

Development of English Oral Communication Ability

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Abstract

The purpose of this article is to present development of English oral communication ability. The result study would be beneficial for teachers who teach English oral communication ability. They would be able to use the findings of this study as a contribution to improve the lessons and/or implement the instruction in their classrooms. In addition, the institutions would raise awareness of addressing students' differences and potentials and provide opportunities of learning to match learners' needs. Lastly, the use of the integration of tiered instruction and gamification in learning and education would benefit English language teaching which provides another advantageous alternative instruction to be implemented in the classrooms in EFL context of Thailand.

Keywords: Development of English; Oral communication ability

Introduction

Oral communication was defined as skills involving spoken interaction between more than one person which performs the effective transmission of facts, thoughts, ideas, feelings, and values. Oral communication skills consist of various elements such as language used, gesture, style, facial expression, understanding the audience, politeness, precision, and directness, etc. Cooperating these elements has effects on both failure and success of the interaction. Oral communication is not only the presentation of formulaic expression; it also requires the abilities to understand what and how to say things in different contexts (Rahman, 2010).

English oral communication comprises both speaking and listening ability that is the foundation of literacy. It is the ability to use the language orally and appropriately in any circumstances as well as shared sociocultural or pragmatic suppositions (Bachman, 1990:58). Oral communication is defined as an interaction which at least two individuals alternately participate a production and reception exchange (Council of Europe, 2018). As oral communication involves speaking and listening skills, several researchers (Burns, 2019:35; Goh,

2016) have defined speaking as complex and dynamic skills involving several processes to generate in real-time.

English oral communication ability in this study could be defined as the ability to perform a spoken interaction as dialogs through the exchange of productive and receptive processes (speaking and listening) simultaneously and appropriately in various contexts including interactions to maintain social relationships and to exchange specific information.

1. Elements of English Oral Communication Ability

Burns (2019) described speaking involved three factors: cognitive, affective, and social factors. Cognitive factors refer to what speakers prepare conceptually to what they will say, involving utterance formulation within the grammar and vocabulary knowledge, articulation to be comprehensible. Social factors involve the pragmatics and sociocultural aspects for the speakers to handle. Affective factors involve people's feelings, emotions, and psychological reactions. Goh and Burns (2012) proposed the model of second language speaking competence consisted of knowledge of language and discourse, core speaking skills, and communication strategies.

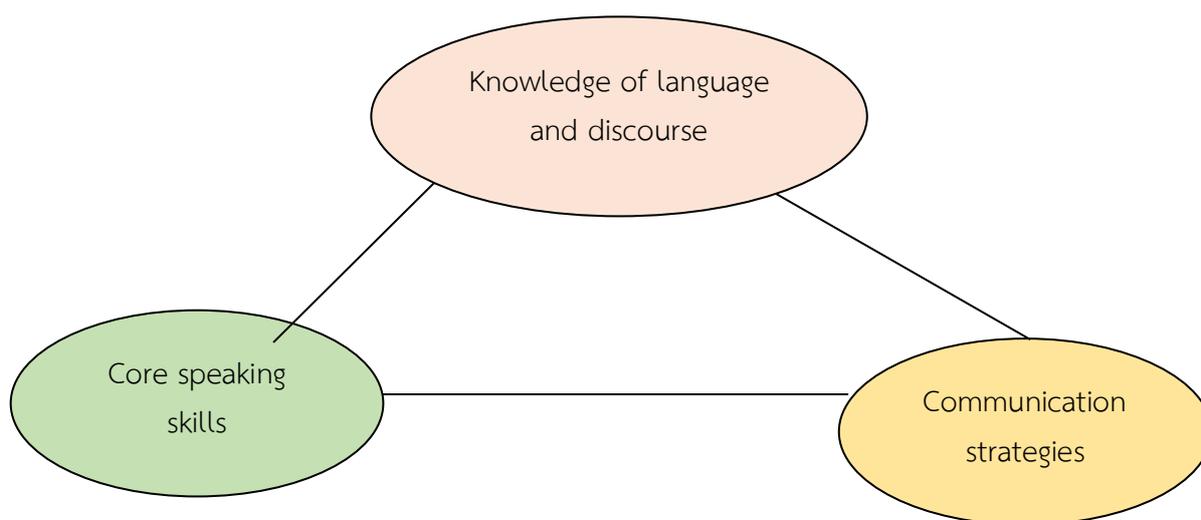


Figure 1 Second Language Speaking Competence (Goh & Burns, 2012)

Knowledge and discourse concerns on master the sound patterns of the language, grammar and vocabulary, and discourse. Grammatical, phonological, lexical, and discourse knowledge are composed of the element. Core speaking skills, including four sub-skills: pronunciation, speech function, interaction management, and discourse organization. Core speaking skills enable the ability to process speech quickly to increase fluency and to manage to flow of the speech. While communication strategies refer to the development of cognitive strategies, metacognitive strategies, and interaction strategies, which support the speakers to

compensate for limitations of language knowledge, overcome lexical gaps, negotiate meaning, and repair communication breakdown.

Brown & Lee (2015) proposed the elements of oral communication skills comprised of two main parts; micro- and macro- skills of oral communication. Microskills focus on details; allophones, phonemes, stress patterns, rhythmic structure, intonational contours. They help produce fluent speech at a different rate of delivery, speech in natural constituents appropriately, reduce forms of words and phrases.

Moreover, micro-skills include the use of strategic devices—pauses, fillers, self-corrections, backtracking to monitor your own oral production and use. They cover the use of grammatical word classes, word order, patterns, rules, elliptical forms. Lastly, micro-skills help express a particular meaning in different grammatical forms. While macro- skills focus on the whole picture of speech. They focus on the use of cohesive devices in spoken discourse, and communicative functions according to situations, participants, and goals to be accomplished appropriately. Appropriate registers, implicature, pragmatic conventions, and other sociolinguistic features in face-to-face conversations should be adopted. Macro- skills can convey the meaning related to main ideas, supporting idea, and include facial features, kinesics, body language, and other non-verbal cues along with verbal language to convey the meaning, and provide the context for interpreting the meaning of words. In conclusion, these elements of English oral communication ability aligned with similarities, but with the different terms of use. In this study, elements of English oral communication ability are based on the model of Goh and Burns (2012), second language speaking competence.

2. Functions of Oral Communication and Types of Classrooms Speaking Performance

There are two types of spoken language which are simply categorized by Nunan (1991:65). The first type is called monologs. They are usually found in speeches, lectures, news broadcasts. They can be planned or impromptu. The second type is called dialogs. Dialogs involve two or more speakers to exchange. They can different purposes; promoting social relationships and exchanging factual information.

Brown & Yule (1983) described functions of speaking into three functions; talk as interaction, talk as transaction, and talk as performance. Talk as interaction focused on conversation that serves the social function to maintain relationships including small talks, while talk as transaction primarily focus on message connotations. Talk as performance includes public talks such as publish announcement and speech. Table 1.1 describes the features and sets of skills involved in each function of speaking.

Table 1.1 Functions of speaking (Brown & Yule, 1983)

Functions	Features	Involved Skills
Talk as interaction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - have a primary on social function - reflect role relationships and speaker's identity - employ many generic words - use conversational register 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Opening and closing conversations - choosing topics - turn-taking - reacting to others
Talk as transaction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - give and receive information - focus on the message or information not the participants - employ communication strategies to make themselves understood - employ frequent questions, repetitions and comprehension checks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - explaining need or intention - describing something - asking questioning - confirming information - clarifying understanding - making comparisons - agreeing and disagreeing
Talk as performance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - tend to be monologue than dialogue - focus on message and audience - present information in an appropriate sequence - present with correct form and accuracy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - presenting with appropriate format, vocabulary, opening, closing - maintaining audience engagement - performing with correct pronunciation and grammar

Table 1.2 Behavioral Outcomes Relating to Oral Communication Ability

Strands	Behavioral Outcomes
Strand 1: Language for communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Speak for an exchange information about themselves, various matters around them, situation and news of interest society, and communicate such information continuously and appropriately. - Use appropriate requests, clarifications, and explanations. - Speak to show needs; offer and provide assistance. - Accept and refuse to give help - Speak appropriately to ask for and give information, describe, explain, compare, and express opinions about what they have heard. - Speak to describe their feelings and opinion about various matters, activities, experiences, and incidents, as well as provide appropriate justifications.

Strand 2: Language and cultures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Choose appropriate language, tone of voice, gestures, and manners by observing social manners and culture of native speakers. - Compare and explain the similarities and differences between the pronunciation of sentences and word orders of English language and Thai language.
Strand 3: Language and Relationship with Other Learning Areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Use English language in searching/conducting research, collecting knowledge/various information sources from the media and various learning resources for further study.
Strand 4: Language and Relationship with Community and the World	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Use language for communication in real/simulated situations in the classroom, school, community, and society. - Use compound/complex sentences to convey meaning in various contexts in both formal and informal conversations.

2. Developing English Oral Communication Task

Brown and Lee (2015:82) categorized types of classrooms speaking performance into five types.

2.1 Imitative

Students imitate a word, phrase, or sentence. The focus is traditionally labeled to pronunciation. Thornbury (2005) also mentioned that drilling acts as a kind of forming an articulation. It is useful in gaining control of short words, phrases, or sentences and their intonation patterns.

2.2 Intensive

It includes some speaking and performance involving some practices of phonological or grammatical aspects. The students can initiate intensive speaking in some pair-work activities. There are some examples of tasks described below. Picture-cued tasks offer pictures as materials that require students to elicit using their oral language performance. Pictures should be designed to elicit a word or phrase. A series of pictures can be put to require the students to narrate the story. Similarly to descriptive task mentioned in Luoma (2004), the students will describe something they know to respond to the given prompt, pictures. The description that the students describe may be elaborated further than what prompt gives. Maps are another example designed for students to perform types of language such as giving directions or locating places. Luoma (2004) described that the main purpose of giving directions or instructions is to get the message across and make it understandable. The rating is focused on the accuracy and comprehensibility of the instructions given. Information gap tasks are a useful activity that one person has information that the other lacks. They need to use the target language to exchange or share information.

2.3 Responsive

It allows students to form a short reply or comment either to students or to teacher. Responsive type of tasks provides a brief interaction with limited length of utterances, yet more demanding than intensive type in the sense which the speaker can talk by their creativity. One example of responsive task is question and answer. They can be standard greetings, small talk, or simple requests and comments. The questions can be open-ended responses, such as “what do you think about the weather today?” or “What do you like about English language?”

2.4 Interactive

Interactive type demands more interactions than responsive task type that interactive task involves longer and more complexed of the interaction, multiple exchanges, and/or more participants involved. Interaction can be separated into two types: transactional and interpersonal exchange. Transactional exchange carries the purpose of conveying or exchanging specific information, while interpersonal exchange serves the purpose of maintaining social relationships. It involves some characteristics such as register, colloquial language, slang, ellipsis, sarcasm, and the meaning between the lines. Some of the example tasks are illustrated below.

Interview is a semi-structured sequence of questions requiring the students to answer the questions (Bailey, 2005). Interview length can vary from 5-45 minutes depending on the purpose and context. It can be tape-recorded for relistening to assess the parameters such as accuracy in pronunciation/grammar, vocabulary usage, fluency, or comprehension. Students are best to practice conducting an interview with their pairs and later interview people they already know rather than strangers in English to at least gaining some confidence in the process.

Roleplaying tasks allow the students to take on a new role to communicate and perform their ability to the requirements of the new role and situation (for instance, age, gender, occupation, etc.) The tasks can be done between the students or between students and the tester (Luoma, 2004). Roleplays can be excellent procedures to participate and learn the target utterances, vocabulary, or grammar structure. (Brown& Lee, 2015:54; Luoma, 2004) It is important for teachers to set up roleplays which relate to their real life and needs. Roleplays are also big challenges for students with beginning level. They might feel embarrassed when they make mistakes. Bailey (2005) suggested some concerns when conducting roleplaying as listed:

- 1) Make sure that every student can join the activity at some point.
- 2) Include time for planning.
- 3) Assign pair work or group work to students when preparing the role-play; students can interact and benefit from others in planning together.
- 4) Demonstrate the activity so that students can know what to be expected.
- 5) Have students do role-plays in pairs or smaller groups before having them do in front of a larger number of audiences.
- 6) Create an atmosphere that oral mistakes are natural learning opportunities instead of judging and observing for the correction.

2.5 Extensive

Extensive speaking tasks demand complex, lengthy discourses. They are frequently monologs and usually with minimal verbal interaction. The tasks can be planned or impromptu. They refer to oral presentations, such as oral reports or short speeches. Picture-cued storytelling similarly in intensive speaking task, yet at an extensive level requires longer story or description. Another example is retelling a story. Students hear, read the story or news event, and later retell the story.

2.5.1 Assessing Oral Communication Ability

Four categories of assessment scales are included in Cambridge Certificate in English Language Speaking (CELS): grammar and vocabulary, discourse management, pronunciation, and interactive communication. Grammar and vocabulary category includes the accuracy and appropriateness of the usage of lexicogrammar in tasks. Discourse management involves the ability of how the speaker conveys the information by producing connected and coherent speech. Pronunciation assesses the ability to produce speech comprehensibly by producing, for example, appropriate individual sounds, stress, or intonation. Lastly, interactive communication evaluates the ability to initiate and respond appropriately to the task.

Brown (2001) illustrated on oral proficiency scoring categories that they involved grammar, vocabulary, comprehension, fluency, pronunciation, and task. Grammar refers to the control of accurate language structure. Vocabulary includes the breadth of vocabulary, idioms, and pertinent cultural references. Comprehension is the scope of how the language is comprehensible. Fluency refers to how to handle the conversations with confidence. Pronunciation is the intelligibility of the accents and the control of error in pronunciation. Lastly, task means the effectiveness of the speakers that can participate in the conversation. The score of oral proficiency scoring categories in each category is ranged from 1-7 (least-most). From the oral proficiency scoring categories, Brown (2001) highlighted all the highest scores in each category that the speakers needed to be equivalent to educated native speakers.

Council of Europe (2018) outlined the qualitative aspects of spoken language use. These behavioral outcomes are called ‘descriptors.’ They are put in five analytic aspects. Table 1.3 describes the qualitative aspects in A2 level.

Table 1.3 Qualitative Aspects of Spoken Language Use (A2 level)

Qualitative Aspects	Descriptors
Range	Uses basic sentence patterns with memorized phrases, grounds of a few words, and formulae in order to communicate limited information in simple everyday situations.
Accuracy	Uses some simple structures correctly, but still systematically makes basic mistakes.

Fluency	Can make him/herself understood in very short utterances, even though pauses, false starts and reformation are very evident.
Interaction	Can answer questions and respond to simple statements. Can indicate when he/she is following but is rarely able to understand enough to keep conversation going of his/her own accord.
Coherence	Can link groups of words with simple connectors like “and” but” and “because.”

Knowledge from the Study

As part of our daily lives, we always have to rely on our communication skills to convey our ideas and thoughts to others. Therefore, it is crucial for a child to develop and hone their oral communication skills from a young age, as they are essential for a child’s academic and future career success.

While many children often have no problem communicating with their friends, speaking with their teachers or in front of an audience is a different prospect. It is common to find many kids feeling apprehensive when asked to communicate with someone they are unfamiliar with.

Fortunately, oral communication skills can be developed. So even if you notice your child is naturally reserved and unsure of how to express their ideas, fret not! By enrolling your child in oral communication classes, you can help them build the foundational skills they will be using for the rest of their life. Let us share how your child can benefit from attending these classes.

Development of English Oral Communication Ability



1. Build your child’s confidence

Public speaking is a daunting task for anyone; even adults often get nervous when they are scheduled to speak in front of an audience. However, as the adage goes, “practice makes

perfect”. When your child attends an oral communication class, they will be guided on how to articulate their ideas effectively to others, and often they will be asked to present their thoughts in front of the class.

By repeating the presenting process, your child will get used to the idea of articulating their thoughts to others, which lessens their fear of public speaking over time. This also allows them to develop their confidence and communication skills, which will prove invaluable in school, and eventually the workplace.

2. Enhances your child’s collaboration skills

Communication is a two-way street, and learning how to listen attentively to a speaker is just as crucial as learning how to articulate one’s thoughts. By learning how to pay close attention to what someone has to say, your child can better understand others. Combined with their ability to articulate themselves proficiently, your child will be able to more effectively work with others in a team setting.

3. Improve your child’s oral communication skills

In an oral communication class, students will be guided on how to eloquently present their thoughts and ideas with others in a calm and rational manner, which is crucial in social interactions and school situations.

Moreover, as your child continues to hone their communication skills, they will learn how to better organize their thoughts and speak in an appropriate and persuasive manner when presenting their views to others or when refuting an opposing view. This will prove to be invaluable when your child is taking their oral exams in school.

There is no denying the importance of possessing excellent oral communication skills. Good communication enables your child to better understand the learning process and empowers them to ask relevant questions and clarify any doubts they have at school. It also helps them socialize with their peers and facilitate new friendships, which is a crucial aspect of their daily lives.

At Writers Studio, our various oral communication classes help children of different ages hone and develop their communication skills, ensuring they can communicate and interact effectively with others. Contact us today to find out more about our courses and rates.

Conclusion

In summary, Oral communication ability in this study were adapted from Cambridge Certificate in English Language Speaking (CELS), oral proficiency scoring categories (Brown, 2001), and Qualitative Aspects of Spoken Language Use for A2 Level (Council of Europe, 2018) to suit the weighting in elements of English oral communication ability for students who were studying in an EFL context that the priority of speaking was not urgent but a long-term preparation.

Therefore, in this study, to assess oral communication ability, there were five elements to evaluate namely, content—the relevance of the meaning and related details of the



utterances towards to given situations, vocabulary use—the use of selecting appropriate vocabulary to produce the utterances, fluency—the use of language confidently, with few hesitations or unnatural pauses, grammatical structure—the use of selection of correct sentence structures when speaking, and pronunciation—the ability to produce the utterances with correct intonation in sentences, phrases, or word stress.

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