



The Use of the Teaching-Speaking Cycle Model to Improve the English Speaking Skills of Wing 4 Officers, Royal Thai Air Force

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Abstract

This study aimed to investigate the use of the teaching-speaking cycle model to improve the English speaking skills of 32 Wing 4 officers in the Royal Thai Air Force, based in Takhli District, Nakhon Sawan Province, Thailand. The participants of this study included 15 officers from technical corps and 17 officers from other corps. To find out the teaching-speaking cycle model's effectiveness, 4 research instruments were constructed and employed: 1) 4 lesson plans based on the 7-stage teaching-speaking cycle model, 2) pretest and posttest, 3) an English speaking rubric, and 4) a satisfaction questionnaire. The researcher collected data by assessing English speaking skills of Wing 4 officers individually before and after learning through the teaching-speaking cycle model. For the satisfaction data, the officers were assigned to fill in a satisfaction questionnaire after taking the posttest. The results revealed that there was a significant difference between the English speaking pretest and posttest mean scores at the significant level of .01. However, when comparing between the technical corps and the other corps, it was found that there was no statistical significance in the pretest and posttest mean scores between the two groups. Therefore, the teaching-speaking cycle model remarkably helped improve the English speaking skills of Wing 4 officers as a whole and the military corps they were based on did not affect their development of English speaking skills. Although they were from different military corps, their learning of English speaking did not have any differences.

Keywords: *English speaking skills, Teaching-speaking cycle, Military officers, Royal Thai Air Force*

1. Introduction

English language teaching in Thailand is categorized as teaching English as a foreign language (TEFL) because Thais normally do not use English as their first language. English is not even an official language or the main language for communication in Thailand. In the EFL context like Thailand, language teachers usually teach English based on native speakers' standards while students barely have opportunities to use or speak English out of class. Thus, Thai students lack interest and motivation in using English. Although they have been studying English for several years in school, they are still unable to communicate with foreigners in real situations. For Thais, a social context is regarded as an obstacle in English skills development (Boriboon, 2011; Thipprapa, 2018).

Thailand is a member of Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) where English is stated as "the working language of ASEAN." Apart from their mother tongue, members of ASEAN must be able to use English in communication in order to create cooperation, tourism, and cultural exchanges among ASEAN countries. Therefore, English skills development for Thai people in school age and working age plays a crucial role in this era.

Being in charge of cooperation in politics and national security, Thailand's Ministry of Defence (MOD) has adjusted its organizational charts and policies to support ASEAN military cooperation. In addition, MOD has provided courses and training to enhance language skills, especially English and other ASEAN languages, which are useful for international cooperation.

Wing 4, an airbase in the Royal Thai Air Force, is responsible for air power preparation and weaponry for air operations. Wing 4 officers join combined and joint military operations annually with allies from several countries. They have to communicate in English with foreign military officers. Moreover, some officers are granted scholarships to study and undergo professional training in their field overseas. To reach their full potential at work, English skills development is mandatory. Therefore, English courses are purposively provided at Wing 4 to enhance officers' ability to communicate in English and utilize English in terms of work. For Wing 4 officers, English speaking is a challenging skill to develop because

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they have a few opportunities to speak English in daily life. Also, some of them are adults who lack confidence in speaking English and their English skills tend to be poor.

2. Literature Review

Set out below is an overview of how the English courses were conducted in Thai military sector, what the teaching-speaking cycle is, and how it works to improve learners' English speaking skills.

2.1 English Language Teaching in Ministry of Defence

Charoenwadhanasuk (2019) claimed that Thailand's Ministry of Defence has been trying to improve English skills of its personnel to be able to work with military officers at the international level. In many international joint training programs, such as Cobra Gold, English is the only means of communication. Officers must be able to speak, listen, and understand basic English grammar in communication (Santasongkroh, 2013) Thus, language centers of armed forces were founded to provide English courses for their personnel, and several military schools were determined to develop English skills of their students. Chalermwat (2017) stated that Chulachomklao Royal Military Academy emphasized English listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills of its students and encouraged them to use communicative English in class and out of class.

2.2 The Teaching-Speaking Cycle Model

The teaching-speaking cycle, proposed by Christine C.M. Goh and Anne Burns, is a pedagogical model for teaching speaking skills of foreign languages. It focuses on the teacher's facilitation to help students acquire better foreign language speaking skills through the application of 7 stages as shown in figure 1 (Goh & Burns, 2012).

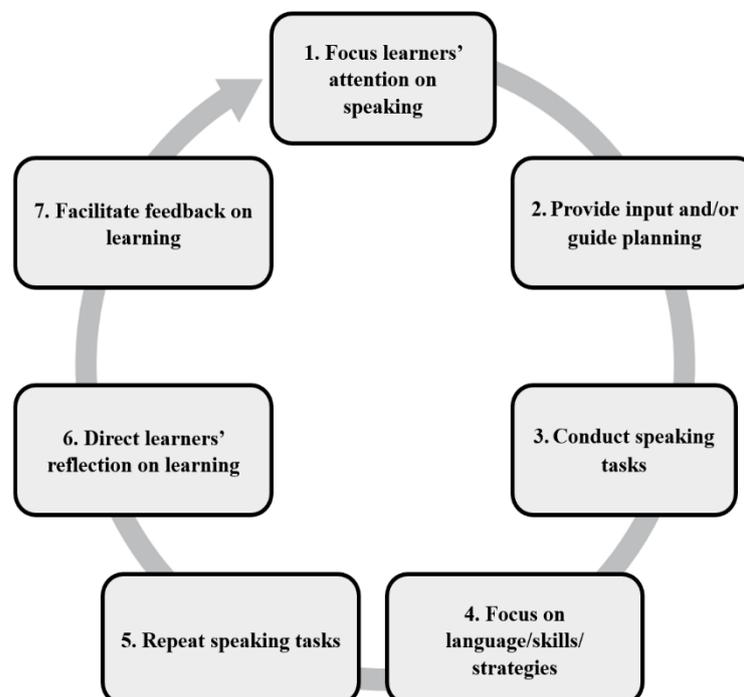


Figure 1 The teaching-speaking cycle model



Stage 1: Focus learners' attention on speaking

The teacher encourages metacognitive awareness of students in their own learning process by asking questions that allow them to think about their foreign language speaking skills and how to develop such skills. The teacher can also ask them to think or prepare themselves for the upcoming activities.

Stage 2: Provide input and/or guide planning

The teacher provides knowledge which is necessary for speaking activities by giving students time to search for information regarding speaking topics or showing sample conversations. Related vocabulary, grammar rules, or pronunciation tips can be introduced to students. Also, the teacher can give some advice on planning for speaking activities.

Stage 3: Conduct speaking tasks

The teacher assigns speaking tasks and tells students to use knowledge learned from stage 2. In this stage, students can develop their speaking fluency by conducting speaking tasks in pair or in a small group. When students are doing the activities, the teacher should notice problems in their speaking and search for some examples to discuss with the whole class and give some feedback for improvement.

Stage 4: Focus on language/skills/strategies

The teacher has noticed some speaking problems in stage 3. In this stage, further advice on language use, pronunciation, skills, and strategies can be given to students as a way to improve their language accuracy. The teacher should let students observe their language use and analyze errors from previous speaking tasks to improve their current speaking skills.

Stage 5: Repeat speaking tasks

The teacher asks students to conduct the tasks again with more focus on language accuracy already discussed in stage 4. In this stage, the teacher can slightly change topics or let students choose topics in the same type. Students are expected to speak more fluently and accurately. They should be more confident in speaking and feel less anxious. The teacher can assign them to repeat some parts of speaking tasks to ease tensions for some students and let them have more time to practice and get some feedback.

Stage 6: Direct learners' reflection on learning

The teacher gives students time to review and reflect their learning of speaking, let them realize how they have improved their speaking skills and set future goals in learning. The reflection can be performed individually, in pair, or in a small group.

Stage 7: Facilitate feedback on learning

The teacher provides feedback on learning as a whole. In this stage, the teacher can read the reflection of students from Stage 6 in order to acknowledge students' feeling towards the improvement of their speaking skills.

2.3 Some Criticism of the Teaching-Speaking Cycle Model

The teaching-speaking cycle is a model recently mentioned in several academic articles. Shu and Renandya (2016) claimed that the teaching-speaking cycle was a new teaching model for enhancing English speaking skills of learners. The model was easy to understand for teachers, and it focused on both language fluency and accuracy. They recommended using the model with intermediate EFL learners in China. Fernández and Andersen (2019) also mentioned the benefits of using the teaching-speaking cycle model that it could enhance foreign language speaking fluency and accuracy as well as encourage metacognitive awareness of learners. They also stated that the model went along well with task-based learning. Similarly, Thomas (2019) suggested that the teaching-speaking cycle model should be experimented in teaching a foreign language. He further introduced the incorporation of pre-task planning, task repetition, and metacognitive training within the model. All of these articles hereby suggested language teachers to use the teaching-speaking cycle model. However, negativity towards the use of the model had not been found.



2.4 Findings from Previous Studies on the Use of the Teaching-Speaking Cycle Model

As a new model, there were a few studies that applied the teaching-speaking cycle in teaching spoken English. In Thailand, Sawongta (2017) studied effects of holistic approach using local cultural content on English oral communication ability of 21 sixth grade students and investigated students' opinions towards holistic approach using local cultural content. In holistic approach, she followed the 7-stage teaching-speaking cycle model in class. It was found that her students received the higher mean score after learning through holistic approach, and there was a significant difference between the pre and post English oral communication test at .05 level. She also reported that her students had positive attitude towards learning through holistic approach using local cultural content. Rosario (2019) also identified and improved foreign language speaking anxiety, and developed core speaking skills of 338 senior high school students in the Philippines through the use of the teaching-speaking cycle model. The statistical results revealed that the model could decrease foreign language speaking anxiety and enhance core speaking skills of the senior high school students. The level of speaking anxiety was changed from 'almost high' to 'low', while core speaking skills were enhanced from 'developing' to 'accomplished'. Moreover, this study also found that the development of the core speaking skills was obstructed when the language anxiety level increased. On the other hand, the core speaking skills were enhanced when the language anxiety level decreased.

From what the researcher had studied, the teaching-speaking cycle could be a potential teaching model to apply in Wing 4 officers' spoken English class as it was expected to enhance their English speaking skills.

3. Objectives

In this study, 2 objectives were stated as follows:

1. To compare English speaking skills of Wing 4 officers before and after learning through the teaching-speaking cycle model.
2. To examine Wing 4 officers' satisfaction level of learning through the teaching-speaking cycle model.

4. Materials and Methods

4.1 Materials

The research instruments of this study consisted of 4 lesson plans based on the 7-stage teaching-speaking cycle model, pretest and posttest, an English speaking rubric, and a satisfaction questionnaire. The pretest included 4 given situations where the officers were assigned to have conversations with the researcher. On the posttest, the officers were also asked to converse with the researcher in 4 similar situations. The researcher and the teacher assistant would assess English speaking of the officers based on the English speaking rubric. The satisfaction questionnaire was a rating scale with 1 as not at all satisfied and 5 as extremely satisfied.

4.2 Methods

Research Design

This study was one group pretest-posttest research design. The research focused on how the teaching-speaking cycle model helped enhance English speaking skills of Wing 4 officers in the Royal Thai Air Force. The whole process of this study was described below.

1. Conducting a preliminary research on need analysis of speaking topics. The selected topics were congratulating someone, asking and giving directions, asking and giving personal information, booking a table and ordering food.
2. Constructing research instruments including 4 lesson plans based on 7 stages of the teaching-speaking cycle model, pretest and posttest, an English speaking rubric, and a satisfaction questionnaire.
3. Revising research instruments according to 3 experts' advice.
4. Administering pretest to assess English speaking skills of Wing 4 officers individually before they learned through the teaching-speaking cycle model.



5. Teaching English speaking skills based on the revised lesson plans.
6. Administering posttest to assess English speaking skills of Wing 4 officers individually after they learned through the teaching-speaking cycle model.
7. Distributing and collecting satisfaction questionnaires completed by Wing 4 officers for data collection and analysis.

Research Participants

The participants of the study included 32 Wing 4 officers, aged between 20 and 41 years, who voluntarily enrolled in the English Proficiency Development Course for Wing 4 Personnel Year 2020. They were officers from different military corps including aeronautical engineering, communication, armament, adjutant general, military police, security forces, navigator, meteorology, supplies, civil engineering, music, and transport corps. The thirty-two Wing 4 officers can be classified into two groups according to their corps. The first group was in technical corps including 15 officers from aeronautical engineering, communication, and armament corps. The second group was in the other corps comprising 17 officers from several corps which included adjutant general, military police, security forces, navigator, meteorology, supplies, civil engineering, music, and transport corps.

5. Results

The results of using the teaching-speaking cycle model to improve English speaking skills of Wing 4 officers were as follows:

5.1 English Speaking Skills of Wing 4 Officers Before and After Learning through the Teaching-Speaking Cycle Model

Table 1 Statistical Results of English Speaking Skills Assessment of Wing 4 Officers, Royal Thai Air Force (n = 32)

	Mean	S.D.	t-test	Sig.(1-tailed)
Pretest	55.19	20.35		
Posttest	79.78	14.35	12.37**	0.0000

**p < 0.01

Table 1 represented that the mean score of the English speaking test after learning through the teaching-speaking cycle model was obviously higher than that of before learning through it. The mean score of the pretest was 55.19 and of the posttest was 79.78. The mean difference was 24.59. The result of the paired sample t-test indicated that there was a significant difference between the pretest and posttest mean scores at the significant level of .01.

Table 2 Statistical Results of English Speaking Skills Assessment on Different Categories

Category	Mean		S.D.	
	Pretest	Posttest	Pretest	Posttest
Vocabulary	11.25	18.69	4.89	2.27
Grammar	9.69	13.56	4.40	3.50
Pronunciation	9.84	12.47	3.82	2.24
Fluency	8.47	11.81	4.60	4.10
Comprehension	8.69	13.22	4.70	3.21
Communicative Strategies	7.25	10.03	3.91	4.24

From Table 2, it was found that the teaching-speaking cycle model could enhance Wing 4 officers' speaking skills in terms of vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, fluency, comprehension, and communicative strategies. Before learning through the teaching-speaking cycle model, Wing 4 officers had the highest mean score of 11.25 on vocabulary while obtained the lowest mean score of 7.25 on communicative strategies. Comparing with the scores to the posttest, the highest mean score was still on vocabulary as they got 18.69, and the lowest mean score was 10.03 on communicative strategies.



Besides calculating statistics of test scores of Wing 4 officers as a whole, the analysis between two groups of corps was further conducted to see whether the corps where the participants were in had any effect on their speaking skills.

Table 3 Statistical Results of English Speaking Skills Assessment on Different Groups of Military Corps

	Group	N	\bar{x}	S.D.	t-test	Sig.(2-tailed)
Pretest	Technical corps	15	53.40	21.00	-0.461**	0.648
	Other corps	17	56.76	20.27		
Posttest	Technical corps	15	77.60	13.47	-0.803**	0.428
	Other corps	17	81.71	15.23		

**p > 0.05

Table 3 showed the comparison of pretest and posttest between two groups of military corps. On the pretest, the technical corps had the lower mean score of 53.40 while the other corps had the higher mean score of 56.76. Although their scores were different, the independent-samples t-test score of 0.648 indicated no statistical significance between the two groups. Similarly, the posttest mean score of the technical corps was lower than that of the other corps. The mean scores were 77.60 and 81.71 respectively, and the independent-samples t-test score of 0.428 revealed no statistical significance between the two groups as well.

5.2 Wing 4 Officers' Satisfaction Level of Learning through the Teaching-Speaking Cycle Model

Satisfaction level of thirty-two Wing 4 officers was investigated by a questionnaire. Their satisfaction of 3 different aspects, including content (items 1-5), teacher's instruction (items 6-10), and learning through the teaching-speaking cycle model (items 11-15), were examined.

Table 4 Satisfaction of Content

Content	\bar{x}	S.D.	Satisfaction level
1. Completeness of content	4.66	0.48	Extremely satisfied
2. Order of content	4.63	0.55	Extremely satisfied
3. Usefulness of content	4.66	0.65	Extremely satisfied
4. Difficulty level of content	4.19	0.82	Very satisfied
5. Consistency of content and class duration	4.28	0.68	Very satisfied
Average	4.48	0.64	Very satisfied

From Table 4, Wing 4 officers were very satisfied with the content as the overall mean score was 4.48 out of 5. They were most satisfied with completeness and usefulness of the content with the highest mean score of 4.66 and least satisfied with difficulty level of content which had the lowest mean score of 4.19.

Table 5 Satisfaction of Teacher's Instruction

Teacher's Instruction	\bar{x}	S.D.	Satisfaction level
6. Teacher's explanation of content	4.78	0.42	Extremely satisfied
7. Teacher's answers to students' questions	4.75	0.51	Extremely satisfied
8. Teacher's attention to students	4.88	0.34	Extremely satisfied
9. Teacher's support in English speaking development	4.78	0.42	Extremely satisfied
10. Teacher's feedback on students' performance	4.66	0.70	Extremely satisfied
Average	4.77	0.48	Extremely satisfied

From Table 5, Wing 4 officers were extremely satisfied with the teacher's instruction as the overall mean score was 4.77 out of 5. They were most satisfied with the teacher's attention to students with the highest mean score of 4.88 and least satisfied with the teacher's feedback on students' performance which had the lowest mean score of 4.66.

**Table 6** Satisfaction of Learning through the Teaching-Speaking Cycle Model

Teacher's Instruction	\bar{x}	S.D.	Satisfaction level
11. Procedure of the teaching-speaking cycle model	4.25	0.62	Very satisfied
12. Effects of the teaching-speaking cycle model on improving English pronunciation	4.56	0.62	Extremely satisfied
13. Effects of the teaching-speaking cycle model on enhancing English speaking fluency	4.53	0.57	Extremely satisfied
14. Effects of the teaching-speaking cycle model on increasing confidence in speaking English	4.53	0.72	Extremely satisfied
15. Effects of the teaching-speaking cycle model on self-confidence	4.41	0.71	Very satisfied
Average	4.46	0.65	Very satisfied

From Table 6, Wing 4 officers were very satisfied with learning through the teaching-speaking cycle model as the overall mean score was 4.46 out of 5. They were most satisfied with the effects of teaching-speaking cycle model on improving English pronunciation with the highest mean score of 4.56 and least satisfied with the procedure of the teaching-speaking cycle model which had the lowest mean score of 4.25.

6. Discussion

From the study, there were two major aspects for discussion: Wing 4 officers' English speaking skills before and after learning through the teaching-speaking cycle model and Wing 4 officers' satisfaction level of learning through the teaching-speaking cycle model.

For English speaking skills of Wing 4 officers, it was found that the teaching-speaking cycle model clearly improved their English skills. The pretest mean score showed that some of them had very poor English speaking skills. A few officers hardly spoke any words in English due to their limited vocabulary. They were only able to tell their names, phone numbers, and email addresses. Those who knew vocabulary expressed grammatical errors, and some could not compose English sentences grammatically. Some officers were extremely anxious when speaking English as their hands were shaking and they said they could not speak a word of English. After the pretest, the researcher employed 7 stages of the teaching-speaking cycle model based on produced lesson plans. The application of 7 stages was a systematic method that gradually enhanced English speaking skills of Wing 4 officers. The first stage of the cycle allowed self-evaluation of speaking proficiency level and recalled what they already knew about the speaking topics. Some of them had background knowledge of the topic while some could not recall anything. The second stage was to provide essential vocabulary and a few key sentences that allowed basic conversations on the topic. In the third stage, officers tried to memorize vocabulary and key sentences to perform speaking tasks in front of the researcher. In this stage, officers normally conversed with grammatical errors, such as using many verbs in a sentence, and pronunciation mistakes, such as omitting /s/ sound at the end of the words. A few officers who had higher English speaking skills performed speaking tasks with less mistakes, longer conversations, more vocabulary and more speaking fluency. In the fourth stage, the researcher brought up mistakes found in the third stage and suggested the correct ones. Moreover, spoken grammar rules, appropriate word choices, pronunciation practice, and communicative strategies were introduced to improve language accuracy. As a result, in the fifth stage, Wing 4 officers spoke English more fluently and confidently with better pronunciation and less mistakes in grammar. This showed that repetition could enhance speaking fluency and increase confidence. This finding is supported by Sawongta (2017) who applied the teaching-speaking cycle model in teaching English to sixth grade students and reported that her students felt more confident after several times of speaking practice. Goh and Burns (2012) also suggested that task repetition enabled greater fluency and accuracy of speech. In the sixth stage, the researcher asked officers to write on reflection paper. They could review what they have learned in class and think about performance of their speaking tasks. Finally, in the last stage, the researcher gave some feedback on learning and encouraged them to keep practicing. After 4 lesson plans were completed, Wing 4 officers took English speaking posttest individually. On the posttest, every officer had shown the improvement in English speaking. Those who barely spoke



English words on the pretest could speak some related vocabulary and key sentences they had learned in class. Those who knew some vocabulary could speak more fluently with slightly better pronunciation. Therefore, English speaking skills of Wing 4 officers were enhanced by the use of the teaching-speaking cycle model. The result is concurrent with Sawongta (2017) who successfully used the teaching-speaking cycle model to develop English speaking of sixth graders and Rosario (2019) who implemented the model in relieving English speaking anxiety and enhancing core speaking skills of senior high school students. The teaching-speaking cycle should be considered an effective model for teaching English speaking to learners of different ages.

In terms of satisfaction level, the result indicated that Wing 4 officers were most satisfied with the teacher's instruction because the researcher and teacher assistant paid attention to the officers individually when conducting speaking tasks. The teacher assistant would pay closer attention to those who needed help with speaking tasks. They also felt very satisfied with the content as learning topics were carefully chosen from their need analysis. In addition, they were very satisfied with learning through the teaching-speaking cycle model as a whole as they thought it helped improve their English pronunciation, enhance speaking fluency, and increase speaking confidence.

Regarding the process of data collection, the researcher had faced some difficulties. The major one for discussion is the length of class. Having 32 officers in a speaking class took a longer period of time to complete the whole 7 stages of the teaching-speaking cycle. In one cycle, the officers had to pair up and perform speaking tasks in front of the researcher both in stage 3 and stage 5. Each officer had to perform at least 2 times, and some performed more than that as they found it very hard to speak and needed more drills and advice. Moreover, when there were a number of errors from the first speaking task, the researcher dedicated time to explain and correct them. Many officers manifested fossilization which was a reappearance of errors, especially in grammar and pronunciation that did not exist in Thai language. According to Chen and Zhao (2013), fossilization is a halt in interlanguage learning before reaching target language standards. Learners inadvertently combined the language rules of mother tongue together with the foreign language they have been learning. In this case, it was found that after several attempts of the researcher's correction, some officers still omitted the articles 'a/an/the' in front of nouns while some constantly failed to pronounce the final /s/ or /z/ sounds, such as in the word 'congratulations.' The researcher had to correct such fixated errors several times and let the officers repeat the practice of those rules. Besides, the researcher occasionally elaborated on vocabulary use and sentence structures when she found out that the officers had little background knowledge on the topic. Consequently, in teaching speaking effectively, the cycle took more time to complete than it was previously planned, and the officers often finished class 15-20 minutes late. Another difficulty encountered is that the officers had different levels of English proficiency. Those who were in higher level felt uninterested when having to listen to the researcher repeating the explanation of what they already knew and learned. On the other hand, the lower level sometimes felt left behind as they did not catch up with the class. As a result, some officers felt unmotivated in learning English speaking.

7. Conclusion

This study aimed to compare English speaking skills of Wing 4 officers before and after learning through the teaching-speaking cycle model and examine Wing 4 officers' satisfaction level of learning through the model. To sum up, the teaching-speaking cycle model could enhance English speaking skills of Wing 4 officers as the posttest mean score was higher than that of the pretest, and there was a significant difference at the level of .01. Also, Wing 4 officers were extremely satisfied with the teacher's instruction and very satisfied with the content and learning through the teaching-speaking cycle model. The results of this study, therefore, proved that the teaching-speaking cycle model was an effective method in teaching spoken English to adult learners.

For further study, it is recommended that prior to implementing the teaching-speaking cycle model, the researcher should utilize a placement test to classify learners according to their level of English in order to avoid having issues of high and low level learners mixed up in the same class. They probably feel more



comfortable learning together with classmates with the same level of English and enjoy the class more. In addition, the researcher recommended using the teaching-speaking cycle model with a smaller class up to 20 learners in order to allow more time for the researcher to observe speaking tasks, correct some errors, and give feedback individually. It will also help alleviate stress in slow learners as they will have enough time to prepare and practice speaking. Furthermore, the teaching-speaking cycle model can be tried out in teaching other foreign languages with different age groups and proficiency levels.

Lastly, the researcher hoped that this study would be of great use for all stakeholders, especially English language instructors in military with similar teaching contexts, English language teachers who teach EFL adult students, and those who have passion in developing methods of English language teaching. Hopefully, this study would contribute towards the advancement of teaching English as a foreign language in Thailand.

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