

Enhancing the English-Speaking Ability of Primary Students Through the Natural Approach Combined with the Total Physical Response Method

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Article information	Abstract
Article history: Received: 25 Jun 2025 Last revised: 26 Apr 2026 Accepted: 27 Apr 2026 Available online: 30 Apr 2026	<i>This quasi-experimental research study investigated the effectiveness of the Natural Approach combined with the Total Physical Response method (NATPR) in developing English-speaking ability among third-grade primary school students. The study objectives were (1) to compare the English-speaking ability of students before and after receiving instruction through the NATPR method, and (2) to compare the English-speaking ability of students who received instruction through the NATPR method with that of students who received instruction through traditional language learning methods. Participants were selected through cluster random sampling of intact classrooms from schools under the Chaiyaphum Primary Education Area Office 2, Thailand. The study comprised 68 third-grade students, with classrooms randomly assigned to experimental and control conditions. Data were analyzed using dependent-samples t-tests and independent-samples t-tests. The findings revealed that (1) students taught through the NATPR demonstrated significantly higher English-speaking ability on the post-test compared to the pre-test ($p < .05$), and (2) students in the experimental group significantly outperformed those in the control group on the post-test ($p < .05$). The effect size ($d = 2.23$) exceeded the large effect benchmark ($d = 0.8$). The study demonstrates that the NATPR method is statistically and practically more effective than traditional language learning methods for enhancing the English-speaking ability of third-grade students.</i>
Keywords: Natural approach Total physical response English-speaking English language teaching Primary school	

INTRODUCTION

English serves as a global lingua franca, playing a crucial role in international communication. While several languages function as international languages, including English, French, Spanish, Russian, Arabic, and Chinese, English has gained particular prominence in global discourse. The United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) recognizes these six languages as official languages for international communication. This designation

underscores the necessity for Thai learners to develop effective English communication skills (Lozinskiy, 2020) to engage successfully in coordination, negotiation, and collaborative efforts within the context of globalization and digital transformation. Consequently, English language learning in the 21st century extends beyond traditional literacy to encompass communication competencies essential for personal development and professional competitiveness in the modern labor market (Puchpan & Rajprasit, 2025). The establishment of a common language for international discourse facilitates cross-cultural communication and enables effective participation in global forums such as the United Nations. This linguistic imperative aligns with Thailand's national development strategy under the Thailand 4.0 initiative, which emphasizes the cultivation of fundamental competencies in language proficiency, critical thinking, and innovative technology application. Within this framework, enhancing the pedagogical capacity of educators and the learning outcomes of students in English language instruction represents a critical governmental priority requiring sustained institutional commitment.

Despite continuous development efforts in teacher training and curriculum enhancement, Thailand's English language proficiency remains worrying. According to Education First's English Proficiency Index (Education First, 2024) and results from the Ordinary National Educational Test, average English scores for primary school students have remained consistently low over the past five years, underscoring persistent challenges in English language teaching and learning quality at the basic education level (National Institute of Educational Testing Service, 2025). A primary factor contributing to inadequate English learning outcomes is the implementation of pedagogical approaches that are incongruent with natural language acquisition principles, particularly grammar-translation methodologies. This traditional approach prioritizes rote memorization of linguistic rules over authentic communicative language use in meaningful contexts (Krashen & Terrell, 1983). Furthermore, educators frequently neglect the development of listening and speaking competencies essential for effective communication. Many teachers demonstrate insufficient pedagogical content knowledge regarding the design and implementation of engaging, age-appropriate learning activities that facilitate language acquisition among primary learners.

Students frequently lack motivation and perceived relevance for English language learning beyond the classroom context (British Council, 2024). This pedagogical challenge is compounded by insufficient attention to developing listening and speaking competencies crucial for communicative proficiency. Many educators struggle to design engaging and developmentally appropriate learning activities, resulting in diminished student motivation and self-efficacy, which ultimately impedes effective language acquisition. Consequently, students experience anxiety when using English, particularly in the presence of native speakers, due to fear of making errors or deviating from perceived linguistic norms. The absence of intrinsic motivation and safe practice environments further exacerbates learning difficulties. Additionally, teacher feedback often lacks learner-centered approaches, and classroom activities fail to establish psychologically safe spaces where students can practice without fear of peer ridicule. When students are expected to achieve native-like proficiency immediately, peer mockery of linguistic errors becomes commonplace, further undermining speaking confidence (Srithep, 2023).

The natural approach and the TPR method have gained scholarly attention due to their alignment with first language acquisition processes, which prioritize comprehension through

listening before speech production, without relying on explicit grammatical instruction (Krashen & Terrell, 1983). These pedagogical frameworks support the development of learning activities that are authentic, low-anxiety, and engaging while de-emphasizing grammatical accuracy during initial stages of language development and promoting active learner participation. The TPR method specifically emphasizes kinesthetic learning through physical responses to instructor commands, providing learners with opportunities to experience language in meaningful contexts rather than through decontextualized translation exercises.

Research examining the natural approach to language instruction demonstrates that this methodology facilitates the development of positive learning environments by enhancing students' willingness to express themselves authentically without performance anxiety. The approach promotes natural language acquisition by reducing affective barriers and enabling meaningful communication, thereby allowing students to develop speaking proficiency within supportive pedagogical contexts (Dedić & Bećirović, 2021; Yayla & Belet Boyacı, 2023). However, existing research on the natural approach reveals several significant limitations that warrant consideration. First, brief intervention periods are inadequate for assessing sustained language learning outcomes and retention. Second, investigations have predominantly focused on young learner populations, thereby constraining generalizability across diverse developmental stages and educational contexts. Third, studies often emphasize the development of speaking ability while neglecting integrated language competencies, including reading, writing, and listening. Fourth, there remains insufficient integration with complementary pedagogical methodologies and limited comparative research systematically evaluating the natural approach against alternative instructional frameworks. These methodological constraints have been consistently documented in contemporary studies investigating the natural approach (Alexon et al., 2022; Daristin et al., 2024; Sinta & Uyun, 2023; Yayla & Belet Boyacı, 2023).

The implementation of the TPR method enhances student engagement and active participation in the learning process. The integration of gestures and kinesthetic activities stimulates learner interest while facilitating memorable educational experiences. This pedagogical approach demonstrates particular effectiveness with young learners who benefit from kinesthetic learning modalities, aligning with developmental characteristics and learning preferences typical of childhood (Putri, 2016; Sinta & Uyun, 2023). However, the total physical response method presents several implementation challenges that merit consideration. Educators must continuously develop innovative instructional materials and activities for each lesson, requiring substantial creative investment and preparation time. Additionally, effective classroom management becomes critical when facilitating active, physically engaged students throughout the learning process, which can present logistical demands. Without appropriate management strategies, this approach may potentially contribute to classroom discipline issues. Furthermore, certain content areas demonstrate limited compatibility with this methodology, particularly abstract concepts that resist expression through physical movement and gesture (Sinta & Uyun, 2023).

The integration of the natural approach and the TPR method, conceptualized in this study as the NATPR method, represents a structured pedagogical framework that systematically combines the theoretical principles of natural language acquisition with kinesthetic learning

strategies to enhance learners' speaking ability and facilitate the transition from comprehension to production. This combined methodology is particularly viable at the primary level, where students benefit from experiential learning through play-based interactions and social engagement, thereby enhancing motivation and establishing a foundation for sustained English language development.

Based on the identified research gaps, this study investigated the effectiveness of the NATPR method in developing English-speaking ability among third-grade primary school students. The NATPR method was compared against traditional language learning methods structured around five sequential components: Warm-up, Presentation, Practice, Production, and Wrap-up (2W3P), a framework commonly employed in English language instruction in Thailand. Specifically, this study aimed to (1) compare students' English-speaking ability before and after receiving instruction through the NATPR method, and (2) compare the English-speaking ability of students taught through the NATPR method with that of students taught through traditional language learning method.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Basic Education Core Curriculum B.E. 2551: Framework for foreign language learning management in Thailand

The Basic Education Core Curriculum B.E. 2551 (Office of the Basic Education Commission, 2010) establishes distinctive pedagogical features designed to ensure educational quality across all learning contexts. This comprehensive framework provides applicable guidelines for diverse educational modalities and learner populations within Thailand's basic education system. The curriculum serves as a foundational document requiring thorough comprehension by educators across all disciplines, who must understand its objectives, structural components, and content specifications to develop contextually appropriate instructional strategies for their specific learner populations. Within the domain of foreign language learning management, the curriculum emphasizes four critical pedagogical dimensions that educators must comprehend and integrate into their practice: (1) the interconnection between language and cultural understanding, (2) interdisciplinary connections between language learning and other academic subjects, (3) the relationship between language acquisition and community engagement within global contexts, and (4) the fundamental principle of language as a tool for meaningful communication. These components collectively form the theoretical foundation for effective foreign language instruction that extends beyond mechanical language learning to encompass cultural competence, cross-curricular integration, and authentic communicative practice.

The curriculum delineates specific standards, indicators, and grade-level expectations across all subject areas. In third grade, Subject Area 1: Language communication encompasses comprehension of oral and written discourse and effective communicative interaction, including competencies such as following simple instructions, oral reading proficiency, and related linguistic skills. Subject Area 2: Language and culture facilitate learners' understanding and

appropriate application of sociolinguistic norms, including verbal and nonverbal communication patterns. This component enables students to comprehend and appropriately utilize target culture practices, including speech patterns and gestural communication that align with social conventions and cultural expectations.

Pedagogical approach for foreign language learning: the foreign language learning management framework integrates diverse instructional activities, including conversational listening, textual reading and writing, authentic speaking contexts, and technological resources such as educational videos, interactive games, and language learning applications. This balanced approach ensures equitable development of all four language skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. The methodology emphasizes experiential learning and collaborative group activities, including brainstorming sessions, to enhance learners' communicative and collaborative competencies.

Furthermore, the curriculum prioritizes cross-curricular connections between language learning and other content areas, incorporating cultural studies of target language communities to ensure that learners develop linguistic proficiency alongside comprehensive cultural understanding. Diversified assessment strategies enable educators to adapt instructional methodologies based on ongoing evaluation findings, thereby optimizing individual student learning outcomes.

Speaking ability

Speaking represents a complex communicative process involving the oral transmission of meaning through linguistic and paralinguistic elements to facilitate mutual understanding and social interaction. This multifaceted skill encompasses the strategic use of verbal components, including vocabulary, syntax, and phonology, as well as nonverbal elements such as intonation, facial expressions, and gestures that enhance communicative effectiveness (Thongphakdee & Raksaphuak, 2023). Effective oral communication requires speakers to demonstrate linguistic competence through the use of appropriate lexical selection and phonetic accuracy, while simultaneously adapting their discourse to specific social contexts and communicative purposes. The speaker's ability to encode thoughts, emotions, and intentions into comprehensible oral output depends on their mastery of both linguistic systems and pragmatic conventions that govern language use in social interactions. Furthermore, successful speaking involves the integration of cognitive processes, including message formulation, linguistic encoding, and real-time monitoring of communicative effectiveness to ensure accurate transmission of intended meaning. As a fundamental component of human communication, speaking serves as a primary mechanism for establishing social connections, negotiating meaning, and participating effectively in diverse communicative contexts within society.

The essential components of speaking ability comprise five interconnected elements: (1) comprehension—speaking and listening operate as reciprocal processes requiring active engagement from both interlocutors in the co-construction of meaning. Effective oral communication necessitates that listeners comprehend the intended message while speakers monitor comprehension to ensure successful message transmission. (2) grammar—grammatical

competence provides the structural framework enabling meaningful sentence construction through systematic organization of linguistic elements, including words, phrases, and clauses. Second language learners frequently encounter challenges with grammatical accuracy due to syntactic interference from their first language, making real-time sentence production cognitively demanding. (3) vocabulary—lexical knowledge constitutes the foundation of communicative competence, encompassing both receptive ability to recognize word-concept relationships and productive capacity to select appropriate lexical items for specific communicative purposes. Lexical proficiency enables speakers to choose contextually appropriate vocabulary that accurately conveys intended meanings; (4) pronunciation—accurate phonetic production ensures spoken language comprehensibility through precise articulation of phonemes and phoneme clusters. Pronunciation competence depends on multiple factors, including native language transfer, individual learner characteristics, and exposure to target language phonological patterns. First language phonological systems may facilitate or impede second language pronunciation acquisition; (5) fluency—oral fluency encompasses the ability to produce continuous, coherent discourse with appropriate tempo and natural flow. This competence involves real-time language generation, effective idea linkage, and contextually appropriate expression without excessive hesitation or interruption (Ilham et al., 2024).

Contemporary research spanning from 2008 to 2023 demonstrates that factors influencing English-speaking proficiency are multifaceted and interconnected. These determinants can be categorized into four primary domains: (1) learner factors encompass positive attitudes toward English language learning and metacognitive awareness of its benefits; (2) instructor factors include pedagogical diversity in teaching methodologies, provision of interactive learning opportunities, and establishment of supportive classroom environments; (3) institutional factors comprise access to contemporary instructional materials and technological resources; and (4) family factors involve parental support and encouragement for English language acquisition. Additional contributory elements include authentic language use experiences, participation in immersive programs or international travel, and supplementary instruction, all of which synergistically influence the effective development of learners' oral English proficiency (Khenkhampha, 2023). Pedagogical approaches for enhancing English-speaking competencies encompass six core components: (1) phonetic accuracy development, (2) syntactic construction skills, (3) modelling and repetition techniques, (4) conversational practice, (5) prosodic and intonational training, and (6) integration of multimedia and technological resources.

The British Council (2021) has established an English-speaking proficiency assessment framework comprising four evaluation criteria: (1) fluency and coherence, (2) lexical resource, (3) grammatical range and accuracy, and (4) pronunciation. This assessment employs a nine-band scoring system with one-point increments across proficiency levels. Reynolds et al. (2022) developed a standardized English-speaking assessment instrument utilizing four primary evaluation domains: grammar, vocabulary, discourse development, and pronunciation. Their scoring framework incorporates six performance bands: 0, 1–2, 3–4, 5–6, 7–8, and 9–10 points. The Wisconsin Centre for Education Research at the University of Wisconsin-Madison created the WIDA MODEL Speaking Rubric, a comprehensive oral proficiency measurement tool. This assessment framework evaluates three linguistic dimensions: (1) linguistic complexity,

(2) vocabulary usage, and (3) language control. The rubric employs five developmental proficiency levels: (1) entering, (2) emerging, (3) developing, (4) expanding, and (5) bridging. Each assessment criterion is evaluated according to demonstrated competency levels arranged in hierarchical progression from novice to advanced proficiency (WIDA, 2025).

Drawing from the aforementioned English-speaking proficiency assessment frameworks, a contextualized evaluation rubric was developed to align with the study's research objectives. The assessment employs a four-point proficiency scale: 4 (very good), 3 (good), 2 (fair), and 1 (needs to improve), evaluated across six performance indicators: (1) pronunciation—assessed through accurate phonetic production of target vocabulary items; (2) vocabulary—evaluated based on appropriate word selection and lexical diversity (minimum ten distinct vocabulary items); (3) grammar—determined by syntactic correctness across all utterances; (4) fluency—measured by sustained speech production without hesitation or interruption within a one-minute timeframe; (5) communication—assessed through successful message transmission across six designated topics with logical organization that facilitates immediate listener comprehension; and (6) confidence/courage—evaluated through vocal clarity, appropriate volume, prosodic features including accent and rhythm, sustained eye contact, and supportive nonverbal communication including posture and gesture. (See appendix)

The natural approach

The natural approach represents a language teaching methodology developed by Krashen and Terrell (1983) that emphasizes naturalistic language acquisition processes similar to first language development. This pedagogical framework prioritizes comprehension through meaningful input before productive language use, minimizing explicit grammar instruction while creating low-anxiety learning environments. The approach is grounded in Krashen's theoretical framework, comprising five fundamental hypotheses: the acquisition-learning hypothesis, the input hypothesis, the affective filter hypothesis, the natural order hypothesis, and the monitor hypothesis.

The acquisition-learning hypothesis distinguishes between subconscious language acquisition through meaningful communication and conscious learning of linguistic rules and structures. The input hypothesis posits that learners acquire language through exposure to comprehensible input that slightly exceeds their current proficiency level. The affective filter hypothesis suggests that emotional variables, including anxiety, motivation, and attitudes, can facilitate or impede language acquisition processes. Research supports this premise, indicating that positive psychological states create optimal learning conditions where enjoyment and intrinsic motivation enhance learners' ability to apply acquired knowledge effectively (Imsa-ard, 2025). The natural order hypothesis proposes that grammatical structures are acquired in a predictable developmental sequence. Finally, the monitor hypothesis suggests that consciously learned rules serve as an editing mechanism for language production. The natural approach facilitates authentic communication by stimulating and contextualized vocabulary acquisition, without excessive pressure or constraints, allowing students to produce language when they are developmentally ready and confident. This methodology emphasizes the development of receptive skills during the initial stages, utilizing repetition, gestural support, and performance-based activities to enhance comprehension before encouraging productive language use.

The primary objective of the natural approach is to facilitate authentic second language acquisition through meaningful, contextualized activities such as discussing daily routines and temporal concepts (Krashen & Terrell, 1983), prioritizing semantic understanding over grammatical accuracy within real-world contexts. Effective learner support encompasses mentoring, structured practice opportunities, positive learning environments, and engaging instructional materials (Chitchayavanich & Kongcharoen, 2023). The instructional sequence should introduce new vocabulary through meaningful contexts without immediate production pressure, allowing for contextualized repetition and practice. Educators should minimize immediate error correction to reduce learner anxiety and maintain focus on communicative enjoyment rather than linguistic accuracy (Crawford, 2018).

Implementation of the natural approach has inspired diverse pedagogical frameworks among educators, with many adopting core principles established by Krashen and Terrell (1983): (1) comprehension-based learning—emphasizing listening and understanding without reliance on translation or native language explanations; (2) low-pressure language use—encouraging communication within familiar, daily-life contexts; (3) authentic learning environments—creating instructional settings connected to learners’ lived experiences; (4) automatic skill development—providing opportunities for unconscious language improvement through meaningful communication and authentic language use across various everyday situations; and (5) confidence building—fostering positive learning experiences that enhance learner motivation and engagement.

Crawford (2018) subsequently developed a systematic four-stage procedure for organizing natural language learning activities: (1) vocabulary and question review, (2) introduction of new lexical items, (3) implementation of differentiated questioning and command strategies tailored to individual student proficiency levels, and (4) guided student production of interrogative structures. This instructional sequence builds upon previously acquired knowledge to scaffold new language development.

The natural approach represents a comprehensive language teaching methodology that emphasizes acquisition through naturalistic processes within low-anxiety environments, prioritizing listening comprehension and meaningful input from authentic contexts to facilitate long-term communicative competence. This research adopted Crawford’s (2018) natural approach framework to inform the design of language learning management strategies.

Total physical response method

The TPR method represents a foreign language teaching methodology developed by psychology professor James Asher (2000), who theorized that second language acquisition should mirror first language development processes, beginning with listening comprehension and physical responses before progressing to confident oral production. Asher’s theoretical framework drew influence from behaviorist psychological principles. Total physical response is characterized as an instructional approach wherein learners respond physically to target language commands, typically involving action verbs that can be demonstrated through bodily movement. Initial stages require no verbal production from learners, making this methodology particularly

suitable for beginning learners or early childhood students with limited target language communicative competence. This pedagogical approach aligns with natural first language acquisition patterns observed in infants, who develop comprehension through repeated auditory exposure before attempting verbal expression. Although total physical response emphasizes kinesthetic responses during the initial learning phases, its ultimate objective is the development of long-term oral proficiency, with instructional progression designed to transition from physical response activities to interactive dialogue.

Consequently, TPR integrates speech and movement to reduce foreign language learning anxiety. The methodology emphasizes imperative-based instruction that both teachers and students follow through repeated practice, with oral production delayed until learners demonstrate readiness (Thongpakdee & Raksaphuak, 2023).

The TPR method comprises five core components (Asher, 2000): the use of physical actions or gestures for conveying meaning, the employment of clear and comprehensible commands, the creation of authentic scenarios for contextual connection, the incorporation of repetition for familiarity and mastery, and the provision of systematic instruction that enables progressive learner development. Total physical response concepts have been adapted into various specialized approaches (Udomphontheesakun et al., 2019), including TPR-B (body), which emphasizes body movements; TPR-O (object), which uses real objects in the classroom; TPR-P (picture), which incorporates pictures to accompany commands; TPR-S (storytelling), which focuses on storytelling with accompanying gestures; TPR-D (drawing), which utilizes drawings to convey vocabulary; and TPR-L (location), which emphasizes spatial movement within classroom environments.

Asher (2000) established key components for designing TPR instructional sequences: (1) action—kinesthetic engagement facilitates communication and learning by enhancing learner comprehension and retention of vocabulary and syntactic structures; (2) imperative structures—command forms direct learners to perform specific physical responses; (3) contextualized scenarios—meaningful situations enable learners to respond appropriately through physical actions; (4) repetitive practice—systematic drilling reinforces vocabulary and sentence structures through both direct commands and varied situational contexts; and (5) sequential instruction—clear, progressive directions ensure accurate learner comprehension and execution. Further delineated a five-stage instructional procedure for TPR implementation: (1) demonstration—instructors initiate activities through questioning and modeling; (2) independent execution—instructors issue commands while students perform actions autonomously; (3) assessment phase—instructors provide varied commands requiring students to process auditory input and respond reflectively; (4) novel commands—instructors introduce unfamiliar directives that may initially confuse students, often generating questions and engagement; and (5) role reversal—selected students assume command-giving responsibilities while peers and instructors respond, followed by error correction and additional explanatory examples to enhance comprehension.

Richards and Rodgers (2014) identified pedagogical practices aligned with Asher's methodology, emphasizing demonstration through action-command pairing; limiting new vocabulary introduction to three lexical items with corresponding actions per lesson; prioritizing

comprehension over rote memorization through action-based meaning construction rather than translation; implementing progressive sequencing from familiar to unfamiliar concepts and simple to complex vocabulary; and systematically reviewing previously acquired vocabulary before introducing new lexical item.

Furthermore, Udomphontheesakun et al. (2019) expanded the framework by developing six specialized TPR approaches: TPR-B, where instructors employ body-related vocabulary, phrases, or sentences to issue commands (such as clap your hands), with students executing corresponding physical actions through systematic repetition until achieving independent performance competency; TPR-O, where instructors utilize classroom realia for speaking practice through object-focused commands (such as point to the book), beginning with object identification and extending to grammatical instruction and numerical concepts; TPR-P, where instructors employ lesson-relevant visual materials to direct student actions such as pointing, grasping, or touching pictorial elements while considering students' developmental level, chronological age, and lesson complexity; TPR-S, where instructors narrate developmentally appropriate, linguistically accessible stories of suitable duration while demonstrating accompanying actions, followed by volunteer student performances based on narrative content; TPR-D, where instructors create visual representations to explain vocabulary items that cannot be physically manipulated or directly experienced by students (such as abstract concepts like sky or sun), and TPR-L, where instructors strategically place written words or pictorial representations throughout the classroom environment and issue movement commands directing students to specific locations (such as walk to the market).

The TPR method represents a language teaching methodology that integrates kinesthetic elements, including gestures, body movements, and symbolic representations, to facilitate experiential language acquisition. This pedagogical approach emphasizes auditory comprehension through command-response sequences wherein students listen to instructor directives and demonstrate understanding through corresponding physical actions. The methodology aims to establish an engaging and motivating learning environment by incorporating diverse instructional resources such as visual materials, multimedia content, and role-playing activities that promote experiential learning and long-term retention. Within this framework, instructors provide explicit commands while learners respond through kinesthetic demonstration, with systematic repetition employed to enhance familiarity and deepen comprehension.

Integration of natural approach and total physical response methodologies

This research adopts Asher's (2000) kinesthetic instructional framework as further developed by Udomphontheesakun et al. (2019), incorporating four sequential components: (1) TPR-B, kinesthetic responses utilizing bodily movements; (2) TPR-O, action-based responses employing classroom objects; (3) TPR-P, physical responses guided by visual materials; and (4) TPR-S, embodied responses integrated with narrative elements. By synthesizing the theoretical principles of the natural approach (Crawford, 2018) with TPR instructional strategies. This study proposes an integrated pedagogical framework, namely the NATPR method, which combines the stages of the natural approach with structured TPR. This method establishes a systematic instructional sequence that supports both comprehension and language production through embodied learning.

Learning Management Based on Natural Approach (Crawford, 2018)	Total Physical Response Method (Asher, 2000; Udomphontheepsakun et al., 2019)	NATPR
Step 1: Review Vocabulary and Questions Begin by revisiting previously learned vocabulary and question structures.	- TPR-B (body) Responding with physical actions using the body. - TPR-O (object) Responding with actions using objects. - TPR-P (picture) Responding with actions using pictures. - TPR-S (storytelling) Responding with physical actions through storytelling.	Step 1: Preparation with TPR-B This stage involves preparing learners, primarily using TPR-B (body language), to establish a foundational understanding through physical actions.
Step 2: Introduce New Vocabulary, Questions, and Commands Introduce new terms, questions, and commands, providing visual demonstrations (such as pictures and role playing).		Step 2: Vocabulary Acquisition with TPR-O and TPR-P Learners acquire new vocabulary by integrating TPR-O (object) and using real objects, as well as TPR-P (picture) and incorporating visual aids to reinforce word meaning.
Step 3: Categorize Questions and Commands Group questions and commands are tailored to the individual students' proficiency levels.		Step 3: Learning Question and Answer Structures in Various Situations with TPR-B and TPR-S This stage focuses on mastering question and answer structures within diverse scenarios, leveraging TPR-B (body) for active participation and TPR-S (storytelling) to embed structures within narrative contexts.
Step 4: Encourage Student-Generated Questions and Commands Prompt students to construct their questions and commands, drawing upon their prior knowledge and learning.		Step 4: Practicing Listening and Speaking with TPR-B, TPR-O, TPR-P, TPR-S, and Providing Feedback The final stage involves extensive practice in listening and speaking abilities. This is facilitated through a comprehensive integration of TPR-B (body), TPR-O (object), TPR-P (picture), and TPR-S (storytelling), with continuous feedback provided to learners.

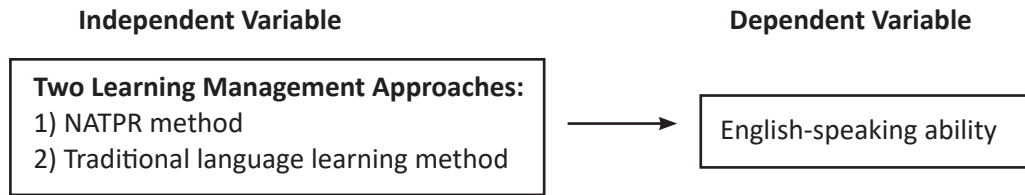
The research questions

1. Does learning management using the NATPR method enhance students' English-speaking ability?
2. Do students who receive instruction through the NATPR method demonstrate higher English-speaking ability than students who receive instruction through traditional language learning method?

Research objectives

1. To compare the English-speaking ability of third-grade students before and after receiving instruction through the NATPR method.
2. To compare the English-speaking ability of third-grade students who received instruction through the NATPR method with that of students who received instruction through traditional language learning method.

Research conceptual framework



RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research examines the enhancement of English-speaking abilities among primary school students through a combined approach integrating the NATPR method. The study population and sample were carefully selected to align with the specific learning management methodology employed. The NATPR method is designed to support language development in students from kindergarten through primary school levels (Nuraeni, 2019).

Research design

This study employed a quasi-experimental research design utilizing an unequal two-group pretest-posttest nonequivalent-group design (Best & Kahn, 2003). The experimental framework is illustrated as follows:

Table 1
Pretest-posttest nonequivalent-group design

Group	Pre-test	Intervention	Post-test
Experimental Group (E)	O ₁	X	O ₂
Control Group (C)	O ₁	-	O ₂

Symbol Definitions:

- E = Experimental group
- C = Control group
- X = Learning management intervention utilizing the NATPR method
- = Learning management intervention utilizing traditional language learning method
- O₁ = Pre-intervention measurement
- O₂ = Post-intervention measurement.

Population: The target population comprised third-grade students enrolled in educational institutions within Phu Khieo District, administered under the Chaiphaphum Primary Education Area Office 2 in Thailand, during the second semester of academic year 2024. The district encompasses 80 educational institutions.

Sample: The sample consisted of 68 third-grade students from two intact classrooms within a single school located in Phu Khieo District, under the Chaiphaphum Primary Education Area Office 2 in Thailand, during the second semester of academic year 2024. A three-stage

sampling procedure was implemented: In the first stage, one school was randomly selected from the 80 district schools using simple random sampling methodology. In the second stage, cluster sampling was employed to select two of four available third-grade classrooms within the selected institution. In the third stage, the selected classrooms were randomly assigned to experimental ($n = 34$) and control ($n = 34$) conditions. Prior to participation, homeroom teachers facilitated parental communication by distributing research project descriptions, information statements, and consent forms, ensuring both parental consent and student assent were obtained. Institutional independence was maintained to ensure objective data collection procedures.

Research instruments and development procedures

1. Learning Management Plans Based on the TPR Method

The primary research instrument comprised six learning management plans implementing the NATPR method. Each plan was designed for two-hour instructional sessions, totaling 12 hours of instruction delivered over three weeks. The development process followed six systematic phases: (1) conducting comprehensive analysis of curriculum standards, relevant documentation, and existing research pertaining to learning management frameworks based on natural language acquisition principles; (2) designing learning activities that integrated the natural approach with TPR methodologies; (3) identifying and selecting developmentally appropriate content for incorporation within the learning management plans; (4) conducting thorough review of instructional plans for accuracy, pedagogical appropriateness, and linguistic clarity while implementing necessary refinements; (5) submitting revised learning plans to three subject matter experts for content validity assessment, wherein Item-Objective Congruence Index (IOC) analysis yielded consistency values ranging from 0.67 to 1.00, demonstrating acceptable construct validity; and (6) refining learning management plans based on expert recommendations and conducting pilot testing with 40 non-sample third-grade students to identify potential limitations in activity organization and temporal allocation.

2. Traditional Language Learning Method (2W3P) Learning Management Plans

Six learning management plans were developed utilizing the traditional language learning method (2W3P), with each plan designed for two-hour instructional sessions, totaling 12 hours of instruction delivered over three weeks. The development process followed six systematic phases: (1) conducting comprehensive analysis of curriculum standards, relevant documentation, and research pertaining to learning management frameworks based on traditional language learning pedagogical principles; (2) designing learning activities implementing the traditional language learning methodology; (3) determining and selecting developmentally appropriate content for incorporation within the learning management plans; (4) conducting thorough review of instructional plans for accuracy, pedagogical appropriateness, and linguistic clarity while implementing necessary refinements; (5) submitting revised learning plans to three subject matter experts for content validity assessment, wherein Item-Objective Congruence Index (IOC) analysis yielded consistency values ranging from 0.67 to 1.00 for the traditional learning methodology (2W3P); and (6)

refining learning management plans based on expert recommendations for implementation during the experimental phase.

3. English-speaking Ability Assessment for Third-Grade Students

A comprehensive assessment instrument comprising six speaking ability evaluation domains was developed for third-grade students. The assessment employed pre- and post-instruction speaking tasks within the thematic context of “All About Me” to measure English-speaking proficiency. The development process followed six systematic procedures: (1) Literature Review and Curriculum Analysis—conducted comprehensive research and analysis of relevant documentation and reports regarding English language assessment construction for the “All About Me” thematic unit, including examination of Basic Education Core Curriculum standards, indicators, and learning content for English as a foreign language at the third-grade level; (2) Objective Scoring System Development—created an objective scoring framework for speaking assessment utilizing the “All About Me” thematic format, employing analytic rubric methodology to evaluate oral English-speaking performance; (3) Accuracy and Appropriateness Validation—established the accuracy and appropriateness of diagnostic criteria for English-speaking ability through evaluation by three subject matter experts who assessed content validity and examined alignment between assessment items and learning objectives; (4) Content Validity Index Calculation—reviewed expert assessments and calculated content validity through Item-Objective Congruence Index (IOC) analysis, with results falling within the acceptable range of 0.67–1.0; (5) Assessment Revision—refined the English-speaking ability assessment based on expert recommendations and suggestions; and (6) Reliability Testing—conducted reliability analysis with 34 non-sample students, yielding an overall reliability coefficient (Cronbach’s Alpha) of 0.93. The validated assessment instrument was subsequently administered to the research sample.

Data collection methodology

Instruction and data collection were implemented through six systematic phases: (1) Cluster Sampling—two classrooms were selected from four available classrooms using cluster random sampling, with one classroom randomly assigned to the experimental condition and the other to the control condition; (2) Pre-test Administration—a pre-test was administered to both experimental and control groups using the English-speaking ability assessment instrument, requiring 60 minutes for completion; (3) Instructional Implementation—instruction was delivered according to designated lesson plans, with the experimental group receiving instruction through the NATPR method, while the control group received instruction using traditional language learning methods; (4) Observation and Documentation—Instructional procedures were systematically observed, and student learning behaviors were documented, with findings recorded on post-lesson documentation forms after each session to inform instructional refinements for subsequent lessons; (5) Post-test Administration—following completion of all instructional activities, a post-test was administered to both experimental and control groups using the identical English-speaking ability assessment instrument employed during pre-testing; and (6) Data Collection and Analysis—English-speaking ability assessment data were collected and analyzed using descriptive statistical measures including

mean (M) and standard deviation (SD), supplemented by inferential statistical procedures employing *t*-test methodologies for hypothesis testing.

Data analysis and statistical

The data analyzed included pre-test and post-test results from the English-speaking ability assessment. Statistical analysis was conducted using descriptive statistics, including mean (M) and standard deviation (SD), and inferential statistics for hypothesis testing. The speaking competence levels of third-grade students were compared through pre-test and post-test analysis using a dependent *t*-test. An independent *t*-test was conducted to compare English-speaking ability between third-grade students who received instruction through the NATPR method and those who were taught using traditional language learning methods.

RESULTS

The study, which examines the application of the NATPR method to enhance the English-speaking abilities of third-grade students, is presented through data analysis and findings reported in Tables 2, 3, and 4.

The English-speaking ability of students before and after receiving instruction through the NATPR method was analyzed and compared using a dependent *t*-test, as shown in Table 2.

Table 2
Comparative analysis of mean differences in English-speaking ability pre- and post-implementation among third-grade students taught using the NATPR method (out of 24 points).

NATPR Method	n	M	SD	D	t	p
Before learning	34	11.76	3.22	8.27	12.49*	.000
After learning	34	20.03	3.78			

* $p < .05$

Analysis of the data presented in Table 2 revealed statistically significant differences in English-speaking ability among third-grade students who received instruction through the NATPR method. A dependent *t*-test yielded significant results ($t = 12.49$, $p < .05$), indicating substantial improvement in students' English-speaking ability. Post-implementation scores ($M = 20.03$, $SD = 3.78$) were significantly higher than pre-implementation scores ($M = 11.76$, $SD = 3.22$), with statistical significance at the .05 level.

An independent *t*-test was conducted to analyze and compare the English-speaking ability between two groups of third-grade students at baseline: those who would be taught using the NATPR method and those who would be taught using traditional language learning method. The results are presented in Table 3.

Table 3

Comparative analysis of baseline English-speaking ability between third-grade students assigned to the NATPR method and students assigned to traditional language learning method (out of 24 points).

Before Learning Management	n	M	SD	t	p
NATPR method	34	11.77	3.22	0.83	.407
Traditional language learning method	34	11.12	3.18		

Analysis of the data presented in Table 3 revealed no statistically significant differences in baseline English-speaking ability between the two groups of third-grade students ($t = 0.83$, $p = .407$). Students assigned to receive instruction through the NATPR method demonstrated pre-instruction English-speaking ability ($M = 11.77$, $SD = 3.22$), which was not significantly different from that of students assigned to receive instruction through traditional language learning method ($M = 11.12$, $SD = 3.18$). This finding confirms the appropriateness of the baseline equivalence between groups prior to intervention implementation.

An independent t -test was conducted to analyze and compare the English-speaking ability between two groups of third-grade students: those taught using the NATPR method and those taught using traditional language learning method. The results are presented in Table 4.

Table 4

Comparative analysis of English-speaking ability post-implementation between third-grade students taught using the NATPR method and students taught using traditional language learning methods (out of 24 points).

After Learning Management	n	M	SD	t	p	Effect Size
NATPR method	34	20.03	3.78	8.18*	.000	2.23
Traditional language learning method	34	13.15	3.13			

* $p < .05$

Analysis of the data presented in Table 4 revealed statistically significant differences between groups. An independent t -test yielded significant results ($t = 8.18$, $p < .05$) when comparing the mean English-speaking ability scores of third-grade students post-implementation between those taught using the NATPR method and those taught using traditional language learning method. Students who received instruction through the NATPR method demonstrated significantly higher English-speaking ability ($M = 20.03$, $SD = 3.78$) compared to students taught using traditional language learning method ($M = 13.15$, $SD = 3.13$), with statistical significance at the .05 level. The effect size analysis revealed a large practical significance (Cohen's $d = 2.23$), substantially exceeding the benchmark for large effects ($d = 0.8$). These findings demonstrate that the NATPR method is both statistically and practically more effective than traditional language learning method for enhancing English-speaking ability among third-grade students.

DISCUSSION

The effectiveness observed in this study can be attributed to the integrated mechanisms of the NATPR method. The implementation of this method resulted in statistically significant improvements in third-grade students' English-speaking ability ($p < .05$). These findings are consistent with natural language acquisition theory, which posits that second language learning mirrors the processes of first language development. By combining the natural approach's emphasis on comprehensible input and a low affective filter with the kinesthetic reinforcement of TPR, the NATPR method facilitates deeper cognitive processing and enhances learners' ability to transition from comprehension to production. Moreover, the method promotes interactive engagement in authentic contexts while fostering supportive, low-anxiety, and enjoyable learning environments that strengthen communicative confidence and contribute to successful language acquisition outcomes (Imsa-ard, 2025; Liu, 2024).

Instructional delivery utilized target language immersion to implement learning activities, with lesson plans emphasizing English-medium instruction and classroom explanations. The activities were designed within naturalistic settings analogous to first language acquisition environments. They progressed systematically from vocabulary introduction through visual and multimedia resources, incorporating gestural and kinesthetic support for comprehension, before advancing to sentence construction. Teachers provided visual word cues for student observation and repetition, enabling speaking practice and articulatory development necessary for word pronunciation, sentence formation, conversational role-play, and error tolerance. Initial student responses demonstrated anxiety and comprehension difficulties with instructional directives; however, sustained exposure resulted in meaningful understanding and engagement. The implementation of comfortable learning environments, rhythmic activities, and interactive games effectively supported the development of speaking ability.

Pre-intervention assessment revealed severely limited English-speaking proficiency, with most students demonstrating an inability to comprehend instructions or respond to questions. A minimal number of students demonstrated a basic understanding of English with limited response capabilities. Post-intervention assessment indicated substantial improvement, with students demonstrating enhanced confidence, comprehension, autonomous word and sentence production, and notably improved response quality. These findings suggest that the NATPR method provides highly motivating, low-anxiety contexts for oral communication development. Wang and Zhang (2021) confirm that total physical response instruction enhances English as a Foreign Language vocabulary acquisition among primary students, improving academic achievement and motivation.

The TPR facilitates language learning through kinesthetic and tactile activities that reduce foreign language learning anxiety, thereby enhancing speaking development (Arsanti et al., 2023; Morales et al., 2024; Thongpakdee & Raksaphuak, 2023). These outcomes support Krashen's theoretical emphasis on meaningful exposure to comprehensible input. Kinesthetic reinforcement through bodily movement connects physical motion with linguistic elements, facilitating second language acquisition processes.

The English-speaking ability of third-grade students taught using the NATPR method demonstrated significantly superior performance compared to students receiving the traditional language learning method, with statistically significant differences at the $p < .05$ level. Students in the NATPR group benefited from relaxed, engaging learning contexts utilizing English as the sole medium of instruction. Instructional activities incorporated vocabulary development through visual materials, manipulatives, multimedia resources, interactive games, and gestural support, facilitating student progression from single-word utterances to phrase and sentence construction.

The integration of the TPR methodology created interactive and dynamic learning environments that enhanced classroom engagement, resulting in measurable improvements in experimental group students' English language proficiency regarding vocabulary acquisition and sentence construction. Herwanis and Sarinauli (2022) demonstrate that total physical response methodology enhances vocabulary and syntactic understanding through kinesthetic engagement. These findings support Asher's (2000) theoretical proposition that gestural communication facilitates word-meaning connections and promotes language comprehension through auditory and visual observation. Students receiving total physical response instruction demonstrated enhanced success in developing cognitive frameworks for lexical information storage (Al-Obaydi & Pikhart, 2024). Krashen and Terrell (1983) emphasize the necessity of providing comprehensible input within low-anxiety contexts, where gestural support reduces performance anxiety, develops communicative confidence, and fosters positive learning outcomes. Yayla and Belet Boyacı (2023) confirm that the implementation of the natural approach has a significant impact on the speaking proficiency and English learning attitudes of primary school students.

Conversely, students in the traditional language learning method class engaged in repetitive drill-and-exercise activities, during which explanations were provided to give an overview of the content. Students learned vocabulary according to designated topics, followed by individual word pronunciation practice and sentence-level speaking exercises. Activities emphasized phonetic accuracy, with the instructor explaining each procedural step while students practiced repeating researcher-prepared sentences. Students engaged in paired conversation practice, alternating questioner and respondent roles across various scenarios, before presenting situational dialogues they had rehearsed. Sessions concluded with cooperative summarization of learning outcomes. Observations revealed that learners acquired vocabulary and sentence structures within specific contexts; however, students demonstrated limited confidence in natural pronunciation and conversational flow. Some students experienced difficulties with vocabulary and sentence retention. The academic-focused learning atmosphere lacked engaging elements, resulting in diminished student interest and reduced enthusiasm for participation, ultimately affecting their ability to produce natural English speech. These students lacked opportunities for interactive activities and authentic communicative engagement.

Pre-intervention assessments revealed no statistically significant differences between groups regarding speaking ability. However, post-intervention assessments demonstrated statistically significant improvement at the $p < .05$ level for the NATPR group. Enhanced student

confidence in speaking, comprehension, and fluency within relaxed, supportive environments resulted from reduced classroom anxiety and effective pedagogical management. Classroom observations revealed positive student relationships and comfortable learning atmospheres that promoted language acquisition. These results support Krashen's hypothesis that comprehension of auditory input constitutes a fundamental component of second language acquisition. Additionally, total physical response methodology creates enhanced learning opportunities by reducing stress and building confidence, encouraging student oral participation that directly contributes to speaking ability development and positive English learning attitudes (Dedić & Bećirović, 2021; Yayla & Belet Boyacı, 2023).

The study demonstrates that the NATPR method represents an effective pedagogical framework for enhancing primary-level students' speaking abilities. This methodology provides a valuable model for language educators seeking to develop effective, interactive, and non-threatening learning environments conducive to language acquisition.

CONCLUSION

The findings from this study demonstrate the effectiveness of the NATPR method in developing English-speaking ability among third-grade students. This instructional methodology parallels the first language acquisition process, wherein comprehension precedes production. Through the establishment of engaging, low-anxiety, learner-centered environments, students demonstrated inductive progression toward English communicative fluency and confidence. The research revealed that students receiving instruction through the NATPR method significantly outperformed those taught using the traditional language learning method.

The NATPR method facilitated active participation, reduced learner anxiety, and provided engaging activities, including gestural communication, interactive games, and authentic scenarios that enhanced language comprehension and retention. In contrast, traditional language learning method employs rote memorization of vocabulary and sentence structures, which lack motivation and engagement in practicing English-speaking in the classroom. While students demonstrated receptive knowledge of lexical items and syntactic patterns, they were unable to generate spontaneous oral communication.

The NATPR method emphasizes instructional strategies that support the provision of comprehensible input, student engagement, and the nurturing of learning environments to optimize English language development. Implementation of this methodology benefits not only speaking proficiency but also students' attitudes toward English language learning (Dedić & Bećirović, 2021). This approach demonstrates effectiveness in English as a Foreign Language instruction within primary educational contexts, offering educators practical strategies for integrating activities that promote positive, engaging, and successful learning experiences for young language learners.

Limitations

This study acknowledges several methodological constraints that may have affected the generalizability and scope of findings. The research utilized a single educational institution and employed a quasi-experimental design with two sample groups, which may limit the applicability of results to the broader population of third-grade students within Thailand's diverse educational contexts. The three-week intervention duration (12 instructional hours) represents a limited timeframe for enabling learners to develop sustainable English speaking competencies. The thematic focus on "All About Me" may not adequately encompass communication topics relevant to learners' broader contextual needs and real-world applications. Additionally, the quasi-experimental methodology utilizing two intact classrooms, while maintaining authentic school-based learning conditions, precluded complete control of external variables such as home environment factors and parental support systems. This classroom-level sampling approach, though practical for educational research settings, may introduce confounding variables that could influence the validity of findings.

Recommendations for future research

Future research should investigate English language instruction through the NATPR method to develop comprehensive English communication abilities beyond speaking proficiency. Studies should employ representative sampling strategies to enhance external validity and enable generalization of findings to diverse populations across varied educational contexts. Longitudinal investigations are essential to monitor the sustained development of learners' English-speaking abilities and assess the durability of instructional interventions using the NATPR method for improving learners' overall communicative abilities. Additionally, comparative effectiveness studies should examine the NATPR method against alternative pedagogical methodologies and the traditional language learning method across different age groups, proficiency levels, and cultural contexts. Multi-site research encompassing diverse socioeconomic backgrounds and geographical regions would provide educators with evidence-based frameworks for informed pedagogical decision-making and scalable implementation strategies within varied educational systems.

Ethics approval

This study was conducted in accordance with faculty regulations and was approved by the Institutional Review Board. The Ethics Committee of Rajamangala University of Technology Thanyaburi granted approval for this study on January 29, 2025 (RMUTT_REC No. Exp 01/68).

Declaration of generative AI and AI-assisted technologies

During the preparation of this work, the authors used Claude AI to correct grammatical errors and improve readability. After using this tool, the authors reviewed and edited the content as needed and took full responsibility for the content of the publication.

Declaration of competing interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this manuscript.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We are thankful to the faculty members of the Education Department at RMUTT for providing years of instruction and support whenever needed. We would also like to express our gratitude to Ms. Capucine Philson, who generously provided native-English-speaker proofreading services to enhance the clarity and academic quality of this manuscript.

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Appendix

English-speaking ability assessment

Assessment procedure

1. Students are required to deliver a short speech on a given topic corresponding to one of the six lesson plans.
2. The researcher evaluates each student's speaking ability based on the predetermined criteria.
3. The researcher records a ✓ in the box that reflects the student's demonstrated proficiency level.

Speaking topics

1. Naming and describing different parts of the body
2. Introducing family members
3. Discussing favorite foods
4. Talking about a favorite sport
5. Describing a close friend
6. Expressing feelings and emotions

Rubric score

- 4 – very good
3 – good
2 – fair
1 – needs to improve

English speaking ability	Rubric score			
	4	3	2	1
Pronunciation	Pronounces every word correctly without any mispronunciation.	Pronounces 80–90% of words correctly; 1–2 words are mispronounced.	Pronounces 60–79% of words correctly; 3–4 words are mispronounced.	Pronounces less than 60% of words correctly; more than 4 mispronunciations.
Vocabulary	Uses all words appropriately (100%) and employs a wide range of vocabulary (more than 10 words).	Uses 80–90% of vocabulary correctly with good variety (8–10 words).	Uses 60–79% of vocabulary correctly with moderate variety (5–7 words).	Uses less than 60% of vocabulary correctly with limited variety (fewer than 5 words).
Grammar	Demonstrates correct sentence structure in every sentence with no errors.	Uses correct sentence structures 80–90% of the time, with 1–2 errors.	Uses correct sentence structures 60–79% of the time, with 3–4 errors.	Uses correct sentence structures less than 60% of the time, with more than 4 errors.
Fluency	Speaks continuously without interruption for the full one-minute duration.	Speaks mostly continuously, with 1–2 brief interruptions within one minute.	Experiences 3–4 interruptions, each lasting more than one second.	Frequently stutters with more than 4 interruptions lasting longer than one second.

English speaking ability	Rubric score			
	4	3	2	1
Communication	Addresses all six topics clearly and logically; ideas are well organized and easily understood by the audience.	Addresses 4–5 topics clearly with fairly good organization; the audience can mostly understand the ideas.	Addresses 2–3 topics sufficiently; ideas are somewhat organized; requires effort by the listener to understand.	Communication is unclear and disorganized; the listener struggles to follow the speaker's ideas.
Confidence & Assertiveness	Speaks clearly in a moderate volume with appropriate accent and rhythm. Maintains eye contact and uses supportive gestures throughout.	Speaks clearly with mostly good accent and rhythm. Maintains eye contact most of the time and uses some gestures.	Speech volume is inconsistent and sometimes unclear. Accent and rhythm may be unclear. Occasional eye contact.	Speaks in a very low and shaky voice, lacking accent and rhythm. Does not make eye contact or use gestures.

Total scoring guidelines

19–24 points: Very Good

13–18 points: Good

7–12 points: Fair

1–6 points: Needs Improvement