



## A Study of English Speaking Proficiency of TNI Students

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### Abstract

The purposes of this research were 1) to study the speaking ability of undergraduate students at Thai-Nichi Institute of Technology, 2) to compare the students' speaking ability according to six speaking criteria: pronunciation, vocabulary, accuracy, communication, interaction and fluency and 3) to study the students' satisfaction towards English speaking instruction.

Research samples were 30 first-year students derived through a simple random sampling technique in the first semester of the 2017 academic year. The instruments used in this experiment included; a speaking evaluation form, an English speaking test and a satisfaction questionnaire.

The experimental process and data collection were conducted as follows: The subjects were asked to undertake a speaking test with questions based on a range of generic subjects. Then, the same question was repeated to the same student for the following two-weeks. On the third and final week, a questionnaire was used to survey the subjects' satisfaction with the English speaking instruction.

The research findings were 1) the overall speaking ability of the TNI students was at a moderate level, 2) the students' English speaking ability was significantly higher, statistically, at the 0.05 level. This shows that the students' speaking ability progressed effectively and, 3) the students' satisfaction towards English speaking instruction was at a high level.

**Keywords:** English Speaking Proficiency, English Language Teaching.

## 1. Introduction

The learning of English for speaking is the preferred skill for a lot of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) and English as Second Language (ESL) learners. We can generally say that we judge a person's English ability mainly on their speaking skills. Teachers and textbooks tend to focus on oral communication through a variety of techniques that enable learners to maximise the practice of their speaking skills either directly or indirectly through communications with other learners (Richards 1990).

The skill of being able to speak is of essential importance when in the process of learning English. The ability to communicate through speech correlates with success in future careers and within one's social environment (Nunan, 2002). However, many studies reveal that Thai students study English for many years but cannot apply speaking skills in real life communicative situations effectively (The Ministry of Education, 2002).

The improvement of speaking ability has a direct link to English teaching which concentrates on exposure to the language and subsequent practice by the students in the classroom. The enhancement of oral abilities through exposure from familiarity, combined with cognitive self-input reflects how language is learned by native speakers from birth. It is necessary for children to hear language that is used to talk about things they see, touch, smell, hear and taste, experiences, curiosities and the things that they care about. This gives children a strong base with which to learn a language, to understand the meaning of words, where subjects and objects are placed into a sentence, how to ask a question, and everything else that forms a language (O'Grady, 2005).

The College of General Education and Languages focuses on the students' language skills, so that students are able to communicate in English. To achieve this objective, it provides instruction from English native speakers in English for Communication courses which are divided into three core courses for students from all faculties, as well as elective courses for students from each faculty (TNI Student Handbook, 2017, 20).

In obtaining the results, the researcher used exposure to English from familiarity, combined with a communicative approach to improve the English speaking abilities of undergraduate first-year students at Thai-Nichi Institute of Technology during the first semester of the 2017 academic year. The results derived from this research will provide guidelines for improvement and development of instruction for future courses.

### Research Objectives

1. To study the speaking ability of undergraduate students at Thai-Nichi Institute of Technology
2. To compare the students' speaking ability according to six speaking criteria: pronunciation, vocabulary, accuracy, communication, interaction and fluency
3. To study the students' satisfaction towards English speaking instruction



## 2. Method

### *Research Design*

The data was gathered and analysed as follows:

#### 1. Population and Samples

1.1 The population was 600 first-year students at Thai-Nichi Institute of Technology during the first semester of the 2017 academic year.

1.2 The samples were 30 first-year students derived through a simple random sampling technique in the first semester of the 2017 academic year.

### *Duration of Experiment*

The experiment ran over twelve weeks which encompassed twelve one-hour classes.

### *Variables*

The variables analysed in this study included:

1. The English speaking ability of first year TNI students.
2. The satisfaction of first year students towards English speaking instruction.

### *Research Instruments*

1. A speaking evaluation form.
2. An English speaking test.
3. A satisfaction questionnaire.

### *Data Analysis*

The collected data was analysed using a computer program. The mean and standard deviation of scores from the speaking evaluation form and satisfaction questionnaire were used to measure data at the end of the speaking class. The experiment lasted twelve hours.

### *Data Collection*

The experimental process and data collection were conducted as follows:

The subjects were asked to undertake a speaking test with questions based on a range of generic subjects. Then, the same question was repeated to the same student for the following two-weeks. On the third and final week a questionnaire was used to survey the subjects' satisfaction with the English speaking instruction.

### 3. Results

For the assessment of the English learning ability of undergraduate students at TNI, the researcher used an English learning ability test which was created according to test procedure. Therefore, percentage of scores were calculated from the following criteria: (Thaweerat, 2000; Wongsothorn, 1995)

- 81-100 (very high speaking ability)
- 61-80 (high speaking ability)
- 41-60 (moderate speaking ability)
- 21-40 (low speaking ability)
- 1-20 (very low speaking ability)

Table 1: Mean score and percentage of students' speaking ability the first time

Student Number	Pronunciation (10)	Vocabulary (10)	Accuracy (10)	Communication (10)	Interaction (10)	Fluency (10)	Total (60)	%
1	3	2	3	1	2	1	12	20
2	2	3	1	2	3	2	13	22
3	1	2	2	3	2	2	12	20
4	6	4	7	8	4	5	34	57
5	7	6	4	5	8	5	35	58
6	4	6	5	5	6	3	29	48
7	2	1	3	3	2	2	13	22
8	4	3	3	3	2	5	20	33
9	7	6	7	8	7	5	40	67
10	1	1	2	3	3	1	11	18
11	6	7	6	8	5	6	38	63
12	3	2	1	1	2	1	10	17
13	3	4	5	3	2	4	21	35
14	3	5	4	2	1	3	18	30
15	1	2	1	3	3	1	11	18
16	2	2	1	2	3	2	12	20
17	2	1	2	1	3	2	11	18
18	4	5	4	6	4	5	28	47
19	6	5	7	7	6	5	36	60
20	4	4	5	2	3	4	22	37
21	3	2	1	2	2	1	11	18
22	8	9	8	9	9	9	52	87
23	3	3	4	3	2	2	17	28

Student Number	Pronunciation (10)	Vocabulary (10)	Accuracy (10)	Communication (10)	Interaction (10)	Fluency (10)	Total (60)	%
24	8	8	7	8	9	9	49	82
25	4	3	4	3	2	2	18	30
26	4	3	2	4	5	4	22	37
27	8	9	9	10	8	10	54	90
28	6	7	7	8	6	5	39	65
29	4	5	4	3	2	5	23	38
30	4	3	2	3	3	2	17	28
Average	4.10	4.10	4.03	4.27	3.97	3.77	24.27	40.43

The table showed that the overall speaking ability of the TNI sample was 40.43% the first time. When considered in each aspect, it was found that communication aspect ranked as the highest level (4.27). The lowest level was fluency (3.77).

Table 2: Mean score and percentage of students' speaking ability the second time

Student Number	Pronunciation (10)	Vocabulary (10)	Accuracy (10)	Communication (10)	Interaction (10)	Fluency (10)	Total (60)	%
1	2	2	1	4	3	4	16	27
2	4	3	2	4	3	2	18	30
3	2	1	1	2	2	2	10	17
4	8	7	7	9	8	8	47	78
5	6	7	5	4	7	7	36	60
6	6	7	5	6	5	4	33	55
7	7	7	4	7	4	7	36	60
8	7	6	5	7	6	4	35	58
9	6	6	5	7	8	7	39	65
10	2	1	1	3	2	2	11	18
11	7	6	5	6	5	7	36	60
12	3	2	1	3	4	2	15	25
13	5	5	3	3	4	3	23	38
14	3	5	2	3	4	2	19	32
15	2	2	1	1	3	1	10	17
16	2	3	1	1	1	2	10	17
17	4	5	4	6	5	3	27	45
18	7	5	8	6	5	7	38	63

Student Number	Pronunciation (10)	Vocabulary (10)	Accuracy (10)	Communication (10)	Interaction (10)	Fluency (10)	Total (60)	%
19	6	6	4	5	7	4	32	53
20	6	7	7	6	6	7	39	65
21	3	4	4	3	2	2	19	32
22	9	8	9	8	9	9	51	85
23	4	7	4	7	7	4	33	62
24	6	6	5	7	9	6	39	65
25	4	3	4	3	5	2	21	35
26	5	4	5	3	3	2	22	37
27	9	10	9	10	7	9	54	90
28	6	6	7	5	8	7	39	65
29	7	6	5	7	6	5	37	62
30	3	2	2	3	3	1	14	23
Average	5.03	4.97	4.23	4.97	5.00	4.40	28.63	47.97

The table showed that the overall speaking ability of the TNI sample was 47.97% the second time. When considered in each aspect, it was found that pronunciation ranked as the highest level (5.03). The lowest level was fluency (4.40).

Table 3: Mean score and percentage of students' speaking ability the third time

Student Number	Pronunciation (10)	Vocabulary (10)	Accuracy (10)	Communication (10)	Interaction (10)	Fluency (10)	Total (60)	%
1	3	4	4	3	3	2	19	32
2	4	3	3	4	5	4	23	38
3	2	3	2	2	4	1	14	23
4	8	6	7	7	6	8	42	70
5	6	6	5	6	7	7	37	62
6	5	6	4	4	6	5	30	50
7	5	6	4	7	8	7	38	63
8	6	7	5	8	7	6	39	65
9	7	8	8	9	9	7	48	80
10	2	3	1	3	1	2	12	20
11	5	6	5	8	4	6	39	65
12	2	3	2	3	3	3	16	27
13	5	5	4	4	6	5	27	45

Student Number	Pronunciation (10)	Vocabulary (10)	Accuracy (10)	Communication (10)	Interaction (10)	Fluency (10)	Total (60)	%
14	5	4	5	3	6	6	29	48
15	2	1	2	1	3	2	11	18
16	1	3	2	2	1	1	11	18
17	5	6	4	6	7	4	32	53
18	6	7	7	8	5	6	39	65
19	5	6	5	7	6	4	33	62
20	7	6	6	7	8	7	41	68
21	6	5	5	4	4	5	29	48
22	8	8	9	8	9	8	50	83
23	5	6	5	8	4	4	32	53
24	8	6	7	7	8	8	44	73
25	4	5	3	6	4	6	28	47
26	5	6	4	5	4	6	30	50
27	9	9	9	10	8	9	54	90
28	7	6	7	8	6	7	41	68
29	5	5	6	4	4	5	33	62
30	3	3	2	2	3	4	17	28
Average	5.03	5.27	4.73	5.47	5.30	4.83	31.27	52.47

The table showed that the overall speaking ability of the TNI sample was 52.47% the third time. When considered in each aspect, it was found that communication ranked as the highest level (5.47). The lowest level was accuracy (4.73).

Table 4: The comparison of the English speaking test for the 30 undergraduate students from the first time to the third time

The statistics used in the data analysis consisted of the mean ( $\bar{x}$ ) and the standard deviation (S.D.).

Descriptive Statistics						
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	%
First time	30	10	54.00	24.26	13.31	40.43
Second time	30	10	54.00	28.63	12.68	47.97
Third time	30	11	54.00	31.26	11.84	52.47
Total	30			28.05	12.62	46.96

The table showed that the overall speaking ability of the TNI sample was 28.05 (out of 60) when changed into a percentage it equalled 46.96%. That meant the students' English ability was at a moderate level. When considering each time separately, it was found that, the first mean was 24.26, the second mean was 28.63 and the third mean was 31.26 respectively. This indicates that the students' speaking ability got better and the teaching style was effective.

Table 5: A comparison of the students' speaking ability by analyzing repeated measures

Tests of Within-Subjects Contrasts						
Source	factor1	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
factor1	Linear	735.000	1	735.000	24.003	.000
	Quadratic	15.022	1	15.022	1.031	.318
Error(factor1)	Linear	888.000	29	30.621		
	Quadratic	422.644	29	14.574		

*\*Statistical significance at the 0.05 level*

From the comparison of each table from table 1 to table 3, each table was different significantly at the 0.05 level. This showed that the students' speaking ability progressed effectively.

Table 6: The students' satisfaction with English speaking instruction

No.		$\bar{x}$	S.D.	Level
	<b>Content</b>			
1	I would prefer speaking classes based on my daily life situations.	4.30	0.65	High
2	I would prefer speaking classes based on conversations in the workplace.	3.96	0.66	High
3	I would prefer speaking classes more closely connected to my major.	4.03	0.76	High
	<b>Overall content ratings</b>	<b>4.09</b>	<b>0.69</b>	<b>High</b>
	<b>Teaching/Speaking process</b>			
4	I prefer individual based learning.	3.76	1.00	High
5	I prefer pair-work for learning.	3.83	0.69	High
6	I prefer group-work for learning.	4.06	0.86	High
	<b>Overall teaching/speaking process ratings</b>	<b>3.88</b>	<b>0.85</b>	<b>High</b>
	<b>Instructor</b>			
7	I prefer to learn English with native-speakers.	4.50	0.68	High
8	Learning with native-speaking English teachers helps me to understand western culture.	4.36	0.71	High



9	Learning with native-speaking English teachers is more enjoyable.	4.13	0.73	High
	<b>Overall instructor ratings</b>	<b>4.33</b>	<b>0.70</b>	<b>High</b>
	<b>Self-improvement</b>			
10	I would prefer speaking classes to focus on pronunciation.	4.16	0.69	High
11	I would prefer speaking classes to focus on vocabulary.	4.06	0.90	High
12	I would prefer speaking classes to focus on accuracy (grammar/word order).	3.93	0.69	High
13	I would prefer speaking classes to focus on communication. (creative answers)	4.43	0.62	High
14	I would prefer speaking classes to focus on interaction. (conversation)	4.36	0.66	High
15	I would prefer speaking classes to focus on fluency.	4.20	0.71	High
	<b>Overall self-improvement ratings</b>	<b>4.19</b>	<b>0.71</b>	<b>High</b>
	<b>Combined total of all overall ratings</b>	<b>4.13</b>	<b>0.73</b>	<b>High</b>

These rating scales were calculated to find out the mean and standard deviation and then translated based on criteria developed by Best (1977) as follows:

$1.00 \leq \bar{x} < 1.50$  refers to students who had the lowest level of satisfaction towards English speaking instruction

$1.51 \leq \bar{x} < 2.50$  refers to students who had a low level of satisfaction towards English speaking instruction

$2.51 \leq \bar{x} < 3.50$  refers to students who had a moderate level of satisfaction towards English speaking instruction

$3.51 \leq \bar{x} < 4.50$  refers to students who had a high level of satisfaction towards English speaking instruction

$4.51 \leq \bar{x} < 5.00$  refers to students who had the highest level of satisfaction towards English speaking instruction

According to the table, it was demonstrated that the students' satisfaction towards English speaking instruction was at a high level. When each section was considered, it was found that native-speaking instruction and self-improvement were given the highest ratings. The results indicate high student satisfaction with the course, affirming the hypothesis.

#### 4. Conclusion

1. The overall speaking ability of the TNI students was at a moderate level.
2. The students' English speaking ability was significantly higher, statistically, at the 0.05 level. This shows that the students' speaking ability progressed effectively.
3. The students' satisfaction towards English speaking instruction was at a high level.

#### 5. Discussion

According to the research results, the TNI students' level of English speaking ability increased from a low level to a moderate level. This may have been due to the possibility that they related to the topics of the questions and they used communicative activities in learning which relates to the concept of Nunan (2002) who stipulated that the teaching of English speaking skills should be based on a communicative approach with focus on learner-centeredness. Students spoke individually in front of their peers in a classroom environment. Using this technique, students had an opportunity to improve the six skills measured in the results. Additionally, the atmosphere created through the familiarity of speaking was able to reduce their fear in making mistakes when speaking English. Students were able to receive encouragement from fellow students in this scenario. This was able to lead to self-monitoring, more confidence in speaking, and enjoyment that encouraged them to participate more in learning. The results of this study reinforced the effectiveness of communicative activities in developing English speaking skills.

Furthermore, the students' satisfaction with this type of English speaking instruction was measured at a high level. This may be because they felt satisfaction when speaking with an English native-speaker and identified the importance of speaking. This is related to the idea of Rivers (1981) who advocated that speaking is the most significant skill because it is one of the abilities that is needed to achieve a conversation. Moreover, speakers improved on all the tested criteria; pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, fluency, accuracy and comprehension. Learners have to have enough English speaking ability in order to communicate simply and successfully with other people.

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