Developing Speaking Skills Using Three Communicative Activities (Discussion, Problem-Solving, and Role-Playing)

Thanyalak Oradee

Abstract—The purposes of this research were: 1) to study and compare speaking skills of Grade 11 students using three communicative activities, and 2) to study the students' attitude towards teaching English speaking skills using the three communicative activities. The sample group consisted of 49 students at a secondary school in Udon Thani, Thailand, classified by high, medium, and low according to their abilities of English speaking proficiency level. The design of the research were mixed method design. The quantitative data came from the speaking test and the students' attitude towards teaching English speaking. The qualitative data were drawn from a Learning Log, a semi-structured interview and a Teacher Journal. A one group pretest-posttest design was also employed. The research instruments were 8 lesson plans, an English speaking ability test, and an attitude questionnaire. Percentage, mean, standard deviation and t-test for dependent samples were employed to analyze data quantitatively. The research findings were as follows: 1. The students' English speaking abilities after using the three communicative activities were significantly higher than before their use. (Pretest = 60.80; Posttest = 85.63). 2. The students' attitude towards teaching English speaking skills using the three communicative activities were rated as good ($\overline{X}$ =4.50)

Index Terms—English speaking skills, three communicative activities, attitude.

I. Introduction

English teaching and learning have the goal of focusing students so that they are able to use English for communication and as a tool for furthering their studies [1] . In the process of teaching and learning, the four language skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) are simultaneously performed. Normally, learners in an EFL context do not use the language in authentic situations. They possess inability in communicating appropriately and correctly. This leads to learners' lack of self-confidence and avoidance when communicating with native English speakers.

In foreign language teaching and learning, ability to speak is the most essential skill since it is the basic for communication [2] and it is the most difficult skill. Reference [3] stated that speaking English is the most difficult for learners. In particular, EFL learners often

Thanyalak Oradee is with Udon Thani Rajabhat University, 64 Taharn Road, Amphoe Muang, Udon Thani 41000 Thailand (e-mail: tanyalakb@hotmail.com)

stammer when speaking English. This results from learners' lack of exposure to authentic English language environments that allow them to use English for communication and expression. Furthermore, learners are not exposed to the cultures of the native English speakers. Speaking is the most important and essential skill. Reference [4] stated that mastery of this skill illustrates that the speaker possesses precise knowledge of language.

According to many teaching theorists, speaking skill can be developed through communicative activities which include an information gap, a jigsaw puzzle, games, problem-solving, and Role-playing. In addition, [5] supported this idea that the activities that can assist better speaking skills are free discussion and role-playing. Also, [6] stated that the language activities are important factors in teaching language for communication. Activities help create interaction in the language classroom. Additionally, communicative activities can motivate the learners and establish good relationships between the teacher and the students as well as among the students thereby encouraging a supportive environment for language learning.

The state and conditions of language learning and teaching at Satri Rachinuthit School, Udon Thani, were unsatisfactory. According to the report of [7] it was found that their foreign language learning strand was 50.83%, which was at the average level and at the lowest among the other strands of the school. From the study of teaching theories in developing speaking skills using communicative activities and many related research studies, it was hypothesized that three communicative activities , discussion, problem-solving and role-playing, might help solve the problem.

On the basis of this literature, as the researcher would study the impacts of these three communicative activities, discussion, problem-solving and role-playing up students' development of speaking skills and students' attitude towards teaching English speaking using the three communicative activities .

II. Objectives of the Study

This study had three objectives.
- To study and compare English speaking skills using three communicative activities: Discussion, Problem-solving, and Role-playing of Grade 11 students before and after learning.
- To study the students' attitude towards teaching English speaking skills using the three communicative activities.

III. METHODOLOGY

A. Scope of the Study

1) The samples

The sample were 49 Grade 11 students of Satri Rachinuthit School, Udon Thani, Thailand, and the target group were 12 students, divided into 3 English proficiency levels (high, medium and low), using purposive selection.

2) Variables

Dependent Variable was teaching English speaking skills using three communicative activities.

Independent Variables were students' English speaking abilities and attitude towards teaching English speaking using three communicative activities

B. Instruments

The instruments employed in this study were:

- Lesson plans
- A test of English speaking ability was used as pretest and posttest
- An attitude questionnaire
- Students' Learning Log
- A semi-structured interview
- Teacher Journal

C. Data Collectio

Data was collected and the study done in the authentic classroom. A test of English speaking ability test was employed as a pretest. Eight lesson plans with the three different communicative activities were used in a language classroom with 49 students. In the meantime, the students are asked to write their Learning Log, and the researcher wrote the Teacher Journal. After completion of the teaching, the students were interviewed using a semi-structured form. Finally, the attitude questionnaire was employed.

D. Data Analysis

Quantitative and qualitative analyses were done. The quantitative analyses were from a test of English speaking ability and an attitude questionnaire. The qualitative analyses was drawn from student Learning Log, a semi-structured interviews, and the Teacher Journal using a triangulation method.

IV. RESEARCHER FINDINGS

The pretest mean score was 60.80 percent and the posttest mean score was 85.63 percent. The students' English speaking abilities after using the three communicative activities were significantly higher than the prior to their use.

The students' attitude towards teaching English speaking using the three communicative activities was rated as good.

V. DISCUSSION

This study produced several important results. These are discussed below.

The posttest mean score of the students' English speaking abilities was significantly higher than the pretest one after the employing the three communicative activities,

discussion, problem-solving, and role-playing. Characteristics of the activities may have encouraged interaction among the students in the language classroom. This could afford opportunity for language practice. The teacher arranged for language functions such as asking for directions, ordering food and beverages, talking on the telephone, and making an appointment with doctors. These types of activities can afford students experience using the language for real communication. This idea was consistent with [8] where they proposed that the learner should know the purpose of speaking, what to speak, with whom, and where to speak, and how to use appropriate language. In this study, the contents of the language through the three activities were carefully selected to suit the syllabus, the learners' age and language level, and to create challenges for the learners to gain experience.

Teaching English speaking skills using the three communicative activities is a learning method focusing on the learner-centeredness. Students work in small groups divided by their language proficiency, i.e., high, medium, and low levels. Using this technique, students can have an opportunity to work together providing help to others while performing the activity. The atmosphere in working in groups can lessen their fear in making mistakes when speaking English. Students in the group can support others in the team needing help. They can express themselves successfully while working in groups. This can lead to self monitoring, more confidence in speaking, and enjoyment can encourage them to participate more in learning. The results of this study supported the effectiveness of these three communicative activities in developing English speaking skills. Reference [9] conducted a study of development of English speaking skills using two communicative activities, Information-gap and Role-playing. The samples were 38 second-year Business English students of Udon Thani Rajabhat Institute in Thailand. The results of the study revealed that the students' English speaking skills were significantly higher after using these two communicative activities. Students' intensive interaction was effective in developing speaking English proficiency.

Moreover, it can be seen from the current study that division into small groups (groups of four) promoted that students' confidence in producing the language as a result of their language proficiency. Students have been trained in using the language functions appropriately. Therefore they could successfully develop themselves using these three activities. This is supported by [10]. In conducting a communicative activity, the context should be focused on meaning not the form. While the students are involved in an activity, there should be no teacher intervention. Students can practice using the language among their group members. Group of four are the most effective[11].

The students' attitude towards teaching English speaking skills using the three communicative activities was rated as good. This may result from having been provided adequate language functions in situations that occur in real communication leading to their confidence in speaking the language. They felt satisfied with their speaking English when using these three communicative activities. The process of teaching and learning helped creating enjoyment

in speaking English in small groups. The feelings of success in learning to speak English through the three activities establish their motivation to learn the language.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Teacher should construct a variation of English speaking activities which motivate the students to learn.

Communicative activities such as discussion, problem-solving, and role-playing can be effected used in the language classroom in Thai context.

Other important factors in using these activities are the order or sequence of these activities should be recognized.

In breaking the students into small groups, optimal group size is four individuals. This leads to better success and achievement in learning foreign languages.

Teacher roles should be changed as a provider, an assistant, a consultant to increase effectiveness in the learning environment.

Interaction in the language classroom can decrease students' anxiety in learning English speaking skills.

Students should change the role from passive to active learners.

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Thanyalak Oradee was born in Udon Thani, Thailand on July 4, 1955.She graduated from Udon Thani Rajabhat University, Udon Thani, Thailand in 2010 with a Master of Arts Degree in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) completed in 2012. he has worked as a high school English teacher at Satri Rachinuthit School, Udon Thani, Thailand for 32 years. She has been a trainer of ERIC (English Resourses Instruction Center) at Udon Thani, Thailand. She continues to progress her passion for teaching; various