



How to Improve English Speaking Skills for PWS Students

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Title of research: How to Improve English Speaking Skills for PWS Students

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Chapter 1

The importance and the background of the problem

Speaking English only in the classroom is one of the hardest skills for a language learner to master. Getting students to speak in class may be the most difficult task many teachers face nowadays. Of the four English language skills, speaking enjoys a superior status. Accordingly, it should be given high priority while teaching. In spite of its importance, teaching English speaking skill to Thai English as Foreign language learners has always been an exacting task for Foreign teachers of English because it is considered a foreign language, not widely spoken or used in everyday life or interactions. For this reason, teachers of English are required to implement new teaching strategies to handle the problems regarding speaking skills in classroom. English speaking skill in Attawit Commercial Technology College, Bangkok, Thailand where English is actively spoken as a second language. The main objective is to find out the common problems which affect the teaching of English speaking skills to the Thai learners in this school in Thailand.

Significance of the Study

As an ESL teacher for more than 10 years, in Attawit Commercial Technology College, I have witnessed, how vast are the struggles and challenges, the teacher and students are facing when it comes to learning and adapting the English language and finding ways to motivate and increase their confidence towards speaking English. There are certain factors that contribute mainly as to why, they are at their low pace, but isn't it enough just to know the reasons, for the long run, we should find out deeper for solutions and concentrate on the problems.

Statement of the problem

Teaching English speaking skills to Thai students has always been a challenging task to EFL (English as a Foreign Language) teachers because it is a foreign language. This refers to teaching skills to learners in or from other countries where it has not been traditionally used. While speaking English, Thai students encounter a lot of difficulties. The major difficulty is limited chance in practicing the language.

It seems that even in these conductive language learning context, most Thai students find difficulty in communicating English freely due to certain factors such as limited knowledge, lack of confidence and motivation.

When teaching English as a foreign language, the most common problem is the persistent use of the first language. Students are often chatting, and I had to stop and ask them to kindly refrain from talking in Thai and join the class. They may be quiet for a few minutes, and then it is back to more chatting. There is a problem of silence. I often ask a question and no one will raise a hand. I will repeat the question and again wait for an answer, the silence felt very frustrating. As a teacher, it is important to encourage students to use English, and only English. Teachers always encounter the same problem and this always an issue, so I decided to research on this topic in order to find more solutions to solve the problem.

Objectives

1. To find out the significance problems which affect the teaching and learning speaking skills of PWS 2 students.
2. To suggest some strategies and solutions that would enhance the quality of learning and to better learn the speaking English skill in a Thai environment.
3. To find out some factors that hinder students from speaking.

Chapter 2

Factors that hinder students from speaking English

1. Limited knowledge of English

To speak English fluently, learners should have enough knowledge of basic English, through which they can enhance their proficiency. The student's knowledge of how sounds are produced as well as how words are produced in meaningful sentence are very important (Canale & Swain, 1980). Learners should know how to pronounce the sounds correctly to avoid problems that are usually transferred from their first language.

2. Fear of mistakes

It is easy for Thai students, become afraid of making of mistakes, during the teaching and learning process. Different from other cultures of other countries which the students are confident enough in asking questions, giving opinions/suggestion or refuting in classroom teaching. This human weakness of making mistakes has result in failure of Thais speaking English.

3. Lack of confidence

Most of the students are not confident enough to speak English in class because it can be caused by lack of encouragement.

4. Shyness

The students are afraid to speak due to the feeling of not capable in English. They are unwilling to intimidate by their friends or the teacher. It creates the sentiment of shyness. Students think a lot and then they are faced to explore their ideas in speaking performance. Those could block the process of students' ability in oral communication.

5. Anxiety

This is the feeling of nervousness in a specific situation. When students are faced with situations like speaking, tension surface over them and thus obstruct them from speaking.

The students feel uncomfortable or being confused and panicky every so often when they are faced with training in oral language.

Chapter 3

Research Methodology

Population

All PWS 2 students at Attawit Commercial Technology College

Sampling Group

The majority of the students, PWS 2, and are studying English are all under my class.

These are the methods that I imply to let PWS 2 students improve their speaking skills.

1. Build Fluency

The most important thing to remember is that your students need to be speaking English as much as possible. The more they practice, the better they speak. The better they speak, the more confidence they will gain. And this cycle will continue to build fluency. Don't make the grammar lessons the focal point of your instruction. Don't do too much teacher talk and lengthy explanations. Choral responses where the students recite the same "response" – whether it be a word, phrase, sentence or dialogue -- are an effective tool to build vocabulary skills that lead to comprehension. This method helps to build success for all learners. So get your students to talk, and keep them talking!

2. Give them easy topics that they know about.

For example recalling a funny and interesting story, telling a tale or even the introduction class where we can get the students ask questions. The most familiar topic anyone can talk about is oneself. Smile, be patient and smile again! No matter how many different activities that you try with your student, nothing beats a smile when it comes to unlocking the confidence. A smile provides the students with positive reassurance to keep at it and give them a positive outlook on what they can perceive as being the impossible task of speaking a foreign language.

3. Don't Interrupt.

Students, when speaking, get distracted easily, they lose their thought and not to mention their confidence is knocked if the teacher is constantly interrupting them. Imagine having every second word corrected for pronunciation, grammar, usage and so on – it would be more than frustrating. Instead let your learners speak freely without interruptions and if they make mistakes, note them down and address them in class later. When addressing the class with regards to spoken errors, collate the most common and important ones (not every tiny detail needs to be addressed) and give a mini workshop to the entire class and not just one student. If one student makes a mistake in speaking, the chances are that others will make the same mistakes too.

4. Equality

It is a common thing for the teacher to split their class into small groups for speaking and communicative activities. However, teachers often make the mistake of not defining the roles and there will always be one or two students who are more vocal than the others thus the conversation or activity will be dominated by just a few people and as a result the other students will feel like they do not have a specific role, they will not feel motivated to participate - and why should they, when they have not been given a purpose? Make sure your groups are equally divided for speaking and communicative activities so everyone can participate.

5. Follow-up with More Questions

Students will often give a short or inadequate answer because they cannot think of anything to say. They feel under pressure and it is much easier to give up and appear lazy rather than admit they cannot do it. If your students give short answers it could actually be that they have nothing else to say on the issue or they do not have the language or confidence to express themselves for longer periods of time. Students hate it when teachers prompt them by giving one or two words at the beginning of the answer – it makes them feel like they are children. Instead help your learners by asking them relevant follow-up questions to what they have already said.

Chapter 4

Analysis Result

Students of PWS 2 students faced three main problems while learning speaking skills.

These problems are (1) lack of linguistic knowledge, (2) lack of motivation and confidence, (3) excessive use of Thai language.

1. Lack of linguistic knowledge

There are three main components that the students are having when it comes to speaking in English these are: vocabulary, pronunciation and grammar. No one can deny the importance of each components, if you lack the knowledge of vocabulary, you'll never know what word to use, or a word is mispronounced, it might not sound correctly so most of the time you'll be misunderstood if the words are mispronounced. Likewise a learner who has a rich vocabulary needs good knowledge of grammar to speak meaningful sentences.

2. Excessive use of Thai language

In school, students are exposed to leaning English as a subject. The fifty minutes period with a foreign teacher is not enough to make a student learn a certain language. Just like a student I encountered, they are just studying English, so they can pass. Also, students feel that they can freely express themselves in Thai language better than in English.

3. Lack of motivation and confidence

The encouragement and support which the student receives from his teachers, parents and classmates help and facilitate his learning process. Students achieve better if they are encouraged. There is a lack of positive peer encouragement in classroom. There is a strong relationship between motivation, confidence and students' performance and achievement. Lack of motivation and confidence an hinder the students/ language proficiency. The students fear from his classmates' negative comments if he commits a mistake while answering a question. In conclusion, motivation and confidence are important factors which accelerate the students' language progress. So in order to avoid embarrassing situations, the students prefer to communicate in Thai.

Chapter 5

Conclusion

In conclusion, let me say that role playing, free speaking plus tutorials, short oral presentations, memorization, a list of exercise as homework and intensive pair work would help the PWS 2 students' progress rapidly and above all would be able to improve their speaking English skills. Therefore, I conclude that free speaking plus tutorials, short oral presentations, memorization, a list of exercises as homework and intensive pair work... the students will progress rapidly and above all be able to "speak" English. Classes became moments not only of learning but also harmony, laughter, and well-being—all this due to intensive pair work, interesting and useful topics, tutorials and free conversations at the start of the lesson.

The students' lack of linguistic knowledge, excessive use of Thai language and their lack of confidence were the major underlying causes for their low level of English. On the other hand the teacher and students' perspectives ESL learning environment were much better compared with that in other countries. The students considered in Attawit Commercial Technology College as a suitable place where they can develop their spoken ability. However, their daily overuse of Thai language in and outside the classroom with their classmates, friends and family members minimized their chances of using English.

Encouraging students can eventually pay-off. If they enjoy your lessons, their attitude to speaking English will improve over time.

Recommendations

There are many things that should be implemented for the improvement of the speaking skills of the students; First, there should be a lot of speaking opportunities for the students. Second, there should be a strict compliance with regards to the instruction in the class which should be in English. Third, there should be materials that are ready to use like books, computers and picture and others, to be used by the teacher.

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