of the students' anxiety levels shows a negative trend (-14% $\Delta$ ) due to the reduction of their English speaking; however, the students' self-confidence illustrates a positive change (+25% $\Delta$ ) because of the use of drama instruction. Their anxiety in speaking English after participating in E-Sarn folk drama English language instruction reduced. Most students felt relaxed speaking English with friends, yet some were still concerned speaking English because other English classes and assignments focused on content and grammar with few speaking activities and little teacher support. Thus, there were some students who agreed that they were still anxious speaking English if they did not speak it regularly or had few opportunities to use it.

It is evident that there were many students who strongly agreed that they had reduced their anxiety and increased their self-confidence in using English. In agreement with FLCAS, the results indicate that the students were able to reduce their anxiety in speaking English at a moderate level, as shown in Table 3 below.

**Table 3. Overall students' anxiety of the post-survey**

Items	Statements	$\bar{x}$	SD	Interpret.
1	You never feel quite sure of yourself when you are speaking in my English language class.	3.25	0.93	Moderate
2	You don't worry about making mistakes in English language class.	3.73	0.84	High
3	You tremble when you know that you're going to be called on in English language class.	3.17	1.13	Moderate
4	It frightens you when you don't understand what the teacher is saying in English language class.	3.14	1.04	Moderate
5	It wouldn't bother you at all to take more English language classes.	4.22	1.01	High
6	During English language class, you find yourself thinking about things that have nothing to do with the course.	2.56	0.90	Low
7	You keep thinking that other students are better at English language than you are.	3.56	0.87	Moderate
8	You are usually at ease during tests in your English language class.	3.81	0.88	High



<b>Items</b>	<b>Statements</b>	<b><math>\bar{x}</math></b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>Interpret.</b>
9	You start to panic when you have to speak without preparation in English language class.	3.64	1.01	High
10	You worry about the consequences of failing your English language class.	3.44	1.13	Moderate
11	You don't understand why some people get so upset over English language class.	3.06	0.82	Moderate
12	In English language class, you can get so nervous you forget things you know.	3.28	0.94	Moderate
13	It embarrasses you to volunteer answers in your English language class.	2.89	1.21	Moderate
14	You would not be nervous speaking English language with native speakers.	3.69	0.82	High
15	You get so upset when you don't understand what the teacher is correcting.	3.03	1.23	Moderate
16	Even if you are well prepared for English language class, you feel anxious about it.	3.08	1.02	Moderate
17	You often feel like not going to your English language class.	2.19	1.19	Low
18	You feel confident when you speak in English language class.	3.61	0.93	High
19	You are afraid that your English language teacher is ready to correct every mistake you make.	2.22	1.19	Low
20	You can feel your heart pounding when you're going to be called on in English language class.	3.28	1.23	Moderate

<b>Items</b>	<b>Statements</b>	<b><math>\bar{x}</math></b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>Interpret.</b>
21	The more you study for English language test, the more confused you get.	3.67	1.12	High
22	You don't feel pressure to prepare very well for English language class.	3.47	0.87	Moderate
23	You always feel that the other students speak English language better than you do.	3.36	0.96	Moderate
24	You feel very self-conscious about speaking English language in front other students.	3.36	1.01	Moderate
25	English language class moves so quickly that you worry about getting left behind.	3.22	1.09	Moderate
26	You feel more tense and nervous in your English language class than in your other classes.	2.97	1.18	Moderate
27	You get nervous and confused when you are speaking in your English language class.	2.97	1.08	Moderate
28	When you're on your way to English language class, you feel very sure and relaxed.	3.69	0.95	High
29	You get nervous when you don't understand every word the English language teacher says.	3.28	1.00	Moderate
30	You feel overwhelmed by the number of rules you have to learn to speak English.	3.14	1.07	Moderate
31	You are afraid that the other students will laugh at you when you speak English.	3.19	1.19	Moderate

Items	Statements	$\bar{x}$	SD	Interpret.
32	You would probably feel comfortable around native speakers of English.	3.44	0.93	Moderate
33	You get nervous when the English language teacher asks questions which you haven't prepared in advance.	3.61	1.17	High
<b>Overall mean score</b>		<b>3.28</b>	<b>1.03</b>	<b>Moderate</b>

Table 3 shows numerous reasons as to why students had anxiety in speaking English, but the use of E-Sarn folk drama used as the teaching technique in class provided effective support for students to reduce their speaking English anxiety. Many students were able to reduce their anxiety in speaking English after participating in this class ( $\bar{x} = 3.28$ ). Some students, however, were worried that they would still be afraid of speaking in other classes without the support of a teacher who recognized the value of the drama approach to motivating students to speak English. The table below summarizes six components of the participants' FLCAS.

The student focus-group interviews evidenced how much they became confident to speak English in the classroom after they performed *Pachit-Oraphim*.

### **Extract 1**

*When this project (E-Sarn Folk Drama) finished, we were really happy and something had changed. We really enjoy speaking English. Our self-confidence has increased. Drama instruction has helped us become interested in English. We would like to communicate with foreigners and think of studying abroad (Student F).*

From the focus group interviews extracts, most of the students expressed having reduced anxiety in speaking English after experiencing E-Sarn folk drama English instruction.

**Extract 2**

*Before joining this class, I think I had an anxiety but I still wanted to study because it's essential to use English for the future. Even though I'm not excellent, I will try my best (Student A).*

The following extract reveals that the student was afraid of peer pressure and being criticized for his English accent.

**Extract 3**

*The activity that makes me feel anxious speaking English is presentation in front of class or public speaking because there are some people laugh at me and make comments like "What an accent!" "Oops! How dare you speak out! Mincing!" "If you speak like this, it's better not to speak." It makes me feel shy to speak English with other people (Student B).*

**Extract 4**

*I get anxious because of teachers' criticisms, and exam failure. Moreover, I'm really worried about using grammar when I have to speak English. It makes me feel anxious and I'm not confident (Student C).*

In this study, the students learned to speak English through their E-Sarn characters, which interested them and got them excited to find out more of the story behind the legend and the history. Moreover, the students agreed that they were able to improve themselves in English by using E-Sarn folk drama because the words and sentences used in the drama could be applied in their daily lives. From the post-survey, the students were more confident to speak English without anxiety.

**Extract 5**

*After finishing this activity (E-sarn folk drama instruction), I felt better. At first, my English speaking was not good because I was not confident. I was afraid of wrong answers. But now, I can use English with many friends, which makes me more confident (Student D).*

**Extract 6**

*I still have a little bit of anxiety. However, I am more confident to communicate in English with the teacher than before. When I joined this drama class, I felt that this activity would make me gain confidence. It's practical for using English (Student C).*

Although some of the students who offered feedback said that they were able to reduce their anxiety during these classes, they were still worried about other English classes not using the same method of English instruction, activities or opportunities to support them to continue using English. They were concerned that they would be more anxious when they had to speak English again.

**Extract 7**

*Most teachers usually give out worksheets or assignments without explaining or giving instructions. They do not suggest and guide us in what to do. They just let students work it out on our own. Sometimes we cannot find answers, especially with difficult words (Student E).*

**Extract 8**

*I give myself six out of ten. But my anxiety is actually around four. When I communicate with my friends or teacher, sometimes I can't arrange the sentences. When I ask questions, they're confused and can't answer me. In such classes, I'm still anxious (Student C).*

**Extract 9**

*After joining the class, I feel that I can reduce my anxiety in speaking English and be confident especially when I have to speak English with my friends, other people and foreigners. Moreover, I have motivation to develop myself for communication in English and really want to study English more than before. But I still worry that some teachers in other English classes will focus on just doing worksheets and be strict on grammar when she/he asks me to speak English. It makes me anxious because I worry that I will make mistakes in front of my friends and teacher (Student F).*

**Extract 10**

*I enjoy and feel relaxed while studying in the drama class. I like how the E-Sarn folk drama lets us improve our English speaking skills, learn more about our cultures, the legends of Northeastern Thailand and especially working with all my classmates for the performance of “Pachit-Oraphim”, which inspired me. I want to practice speaking English well to make a perfect performance. I want the teacher and the director of the school to support us to participate in creative English activities that allow us to speak English (Student B).*

These extracts suggest that there were also many students who felt confident when they had to speak in an English class. In addition, students felt comfortable even around native speakers of English than before. In particular, students were not nervous about speaking English with native speakers. They were confident speaking English, and not only did they wish to practice and communicate with native speakers more than before, but they wanted to communicate in English with foreigners and tourists from other countries as well.

## **Discussion**

The results of this study suggest that drama in the English classrooms can enable students to be less afraid of making mistakes in front of their friends and their teachers (Wood, 2008). This study provides an alternative English language teaching approach by shifting away from the native and Western model to a non-native and localized one through the use of students' sociocultural contexts. Familiar cultural contexts, customs and life styles are advantageous for students in providing authentic situations in which to practice speaking English. The results correspond with studies conducted by Kanoksilpatham (2015, 2016) and Kanoksilpatham and Channuan (2018) in terms of valuing and integrating local culture into English language teaching, materials development, and classroom activities to not only promote positive attitudes among language learners and teachers, but also to elevate their cultural pride and identity, which can then be shared with foreign visitors.

According to Mitchell (2019), when heritage language and culture are brought into the classroom, teachers encourage the traditional storytelling of learners' own local culture that bridges their academic and social contexts; and thus, culturally responsive teaching links learners' home and school together through their background knowledge and way of life (Coleman, 2005; Nomnian & Thawornpat, 2015; Tomlinson & Masuhara, 2004). In this study, the students were empowered and able to communicate with foreigners about their way of life using meaningful sociocultural vocabulary and expressions. Folk drama is thus a means reducing speaking anxiety of foreign language classroom anxiety. The use of E-Sarn folk drama English language instruction should then be continued in English class activities or integrated into other classes such as Thai and social science subjects. The results show that almost all the students interacted with their peers in English and were more confident to communicate in English without anxiety. It is evident that E-Sarn folk drama can be an effective approach to be integrated into English language instruction.

Drama can also be considered as a key teaching tool that potentially transforms the learning experiences that contribute to learners' life skills and personal development (Atas, 2015; Gorjian, Jabripour, & Moosavinia, 2010; Macy, 2013; Maley & Duff, 2005; McCaslin, 2006; Miccoli, 2003; Sağlamel & Kayaoğlu, 2013; Stern, 1993). Similar to Wongdaeng and Hajihama's (2018) findings, it is evident that the use of folk drama in English language classes provided opportunities for learners who not only felt empowered to use English in their performance and communication, but also facilitated their development of 21<sup>st</sup> century skills including creativity, collaboration, information literacy, media literacy, flexibility, team-working, critical-thinking, leadership, and social skills, all of which will be vital for them in real-life contexts. Dramatizing folklore may, therefore, be an alternative avenue for language learners and teacher in creating co-learning spaces within regular language classroom activities.

### **Conclusion**

The aim of the study was to reduce high school students' anxiety in speaking English in English language classes by using E-Sarn folk drama. The results suggest that E-Sarn folk drama can potentially help reduce the anxiety of students towards speaking English as well as promote positive attitudes towards the use of culturally responsive English instruction, which connects their school and home culture via drama performance of *Pachit-Oraphim*.

Moreover, students learned to appreciate their E-Sarn culture, customs and lifestyle by playing and performing this folk drama, which is of benefit to them by introducing authentic situations to speaking practice sessions. They were able to communicate with other foreigners about their way of life using meaningful, sociocultural vocabulary and expressions. Students have now become more interested in their culture, history and other legends. The drama activities required them to act in authentic sociocultural situations and practice speaking English, which should be integrated into other classes such as Thai and



social studies. Folk drama is thus a possible way towards reducing speaking anxiety in English classes.

This study addresses the significance of using students' sociocultural knowledge to enhance understanding of their lives, promote classroom communication, and discuss their culture with foreign visitors. Due to the non-generalizable nature of such case study, this one may be considered as an adaptable model for other English teachers who wish to consider drama as a way to increase students' engagement and interactions in the English classroom.

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**Appendix**  
**Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Questionnaire**  
**(English Version)**

**Section 1: General Information**

1. Name..... Last name.....
2. Academic Field of Study..... Major.....
3. Have you ever taken an additional English course or not?
  - No
  - Yes ..... Course(s)
4. Have you ever been to an English-speaking country or not?
  - No (Go to Section 2)
  - Yes ..... Time(s)
5. If yes, what is the purpose of the traveling? (More than 1 answer is applicable.)

<b>Purpose of The Traveling</b>	<b>Frequency of Language Use</b>		
	<b>Much</b>	<b>Moderate</b>	<b>Little</b>
<input type="checkbox"/> Traveling			
<input type="checkbox"/> Taking an additional English Course			
<input type="checkbox"/> Furthering Study			
<input type="checkbox"/> Attending an Exchange Program			
<input type="checkbox"/> Others (Please specify) .....			

**Section 2: Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Questionnaire**

Please, put “√” in the square which best describes your feeling for each item. The descriptions for each square are the followings.

- 5 Means I **strongly agree** with the statement.  
 4 Means I **agree** with the statement.  
 3 Means I **neither agree nor disagree** with the statement.  
 2 Means I **disagree** with the statement.  
 1 Means I **strongly disagree** with the statement.

Statement	Level of Agreement				
	5	4	3	2	1
1. You never feel quite sure of yourself when you are speaking in my English language class.					
2. You don't worry about making mistakes in English language class.					
3. You tremble when you know that you're going to be called on in English language class.					
4. It frightens you when you don't understand what the teacher is saying in English language class.					
5. It wouldn't bother you at all to take more English language classes.					
6. During English language class, you find yourself thinking about things that have nothing to do with the course.					
7. You keep thinking that other students are better at English language than you are.					
8. You are usually at ease during tests in your English language class.					
9. You start to panic when you have to speak without preparation in English language class.					
10. You worry about the consequences of failing your English language class.					



Statement	Level of Agreement				
	5	4	3	2	1
11. You don't understand why some people get so upset over English language class.					
12. In English language class, you can get so nervous you forget things you know.					
13. It embarrasses you to volunteer answers in your English language class.					
14. You would not be nervous speaking English language with native speakers.					
15. You get so upset when you don't understand what the teacher is correcting.					
16. Even if you are well prepared for English language class, you feel anxious about it.					
17. You often feel like not going to your English language class.					
18. You feel confident when you speak in English language class.					
19. You are afraid that your English language teacher is ready to correct every mistake you make.					
20. You can feel your heart pounding when you're going to be called on in English language class.					
21. The more you study for English language test, the more confused you get.					
22. You don't feel pressure to prepare very well for English language class.					
23. You always feel that the other students speak English language better than you do.					
24. You feel very self-conscious about speaking English language in front other students.					

Statement	Level of Agreement				
	5	4	3	2	1
25. English language class moves so quickly that you worry about getting left behind.					
26. You feel more tense and nervous in your English language class than in your other classes.					
27. You get nervous and confused when you are speaking in your English language class.					
28. When you're on your way to English language class, you feel very sure and relaxed.					
29. You get nervous when you don't understand every word the English language teacher says.					
30. You feel overwhelmed by the number of rules you have to learn to speak English.					
31. You are afraid that the other students will laugh at you when you speak English.					
32. You would probably feel comfortable around native speakers of English.					
33. You get nervous when the English language teacher asks questions which you haven't prepared in advance.					