

## **Pattern Practice: An effective English teaching Method**

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### **Introduction**

A brief look at past trends will help the reader to understand the present and possible future trends. Over a hundred year in Thailand Grammar- Translation Methods have been used in teaching Thai students English. The question is why Thai students, when compared to students in other countries like Malaysian, Indian, and so on are still weaker at English. The ways that they have been taught are to know the parts of speech; memorized conjugation, declension, and grammar rules; and translated selections, using a bilingual dictionary or glossary. (Robert Lado. 1997). The failure is already understood today. Thai students, even though they are studying in university level, still have understanding problems. They do not come up with the point that a foreigner is talking about and cannot respond to what a foreigner asks. . And also they cannot use English for their needs, which is the real objective of learning a language. Language is intimately tied to man's feelings and activities and it is the chief means by which the human personality expresses itself and fulfills its basic need for social interaction with other people. (Weeler 1994). So, if someone who has spent some years learning a language, cannot use it, such a language is meaningless. And the learner is like a deaf man. The deaf never speak. What are real causes of that? In my opinion, there are several factors, that is, (1) English is hardly used in Thai society. (2) Thai students rarely have the opportunity to use English outside the class. (3) In up - countries, hardly have qualified teachers. (4) Students learn English as knowledge for their test, not as language skills. (5) The method that they have been using is not appropriate. Some of mentioned factors are above the control but the teaching approach is easier to be adapted. So, Thai English teachers should change the traditional method that has already been proved failure. One of the appropriate methods in my opinion would be the pattern practice. This method usually de-emphasizes or eliminates translation and memorization of conjugations, declension, and rules, and in some cases it introduces phonetics and phonetic transcription. By assuming that learning a language is the same as learning the mother tongue, that is, that exposing the students directly to the foreign language makes it easily remembered by them upon his mind.( Rober Lado t: 1997) That means to learn a target language one should do as a child learns his or her mother tongue from mother by listening and practicing words, phrases, even a short sentence repeatedly until he or she can use it naturally. The pattern practice is suitable for Thai English comers or Thai students who have learnt English for some years which are still unimproved.

## **What is pattern practice?**

In the class you often see your students not be able to understand your lectures and questions. You often see they say something different from what you ask, for instance, you ask them “how old are you.” Some students surprises you by saying “I’m fine, thank you”. Or “ Where are you from?” “I am come from Bangkok.” He or she often does mistakes and you often correct him or her. He or she notes and goes on doing mistakes. The way you can help them is to have them drill the words or patterns until they are confident in producing them. So, pattern practice is a rapid oral drill on the problem words or patterns with attention on something other than the problem itself. (Williams and Burden: 1997)

In rapid oral drill words or sentences are produced after each cue at normal conversational speed. A class may produce 10 to 20 different words or sentences per minute following as many cues supplied by the teacher. To encourage students to use the problem words or patterns while thinking of something else the class is not told what the pattern practice is about. It is shown how to proceed with the practice through several examples. And the cues that control the changes in each succeeding response are chiefly not at the problem point of the words or patterns.(Robert Lado: 1979).

## **Four steps of pattern practice**

- (1) Cues by the teacher, responses by the teacher
- (2) Cues by the teacher, responses by the class
- (3) Interactive activities

## **What to do in the class**

- (1) Students must be divided into a group of 4-5
- (2) An audio – visual aids, and a white board are set up in the class.
- (3) The cue words or sentences are ahead – prepared.
- (4) The substitute words or phrases are ahead-prepared
- (5) Some pictures are arranged
- (6) For the third and fourth steps, the teacher acts as facilitator, only guiding students some words or phrases they are not sure in producing.
- (7) Students rotate drilling the patterns among their group or with other group.

### The first step

**This is to teach Thai new English comers a verb to do.**

- (1) Cues by teacher and responses by teacher  
 Do you understand?  
 Hear.  
 Do you hear?  
 See  
 Do you see?  
 Like  
 Do you like?

### The second step:

- (1) Cues by the teacher, responses by the students  
 Teacher: Understand.  
 Students: Do you understand?  
 Teacher: Hear  
 Students: Do you hear?  
 Teacher: see  
 Students: Do you see?  
 Teacher: Believe  
 Students: Do you believe?

Students have to listen to each substitution given by the teacher. He gradually turns attention from a verb to do and onto the substitutions. Without additional complications students will be able to put the substitutions in place without having to make any choice.

- (2) Picture substitution:  
 The cues can be a series of pictures or simple drawings identifying one for the class: ship, train, airplane, bird and so on. The teacher takes the basic sentence, "Do you see the train?" and then gives examples orally, pointing the appropriate picture

Teacher: Do you see the bird?  
 Do you see the tidal wave?  
 Do you see the tiger?

The teacher points to succeeding pictures and signals the class to continue at the same conversational speech.

Class: Do you see the bird?  
 Do you see the tidal wave?

When the class is doing well, an individual student is called on to practice in any order.

- (3) Now *does* substitutes *do*

Teacher: Do you see the dog?  
 Hear.  
 Do you hear the ship?

Train.  
 Do you hear the train?  
 He.  
 Does he hear the train?  
 She.  
 Does she hear the ship?

Teacher: Now use *Does and she*  
 Students: Does she see the ship?  
 Teacher: Does and John  
 Students: Does John see the train?

(4) Cues by the teacher, responses by the class.

Teacher: Did.  
 Class: Did you see the boat?  
 Teacher: Like  
 Class: Did you like Thai food?

(5) Multiple substitution

The teacher supplies two or more cues. They may be oral, pictures or combination of both.

( Cues by the teacher, responses by the class)

Teacher: You. (Pointing to the sea)  
 Class: Do you like the sea?  
 Teacher: They.(pointing to the ship)  
 Class: Do they like the ship?  
 Teacher: She. Did. (Pointing to noodles)  
 Class: Did she like noodles?

(6) Conversational substitutions

The teacher points to the pictures or covers and asks questions.

Teacher: (points to a monkey)  
 Do you see the monkey?  
 Yes, I do. I see the monkey.  
 (Covers up with the boat)  
 Do you see the boat?  
 No, I don't. I don't see the boat.

The examples given above are the guidelines for teaching English to English beginners. In this step, students are permitted to speak freely. They have to try to drill the pattern practice until they feel confident with them and can speak them naturally and when students are quite good in producing some short sentences by themselves, the teacher raise them up to the third step.

**The third step:**

In this step, students are quite good in pattern drills and can create some short sentences by themselves. So the teacher must change his role to be a facilitator, a person who works as a class helper not a class controller. Students have to create the interactive activities among their group, for example,

Group one:

Daeng, a group leader says to the group members, showing a picture of red rose.

Dang: What is it?

Dee: This is a rose?

Dam: What color is it?

Dan: It is red

Dun: Do you like a red rose, everybody?

Class: Yes, we do. We like e red rose.

The example given the third step is one of the interactive activities through which students can develop themselves in speaking and listening skill gradually. So, to teach English to Thai students who hardly have the opportunity to use English in daily communication, the pattern practice is one of the most appropriate approaches. It seems to be a on boring technique but it can be absorbed students day by day and automatically can do it perfectly and confidently.

## **Conclusion**

As we have known English is a very important instrument in the global village; world. But Thailand still has a few English-speaking people as in the natural disaster of Tsunami massive tidal wave killing over 5000 people Thailand didn't have enough English speaking volunteers to help the victims. And students from some universities were asked to help. Nearly 60% of Thai students used to learn English but they couldn't do it. The reason is as said above they learn English with the traditional method. And they never learn speaking and listening. They cannot understand and response what the foreigner speak to them. So, it must be an urgent task for the academic people in Thai society to come change the way to teach English Thai students, especially in primary school and in secondary school to pave the concrete background to students. And the pattern practice is one of the appropriate approaches to be used.

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