

IMPROVING STUDENTS' SPEAKING ABILITY USING PRIME METHOD

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Abstract

This classroom action research aims at knowing how PRIME (*Practical, Relevant, Integrated, Meaningful and Enrich*) is able to improve the students' speaking ability. The data was taken from 12 students of seventh grade at Muslim Bamrung School Yala Thailand. After implementing PRIME for 4 meetings in 2 cycles, it reveals that PRIME is able to improve students speaking ability by focusing the activity on drilling individually. Significantly, PRIME is able to develop their activeness in involving teaching and learning process and their confidence to speak English.

Keywords: *PRIME, speaking ability*

I. Introduction

English teaching and learning methods in Thai schools and universities may not achieve their goals. In fact, a number of Thai students still have unsatisfactory levels of English language ability.

Speaking is considered as one of the most difficult skills, especially for Thai students. In line with this, it has been observed that most of the students of Muslim Bamrung School are still in low level of speaking. Based on the interview to the English teacher, the similar data were obtained. However, the teacher doesn't go further in observing or solving the problems. Afterwards, pre-test is given in order to know how the speaking ability of the students is still low. Indeed, the result of the preliminary study showed that the speaking problem of most Thai students were also the problem of Muslim Bamrung School students. For instance, the accent of the students' native language hampers them to pronounce words clearly, a fear of errors and lack of experience and practice. These problems are basically due to their lack of self motivation.

PRIME stands for *practical, relevant, integrated, meaningful, and enrich* (Tweedie, 2009, p. 6). *Practical*, is how the learning strategies can be possibly done. *Relevant*, the learning topic is understandable. *Integrated*, the focus of skill is supported by other skills. *Meaningf*, the students understand the purpose of the learning. *Enrich*, the students are expected to make the learning useful for their real

life. When the learning has the mean of practical, relevant, integrated, meaningful, and enrich as explain above, it is PRIME. This is basically an approach aimed to activate the students' prior knowledge with certain strategies. This research, however, decided to have some steps to implement it. The steps was adapted from *In The Hot Seat* strategy to implement PRIME method.

In the strategy, however, the students' activities were sitting in a chair and answering the questions related to the topic of learning. It was how the students actively participate in the class. During the activity, the teacher provided some questions related to the topic of study to be answered by the students. This made the student involved directly to the activities, then the students were motivated to speak.

This research was conducted in Muslim Bamrung School Thailand. One of the reasons to conduct the research in Muslim Bamrung School Thailand is because the school had never use PRIME method especially in speaking class. Based on the teachers' information, the seventh grade students were still lack of speaking ability. The researcher, therefore, wanted to implement PRIME to improve speaking ability as well as to encourage students' speaking activeness in the classroom.

II. Method

Quoting Watt, A'yunin (2014, p. 24) wrote that "action research is a process in which participants examine their own education practice systematically and carefully, using the techniques of research". The action research is undertaken in the classroom and school.

This research intends to improve speaking ability by using PRIME for the seventh grade students in Muslim Bamrung School Yala, Thailand. Thus, this kind of the research is classroom action research. Furthermore, this research is conducted collaboratively with the English teacher of the subjects.

Classroom Action Research is a model of professional development in which educators study student learning related to their own teaching. This is a process that allows them to learn about their own instructional practices and to continue to improve student learning (Ferrance, 2006).

The actions in each cycle of the research will be implemented in four stages, in which explained by Lewin Elliot (1991). They are as follows:

1. Planning. There was choosing the themes, material, deciding, lesson plan and observation list, and scoring;
2. Implementing. At first the students will be given an introduction on how to speak in front of class, in the second meeting is discussing the topic further, and the last meeting is conducting a post test as the evaluation. The class provides 60 minutes for each meeting in this research implementation as written in the lesson plan;
3. Observing. This activity is focused on the method implementation in the class during the teaching learning process. To collect the data, speaking test and observation checklist are used.
4. Reflecting. It is the step of analyzing the data which have been collected. In reflecting, the decision will be made by the researcher along with his collaborator. In other words, it is going to decide if the teaching by using PRIME has already improved the students' speaking achievement and they have activated the score of criterion of success or not. Then, anything found in the reflection will be the consideration to be revised for the next ones. The observation checklist is used to know the students' activeness in teaching and learning process, and it will be analyzed by using percentages as follows.

$$\frac{\textit{The number of active students}}{\textit{the total number of students attending the class}} \times 100\%$$

Meanwhile, the students' speaking test will be analyzed by using the following formula.

$$E = \frac{n}{N} 100\%$$

Notes:

E is the percentage of student who achieve the target score of ≥ 60

n is the number of students achieving the minimum standard scores

N is the total number of students

(Ali, 1993, p. 186)

In reflecting is the decision will be made by the researcher along with his collaborator whether the cycle will be continued to the next one. In other words, it is going to decide if the teaching by using PRIME has already improved the students' speaking achievement and they have activated the score of criterion of success or not. Then, anything found in the reflection will be the consideration to be revised for the next ones.

III. Result and Discussion

This research was conducted in the class 7/2 of Muslim Bamrung School Yala, Thailand in the 2014 / 2015 academic year.

The action in cycle one was carried out through the strategy of PRIME method in the class, the students were divided in to some groups randomly then they were instructed to answer the questions that were provided by the teacher the sticky note which placed under the chairs. During the activities the english teacher observed the students' activeness in teaching and learning process. At the end of the cycle, the students were given the test by asking them to tell their daily activity individually.

The result of the students' speaking test showed that the mean score was 57.27 and the percentage of students who scored was ≥ 60 or 45.5 percent. The result checklist showed that only 57.5 percent or 7 of 11 students were actively involved in the teaching learning process.

In cycle two, the students were asked to tell daily routines (based on the topics discussed in the first meeting of the second cycle) individually. Based on the test result, 8 students got ≥ 60 and 2 students got ≤ 60 in speaking score. The mean score was 62.27 and the percentage of students who got score ≥ 60 was 72.7 percent. The result of observation checklist showed that only 78 percent or 10 of 11 students were actively involved in the teaching learning process.

Table 4.2: The Result of Speaking Test

The Data Results	Cycle one	Cycle two
The mean score of speaking test	57.27	62.27
The percentage of the students who scored ≥ 60	45.45%	72.7%.

Table 4.3: The Percentage of students' involvement

The Data Results	Cycle one	Cycle two
The percentage of active students	57,5%	78%
The number of active students	7	10

The table above showed that the requirement of the involvement in the teaching learning process was 73 percent and it has been achieved the target percentage.

Discussion

In the first cycle, a lot of students were passive because PRIME was a new method for them, and they were not used to practice their speaking in front of the class. The students did not have enough vocabulary, moreover, so they had difficulties in arranging words into good and grammatical sentences. Afterwards, in line with the reasons above, indeed the action in the second cycle needs to be improved by giving more practice to the students. Brown (2003, p. 140) states, “speaking is more than just a way of making a conversation; we use spoken language for a variety of reasons in daily life”.

In process of learning speaking skill, however, students are required to be active. Moreover, speaking is a productive skill that needs more practice in mastering the skill. It is supported by Hardfield and Charles in Qurrota A'yunin (2013, p. 1). Indeed, speaking is a productive skill that can be directly observed. The observations are done in terms of fluency, accuracy and the effectiveness of test takers' listening skill, which necessarily compromises the reliability and productivity of an oral production test. Brown and Yule (1983) add that the students need to know the components of English language, such as fluency, pronunciation rules, knowledge of unfamiliar vocabularies and grammatical structure. Indeed, teacher's aim in teaching speaking is to make students are able to apply the English language as a means of communication consisting of fluency and accuracy in pronunciation, vocabulary and grammar orally. Thus, towards the statement above, it is argued that speaking ability in this research is the ability to express someone's ideas using English language orally in spoken, including in fluency and accuracy in pronunciation and vocabulary. Based on the result of speaking test through the

PRIME method in cycle two. Afterwards, the students' speaking ability in this cycle was better than in Cycle one. It means that the PRIME method is able to improve the students' speaking ability.

PRIME is how we do learning strategies in the class activity to activate students' prior knowledge. PRIME used in speaking class might function as what Tweedie (2015) states that in the class room activity teachers can control the students' conversations. PRIME method improves students' speaking ability, and is effective to be implemented in speaking class. Indeed, in this case teacher is able to control students' conversation in the class, manage the activity well in order that learning will be affective. The teacher providing some routines in the class which make the student be addicted in process learning in class towards the students' confidence. That means the benefit of using PRIME method is the development of confidence in speaking skill. However, students' need confidents towards speaking achievement. Kelly and Watson in Songsiri, (2007, p. 27) says, "one of the factors in students' speaking skill improvement is their confidence". Students' confidence is an important aspect to promote their speaking achievement. Confidence means having or showing certainty or sure of oneself. This research held in Muslim Bamrung School Yala, Thailand.

PRIME method, afterwards, in this research tries to build student's ability by activating prior knowledge and to improve their confidence in speaking skill. We need knowledge to use English language orally, and yet, we need confidence in using English language orally. Somehow, we will never be able to do speaking ability, *as* one student of Muslim Bamrung School, Yala, Thailand. The students think that by having PRIME as the method in teaching learning process, it is very effective towards students' speaking skill development. The students have more chance to practice in the class. Thus the students easily be familiar with the speaking skill. They feel more confident in speaking.

IV. Conclusion

Based on the result and discussion, the use of PRIME method is able to improve the seventh grade students' speaking ability at Muslim Bamrung School Yala, Thailand in 2014 / 2015 academic year by activating their prior knowledge, the

activeness, and confidence in speaking skill. Indeed, it is because in PRIME method, students are forced to get involved in the teaching learning process and practice speaking skill often; the students have to do the steps of strategy in PRIME method individually while the teacher only guided the student learning process. Moreover, if the students get used to with PRIME method it will increase the students' speaking and confidence in speaking skill as well.

V. References

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