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DEVELOPING ENGLISH SPEAKING SKILL THROUGH ONLINE INTERACTIVE AND COMMUNICATIVE LESSONS

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ABSTRACT

The basic aim of this article is to enhance communicative English skill of secondary students that have difficulties on speaking. It is intended to address these questions: a) Are the employment of online communicative lessons helpful to develop learners' conversation skills compared to face-to-face classroom that is offline class with English speakers; b) Do we have any differences in the performance enhancements contributed with the help of the two learning approaches?; c) What learning approach improves the learners' communicative performance very well?; and d) What are the advantages and disadvantages of each learning approach in improving oral speech? There are 50 participants in this paper. They were basically sampled and classified into two groups: on learning through online conversation lessons and the other by classroom interaction with an English speaker. They were individually interviewed to evaluate and check their spoken English performance before the attitudes and after finishing the lessons. Video-recorded was done by students with their interviews and conversations practices for close analysis following Conversation Analysis (CA) principles and rated in the following peculiarities: accuracy, complexity, fluency, vocabulary, appropriacy, pronunciation, and grammar. The main tools of research employed in this work were spoken communication tasks for pre- and post-tests. The research findings based on statistical and CA analysis indicates that the students' oral English speaking remarkably enhanced by the usage of online lessons and interactive classroom with. The learners engaged in classroom interaction, however, became basically more fluent and had a broader variety of vocabulary than those learning through online conversations, even though their performance in pronunciation were similar. Thus, it was recommended that teachers utilize online lessons not as the sole language learning activity but as an addition to classroom interaction to focus on main speech features.

KEYWORDS: *Online Communicative Lessons, Interactive Classroom, Speech Features, Oral English Performance, Conversation Skills*

I. INTRODUCTION

This article is to compare the communication enhancement of learners using online communicative classes and those learning by offline interactive lessons, to make whether there are communication differences between learners learning speaking with the help of online lessons and those by face-to-face interaction with English speakers, and to discover how each learning approach can differently benefit learners' development of their conversation skills. The research questions are:

- 1) Are the employment of online communicative lessons helpful to develop learners' conversation skills compared to face-to-face classroom that is offline class with English speakers;
- 2) Do we have any differences in the performance enhancements contributed with the help of the two learning approaches? What learning approach improves the learners' communicative performance very well?;
- 3) Which aspect of the learners' communicative skill can be more useful strengthened by each approach?

English has long been utilized as a world language for global communication. Its importance as a global language has been even focused greatly particularly in the educational system. The Basic Education Core Curriculum B.E. 2551 (A.D. 2008) as a prominent for primary and secondary levels, which challenges learning English as a foreign language from Grades 1-11. The intention has been conducted on improving learners' good approaches and attitudes to learning the language and capability to effectively speak in English and use it as a medium for life-long autonomous learning (Ministry of Education, 2008).

Paying no attention of the level of learners, the purpose is to make them to share opinions, ideas, involve in English speaking on different themes, and find information significant for the choices of higher studies and future career. According to the current curriculum, young learners especially at the lower secondary level are expected to be aware and know 2,100 to 2,250 words and can speak about daily topics such as oneself and family, environment, food and drink, health, weather and climate (Ministry of Education, 2008). Nevertheless, according to Prapphal (2003), even though Thai students learn English from primary or even kindergarten level, many still fail to utilize the language with confidence in real-world speech events or when required to talk about everyday topics. Regardless of the established curriculum, it is apparently insufficient for second language learners to spend only a few hours a week learning English in classes that basically intention very little on conversation (Brooks, 2009; Wei & Zhou, 2002). Outside the classroom they also have no chances to interact in English and failure to persist the speech act (SalmaniNodoushan, 2014). Actually, these hindrances can be overcome if we as teachers attempt hard not only to create classroom environments which attract them in more intense English communicative activities, but also to motivate them to use in autonomous learning afterwards. Fujii (2012) noted that as teachers permit students to express their ideas with one another and possibly generate some new vocabulary words, the adaptation to features of natural

conversation will follow and can be strengthened addition as the learners are inspired to take duty for their language learning by attracting in after-class tasks of their choice (Nunan, 1996).

Apart from developing classroom spoken interaction, learners are therefore inspired to get positive features of bountiful computer-mediated language learning (CMLL) materials. Through the Internet learners of different groups can access a wide range of target web-based English learning materials with much ease. The availability of online resources has made language practice even more comfortable basically for EFL learners, most of whom have stopped chance to take exposed to English outside the classroom. Nowadays, a lot of websites give online English conversation lessons, giving the learners the chance to enhance their speaking skills in appropriate way, at their fingertips. Factually, there are many various websites supporting English speaking classes for EFL learners' self-study free of charge.

According to Barrs (2012), computer-mediated language lessons can actually complement offline classroom-based learning. While face-to-face learning of EFL learners remains mostly in the classroom setting and relies much on teachers' instruction, online learning can be done particularly from inside and outside the classroom through available technology applications and language training websites with little reliance on teachers. Mayer (2003) suggests that CMLL can in fact facilitate learners in developing vocabulary skills better than face-to-face learning. Audiovisual texts supported online would allow for recurring practice and assist accurate learners' misconception of the target language whereas in face-to-face teaching the learners are often deprived of such opportunity and have to draw attention to teachers.

As the goals of interaction in second language classrooms have been shifted from solely improving students' correct production of linguistic forms to containing the active production of meaningful speech with the goal of improving their L2 fluency, it becomes especially significant for teachers to comprehend the organization of the learners' speech and learning experiences in the classroom. Conversation analysis (CA), as theorized and practiced by Harvey Sacks and Emanuel Schegloff, has particularly started to have a great significance in an L2 classroom as it challenges useful devices for recording and transcribing the nature of talk in interaction (Seedhouse, 2004). CA is the study of recorded, naturally occurring talk-in-interaction to discover how participants understand and respond to one another in their turns at talk, with a central emphasize on how sequences of action are generated. Thus, CA popular focuses enabling teachers to recognize the patterns of communication that develop and maintain second language classroom interactions and provide learners to complete their conversation in the interactions. The language teaching material design of CA in particular shows dialogues in audio or video clips together with transcription permitting learners to experience their authenticity while learning linguistic expressions (Wong 2002 cited in Seedhouse 2004: 228). With the application of CA, teachers can also select authentic online speaking classes to suite learners' needs in an appropriate and make the best usage of bountiful online resources as additional learning materials for learners' autonomous learning. Given the many of online language learning resources at present, there has however been a dearth of studies particularly evaluating their efficiency, specifically in facilitating learners' improvement of conversation skills, compared to traditional face-to-face classroom-based teaching. Therefore, this study is intended to determine whether the employment of online conversation lessons can really be helpful to improve learners' speaking skills compared to face-to-face classroom interactions with English speakers, and in

what ways, if it can. It also tries to unveil how each learning approach can lend itself to the improvement in different aspects of the learners' communicative skills.

II. METHODS

The participants of this study were fifty class 8 students from Rajchaprachanukroh 43 Songkhla province school under the Bureau of Special Education, Office of the Basic Education Commission. They were taking English as a core course of a foreign language demanded for secondary level students. The ages of students ranged from 13-15. They were selected by the purposive sampling method for the quasi-experimental treatment. The students were divided into two groups of twenty-five. One group was assigned to learn speaking through face-to-face interaction with English speakers and the other via online conversation lessons.

In educational process, instruments have a great role to conduct the class with interactive methods, techniques and approaches that are really important for students. The instruments utilized in this paper were lesson plans and oral speaking tasks. There were 6 lesson plan prepared by the researcher. Each lesson plan had duration of 150 minutes including the topic of introducing oneself and others, interview, food and family. The oral speaking exercises and tasks were pre-test and post-test. In the pre-test conversation, the participants were asked about their personal information and the conversations were recorded for subsequent assessment. After the treatment students were involved in post-test to see individual improvement.

The data was collected from the fifty student samples. In the beginning, the pre-test was conducted as all of the students were asked to converse with an English speaker to determine their conversation performance. The performance was assessed by the English speaker and videotaped for subsequent scoring by the researcher in the following features: frequency (speech flow), vocabulary (use of words and accuracy), appropriacy (turn responding), pronunciation (segmental sounds), grammar (range of structures used). The scoring rubric had been adapted from Barraja-Rohan (2011), O'Loughlin (2001), Luoma (2004), and Tsang & Wong (2002) (See Appendix). After the pre-test conversation, the students were engaged in weekly conversation lessons on the following topics: introduction and leave taking, likes and dislikes, family, and community. The training was take place three hours a week over the course of four consecutive weeks. One group of students was practice English conversation online in a computer lab with guide books containing specific instructions, conversation scripts, and exercises prepared by the researcher. At the beginning of the first session, the researcher as teacher was oriented them towards the training goal. The teacher was available during their practice only to help them with technical problems, allowing them to maneuver freely through the lesson until they master the target conversation. The students in the other group learnt conversation on the same topics through classroom face-to-face interaction with an English speaker and they were provided only with the scripts and exercises.

There were 6 lessons prepared by the researcher for both groups. In week 5, after the students complete their training, they were engaged in a post-test conversation with the same English speaker as in the pre-test. The test was measured by the English speaker and videotaped by the researcher. The score was analyzed by the two raters through the use of the same rubric, as in the pre-test. The videotaped conversations from both, the pre- and the post-test interviews were recorded and transcribed for subsequent comparative analysis. The comparative analysis threw

light on the strong and weak areas of the students and difficulties they faced during these sessions.

III. ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

Learners' performance improvement via online conversation lessons and classroom interaction with English speakers. The videotaped oral interactive activities and the pre- and post-tests scores obtained from face-to-face interactions between participants later showed that classroom interaction learners have developed the participants' oral speaking over participants who had engaged in online lessons. However, both groups of learners have improved their oral performance.

As shown in Table 1, regarding the first research question which compared the enhancement of classroom interaction with English speaker and online communicative classes, the results analyzed by the t-test showed that both groups have same score from the pre-test which showed that the students have the same proficiency of English speaking skills.

TABLE1 COMPARISON BETWEEN THE PRE-TEST OF GROUP 1 LEARNERS WHO PARTICIPATED IN CLASSROOM INTERACTION AND GROUP 2 PARTICIPANTS IN ONLINE CONVERSATION LESSONS

Features	GROUP				t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
	1 (n=25)		2 (n=25)				
	Mean	SD.	Mean	SD.			
Fluency	1.20	0.41	1.16	0.37	0.36	48	0.72
Vocabulary	1.16	0.37	1.24	0.44	-0.70	48	0.49
Appropriacy	1.24	0.44	1.24	0.44	0.00	48	1.00
Pronunciation	1.56	0.58	1.52	0.71	0.22	48	0.83
Grammar	1.08	0.28	1.16	0.37	-0.86	48	0.39
Total 25	6.24	1.64	6.32	2.15	-0.15	48	0.88
Total 100	24.96	6.56	25.28	8.62	-0.15	48	0.88

After the treatment the students who were assigned classroom interaction performed better in all speech features except in pronunciation where both groups were equal (2.32 for Group1 and 2.36 for Group2). However, there was only frequency that sig. at 0.05 (0.02) which indicated the differences in the classroom interaction, which has developed more than the learners who attained online conversation lessons.

However, indicated by the pre- and post-test score differences, the degree of improvement varied among the features; fluency appeared to be the most improved, whereas pronunciation appropriacy of turn responding, grammar and vocabulary were readily developed through face-to-face interaction with English speakers. Segalowitz & Freed (2004) suggested that for young learners, the fluency or speech flow is easier to improve and the more frequently learners occupied in meaningful conversation practice, the better their language performance and interaction will become.

IV. DISCUSSION

As we know, there are basic ways of improving speaking skill through online classes. However, online lessons can enhance self-education skill of students at the same time. Also, students can learn all types of competences by online classes. The most used and significant competence is Communicative one. The term “Communicative Competence” has been developed for many years. Hymes, (1972) stated that communicative competence is the ability to use language or interpreted language correctly in the process of interaction with the social environment such as the use of language in the proper regulation of social practices.

Moreover, Canale and Swain, (1980) and Celce-Murcia, (2007) also support Hymes’ idea that communicative competence is the ability to use language correctly, appropriate to situations and express suitable behavior in cultural context of communication. Therefore, communicative competence in this present study refer to the ability to use English language and interpreted language correctly and appropriate to situations and express suitable behavior in cultural context of communication. After reviewing many researches about component of communicative competence, it can conclude component of communicative competence as this following table.

V. CONCLUSION

This article is based on the enhancement of classroom interaction with English speaker and online communicative lessons to improve oral communication by the assessment of rubric, including five distinct features; namely, fluency, vocabulary, appropriacy, pronunciation, and grammar. The result of this work concludes that the online conversation lessons and classroom interaction with English speakers were flexible and practical styles to use, for the aim of improving good speaking skill. A teacher and learners can better use it by the application and sharing of real life experiences and situations within a healthy learning atmosphere. Thus, the roles of a teacher is a facilitator and a lider, inspiring learners with the help of linguistic interaction with others and using technology as an aid of educational and language learning activities as it permits for a lot of of chances and good environment to speakin the target language. Additional studies examining the online speaking classes and classroom interaction, should consider learners with various levels of proficiency and close-supervised training may be necessary for specific group of students. The rubric utilized for assessment in student’s communication should be made more suitable to naturally occurring conversations.

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