

Improving english speaking skills in english major students



English language has become the global language which dominates in various fields throughout the world (Baker, 2003). Similarly to Diab, 2006 English is not the language that is used by the largest group of people, though it plays influential role in many fields such as in business world, technology, science, communication, and education. High proficiency in English is required for all of these fields (Wiriyachitra, 2002). English, especially in education is essential to develop human resources which seem to be most important in development of countries (). Therefore, the national governments across the world are trying to change English curricular in order to develop communicative abilities of students (Wedell, 2008).

Specifically, since Thailand is a country that English which is involved in academic, career and travelling is a foreign language, teaching and learning English is significant to improve English language proficiency of Thai's learners (Khamkhien, 2010). Consequently, Thailand educational plan () introduces English at every stage of public schools. Furthermore, students must pass the examination or the standardized test of English in some ability in order to study in government colleges and universities (Baker, 2003; Wiriyachitra, 2002).

However, based on two international English tests: TOEFL and TOEIC, scores of Thais have indicated that Thais' English proficiency level is unsatisfied in all four skills: reading, writing, listening and speaking (Khamkhien, 2010; Wiriyachitra, 2002). Therefore, because of the result of these two tests teaching and learning of English in Thailand and English language curriculum in developing English abilities of learners emphasize on " language pedagogy" (Khamkhien, 2010, p. 184).

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Then, English language curriculum was revised many times with the purpose of developing students' English language proficiency in order to provide students the opportunities to connect the changing world and globalization (Foley, 2005; Khamkhien, 2010). In terms of English language teaching approach which was introduced in 2001 by the Ministry of Education through the English language curriculum is child-centered (Foley, 2005; Khamkhien, 2010). In fact, at schools and in higher education English is taught by non-native speaking teachers (baker, 2003) who carry the old strategies in teaching language that are teacher-centered and grammar translation approaches (Bhaowises, n. d.).

1. 2 Background: Problems in learning and teaching speaking

Since Thailand teach English as a foreign language, Teaching and learning English in Thailand have emphasized on language capacity

Nevertheless, teaching and learning English in primary, secondary schools and university levels have faced many difficulties. According to Biyaem (1997) cited in Wiriyachitra (2002) describes what difficulties teachers and students in primary and secondary schools have faced in English language classroom. For teachers, the difficulties in teaching are due to teachers' qualifications (Wedell, 2008), and they have workloads and too many students in a class (Biyaem, 1997 cited in Wiriyachitra, 2002). A large group of teachers of English lacks of appropriate levels of English, and uses a lot of inappropriate materials (wedell, 2008). Similarly, Thai English teachers who have inability as English teachers are the majority in all levels (Khamkhien, 2010, and many teachers who graduated from universities lack essential

English skills, especially the ability to speak English (Al Hamzi, 2003 cited in Wedell, 2008). As for students, they wish to speak English fluently, but face with language barriers such as pronunciation and grammar usage (Biyaem, 1997 cited in Wiriyachitra, 2002). Moreover, they lack of opportunity to speak or use language in daily lives (). They are too shy to speak with their classmates because they are being passive and have little speaking activities to practice ().

In addition, all of four skills, teaching and learning of speaking skills seem to be the most crucial part, because in the classroom almost of instructions are given in Thai as many as teachers who are non-native speakers teach English without naturalness, and having no interaction occurs in the classroom (Khamkhien, 2010; Wiriyachitra, 2002).

These difficulties in primary and secondary schools, where the English curriculum and environment do not meet the demand of the learners, and do not focus on speaking, have affected on learning English in university level where listening and speaking skills are most used (Wiriyachitra, 2002). Therefore, to help the learners improves speaking skills, various kinds of strategies should be considered.

Since reading may be the first discipline that students of a language come into contact with, it may help the learners to master in speaking because reading establishes correlation of proficiency (Mody, Studdert-Kennedy, & Brady, 1997). Seeing the words of a language on paper will be the first thing people see the language. Moreover, Reading is the skill that uses as an activity which is related to students' ability such as interpreting idea of

information, helping to remember meanings and ideas of materials, and expressing opinion through speaking proficiency. According to the study of Hilferty and Barbara (2000), development in reading skills seems to enhance improvement in the spoken language. While Students read, they can see sentence structures which help to improve using grammar in speaking.

Since manga has become the world comics which are popular and read by different groups of people, manga that display in market around the world has various genres divided to be appropriate for age and gender groups (Eng, 2010). Also, every genre of Japanese manga covers in the themes of fantasy, science fiction, crime, sport, romance, horror and erotic (Eng, 2010; Welcome to manga world, n. d.). 16 types of manga are widely known and being published in Japan (Welcome to manga world, n. d.).

Although manga has different genres and has been widely distributed in Japan, four main types of manga that appeared after World War II and have been popular are shonen manga, shojo manga, seinen manga and redikomi manga (Schwartz & Rubinstein-Avila, 2006). The themes of these four main types may in five categories: hobby, specialist, sports erotic and pornograph, and they are marketed to boys and girls, and adult men and woman (Eng, 2010; Schwartz & Rubinstein-Avila, 2006). Therefore, for this study mangas that are most appropriate for young people are shonen and shojo mangas which are comics for teenagers aged 6-18 (Welcome to manga world, n. d.).