

Investigating English speaking skill at Vo Truong Toan secondary school based on teaching objectives defined by the MOET

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Abstract: English is an international language, improve lives. The main objective of this study is to find out whether the English speaking skills taught are consistent with the teaching goals set by the Ministry of Education and Training. The study involved 120 7th grade students and 5 English teachers in charge of 7th grade English at Vo Truong Toan Secondary School. These students are about 12 years old and their English proficiency is at a basic level. This study also applied classroom observation, oral testing and SPSS tools to thoroughly examine the above issue. Based on the research results, the ALM and CLT methods applied in speaking classes at Vo Truong Toan Secondary School are appropriate and meet the goals of teaching speaking in grade 7 of the Ministry of Education and Training. Number of students interacting with listeners using common ways of speaking but responding slowly; Therefore, teachers need to apply appropriate methods to help students learn speaking skills best.

Keywords: 7th grade student, Speaking skill; the Ministry of Education and Training

1. Introduction

Problems at Vo Truong Toan Secondary School

English is a compulsory subject at Vo Truong Toan secondary school. 7th grade students have to study English to complete their seven-year English program set by the MOET. Most of secondary school students tend to ignore English listening and speaking, however, to focus on grammar and vocabulary instead (Kim Lien, 2006). In reality, their English speaking skill is generally of low level in comparison with the objectives set by the MOET. Therefore, the methods of teaching English speaking play an extremely important role in motivating students and improving students' speaking skill especially for 7th grade students who have just entered secondary school and have got a lot of influences from teachers' teaching methods.

2. Content of the research

2.1. Research question

To accomplish the before specified goals, the research endeavour timed to investigate the subsequent enquiry

“How should English speaking be taught at Vo Truong Toan secondary school in order to meet the objectives of teaching English speaking for 7th grade students defined by the MOET?”

2.2. Literature Review

2.2.1 The nature of speaking

Howarth (2001) revealed that speaking is the act of using spoken language to communicate ideas and feelings or to transmit information.

Scarcella (1992) indicated that communicative competence is a fundamental requirement for those who want to have effective communication with others of different backgrounds and cultures

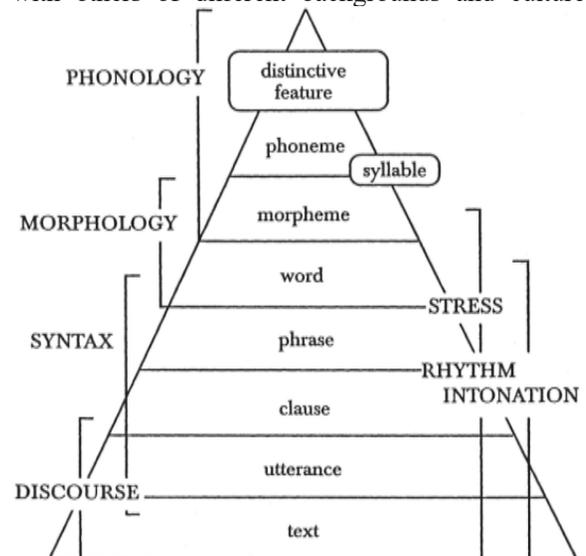


Figure 2.2.2. Units of spoken language (Van Lier, 1995, p. 15)

2.2.2. *What is spoken English?*

Figure 2.2.2 shows that the model was divided into three columns. Discourse, syntax, morphology, and phonology are the four distinct domains of linguistic study that are highlighted in the left column. The units of spoken language, including text, utterance, sentence, phrase, word, morpheme, phoneme, and distinguishing characteristic, are listed in the middle column. The ways that rhythm, stress, and intonation can be used to communicate meaning in spoken English are discussed in the right column.

2.2.3. *Principles of teaching speaking skill*

Brown (1994) identifies the principles of speaking instruction that firstly using applicable teaching material, secondly offering appropriate feedback and correction, thirdly improving accuracy and interactive fluency on students' communication; additionally promoting communication techniques including asking for clarification, paraphrasing, gesturing and initiating and lastly understanding each student's personality and then encouraging the quieter one to take more risks.

2.2.4. *Previous studies on English speaking skill*

Up to now there have been many researches on teaching speaking skill which all emphasize the importance of speaking skill in teaching and learning a language especially for communication. However, the number of researches on evaluation of English speaking teaching methods seems to be limited. That is the reason why the researcher needs to carry out this study in order to help related objects deal with the urgent problem of teaching and learning speaking skill in Vo Truong Toan secondary school.

2.2.5. *Specific objectives of teaching English speaking for 7th grade students in secondary school*

According to the MOET, the 7th grade students will be able to use the knowledge of English which they have learned in English 7 in order to ask - answer, present the contents related to the topics in the curriculum, then carry out some major communicative functions in their daily lives.

2.3. *Research methodology*

The researcher used a mixed method with various kinds of data sources in this study with the purpose of investigating English speaking skill at Vo Truong Toan secondary school to meet the objectives of teaching English speaking for 7th grade students defined by the MOET, in which classroom observations and oral tests were used as data collection instruments.

3. *Findings, discussion and conclusion*

3.1. *Findings, results and discussions on classroom observations*

The researcher has a sound foundation for concluding that the ALM and CLT were applied in speaking classes at Vo Truong Toan secondary school. Nonetheless, there was occurrence of the Grammar-Translation method via the evidence of translation. Interestingly, the teachers did not mention to their applying the Grammar- Translation method in real speaking classes. Additionally, there were some differences between the responses of teachers and observation.

3.2. *Findings, results and discussions on oral tests*

The results of speaking tests showed that the number of students who could interact with the listeners by using common utterances but responded slowly, and developed passively and inflexibly conversation were 49.4% and 42.5% respectively. When considering the results that teachers suggested and oral tests supplied, the researcher realized that on average nearly 80% of students obtained the required level of speaking according to the MOET after they finished their grade 7. There was still in-equability in the percentages of different levels and the percentages got from oral tests and from teachers which could lead the researcher to the firm conclusion that students generally met the objectives of teaching English speaking for grade 7 set by the MOET. More specifically, the order of percentages from lowest to highest of the five fields of speaking skills in English.

4. *Conclusion*

In short, to solve the problems at Vo Truong Toan secondary school, it is necessary to have the close cooperation from teachers, students, the school managers and the MOET. It also needs to be noted that Communicative Language Teaching has been suggested to be mainly applied. With a view to improve students' communicative competence, CLT indicates that teaching and learning English should be about how to appropriately use English for purpose of communication in real-life international contexts. If so, the percentages of students who can achieve the requirements of the MOET would be increased.

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