



## The Development of English-Speaking Skills Using TPRS (Teaching Proficiency through Reading and Storytelling) for Second-Grade Students

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### Abstract

The purposes of this research are to 1) Assess Grade 2 students' spoken English proficiency against an 80% performance benchmark following the implementation of the TPRS (Teaching Proficiency through Reading and Storytelling) teaching technique. 2) Examine the satisfaction level of Grade 2 students with the use of TPRS. The sample group, obtained from purposive sampling consisted of eight students in Grade 2, studying in the second term of academic year 2024 at Wonder Valley International School, southern Thailand. The research tools employed were: 1) An eight-hour lesson plan incorporating TPRS activities that lasted for 8 teaching periods. 2) An English-speaking skills rubric scoring assessment. 3) Student Satisfaction Survey on learning English through the TPRS technique. The statistics used for data analysis in this study included Chi-square, mean and standard deviation. Research findings have revealed that students' spoken English proficiency significantly exceeded the 80% criterion ( $p < .05$ ) following the implementation of TPRS in class. Students rated the TPRS method with a mean score of 4.22 out of 5, reflecting high satisfaction with the learning approach, where 5 represents the highest level of satisfaction.

**Keywords:** TPRS, English-Speaking Skills, Storytelling

### Introduction

Driven by an increasingly globalized economy, English language proficiency has for several years been considered a top educational priority for Thai parents from all economic backgrounds. Parents consider English to be important for the future career and business opportunities for their children, broadening their perspective and global outlook. According to the Basic Education Core Curriculum B.E. 2551 (A.D. 2008) the Thai government too acknowledges this, making English a compulsory subject throughout the entire basic national curriculum (Ministry of Education, 2008). This widespread enthusiasm to learn English led to a proliferation of various English as a second language tutoring



centers as well as international schools across the country. Despite the prevalence of these educational institutes, the development of spoken English language skills amongst Thai students continue to face challenges, particularly in the context of international schools in Thailand.

In such schools, there are notable differences in terms of academic performance between students whose parents speak English to them and those whose parents do not. The latter often fall behind in their English scores, particularly in spoken English, which then impacts other areas of academic development, as most academic subjects build on language foundations (Charoenlap (2017). Drawing from experience as a former teacher at an international school, the researcher observed that although these children possess strong cognitive abilities and articulate well in their native language, they face more challenges with vocabulary acquisition, spoken fluency and articulation of academic concepts and abstract ideas, particularly when compared to peers who have greater exposure to English at home. These children also tend to underperform in other subjects as well which prevents them from being able to reach their potential in other areas.

Such discrepancies in spoken English performance between students with English-speaking parents and those without highlights the need for a more effect pedagogical intervention. To address such challenges, this study aims to explore the implementation of Teaching Proficiency through Reading and Storytelling (TPRS) as an instructional intervention for the above-mentioned group of students.

TPRS has been highly researched and practiced across the second language teaching world. Several research have shown, how it outperformed other methods in teaching second language (Muzammil, 2015). TPRS is said to offer a natural and effective approach to second language acquisition, particularly well-suited for young learners due to its engaging methodology (Argenio, 2022). Therefore, TPRS exhibits potential in compensating for limited exposure to English at home by providing a more immersive and interactive learning experience for international school students within the classroom setting.

## Objectives

1. To assess the spoken English language skills of second-grade students after the implementation of the TPRS teaching technique with an 80% performance criterion.
2. To study the satisfaction level of second-grade students with learning English using the TPRS technique.



## Hypotheses

1. Second-grade students will achieve at least 80% proficiency in spoken English language skills after being taught using the TPRS teaching technique.
2. Second-grade students will report an important level of satisfaction with learning English through the TPRS teaching technique.

## Concept Theory Framework

### What is TPRS?

TPRS is a second language acquisition method developed by Blain Ray, a teacher in the late 1980s. Ray developed TPRS after using Jame Asher's TPR method. He found that while it worked very well with concrete words, it fell short when dealing with abstract terms and concepts. According to TPRS researcher Lichtman (2015), researchers generally "identify the method based on core concepts such as the co-construction of a story with students, using high frequency vocabulary, and providing lots of input in the target language with small amounts of translation for clarity". This method, she contrasts with the use of "traditional" teaching that focus on a grammar-based syllabus, textbooks and exercises demanding student output, grammatical accuracy, and teaching a larger set of (often thematically organized) vocabulary."

In TPRS classes, students rely on exposure to the target language, contextualization (language is given in a context that facilitates understanding of unknown words and grammar), and repetition, in an organic process that seeks to mimic the way children learn their first language. The TPRS class feels less like a lesson and more like a conversation. It encourages active participation during the lesson and enhanced listening skills (Octaviani & Hesmatantya 2018).

Lichtman (2018) explained that TPRS normally involves three stages of learning. The first stage (Show) involves establishing meaning in which the teacher introduces new vocabulary through action, visuals, or translation in student's first language. The second stage (Tell) involves asking children to create personalized stories along with the teacher using the words learnt and then acting them out in class. This gives students multiple opportunities for repetition in a positive learning environment (Kara & Eveyik, 2019). The last stage (Read) involves reading where students are encouraged to process aural input to written input. TPRS encourages active participation during the lesson and enhances listening skills (Octaviani & Hesmatantya, 2018).

## Previous Studies on TPRS

TPRS researcher Karen Lichtman argues in her book that "TPRS shows the clearest advantage for the acquisition of vocabulary and grammar, as well as the development of



reading and speaking skills. Additionally, TPRS outperforms other methods on rate of learning; students in TPRS classes get more language and more skills than in traditional classes” (Argenio, 2022).

Meeboon (2024) published research indicating that Grade 1 students in Thailand who learned English through the TPRS method achieved significantly higher performance scores in spoken English skills compared to when they did not use this method.

Bulan (2021) conducted a study in Türkiye investigating the effect of the TPRS method on vocabulary acquisition among third-grade students. The findings concluded that TPRS was effective in enhancing the students’ vocabulary acquisition.

Kara and Eveyik (2019) studied the effects of TPRS on four-year-old kindergarten students and found that it had a positive impact on both recall and retention of receptive and productive vocabulary. They noted that the method collaborates well with young learners because it uses storytelling and repetition—techniques that support how children naturally acquire language. Their study also offered helpful suggestions for adapting TPRS to better fit the needs of young learners.

Davidheiser who worked on the integration of grammar instruction with TPRS at college level reported in 2001 that TPRS improves pronunciation and vocabulary memory, reduces anxiety, and promotes active learning and is beneficial for distinct types of learners (Muzammil, 2015).

## Theoretical Framework

To really understand TPRS one needs to consider the theories that support it. TPRS is rooted in Krashen’s Input Hypothesis and Comprehensible Input approach to teaching language.

Krashen's Comprehensible Input Hypothesis argues that 1) speaking is a result of acquisition and not its cause. Speech cannot be taught directly but emerges on its own because of building competence via comprehensible input. 2) If input is understood by the student, and there is enough of it, the necessary grammar is automatically provided. “This means that the language teacher need not attempt to deliberately teach the next structure along the natural order- it will be provided in just the right quantities and automatically reviewed if the student receives enough comprehensible input” (Mitchell, Myles & Marsden 2013).

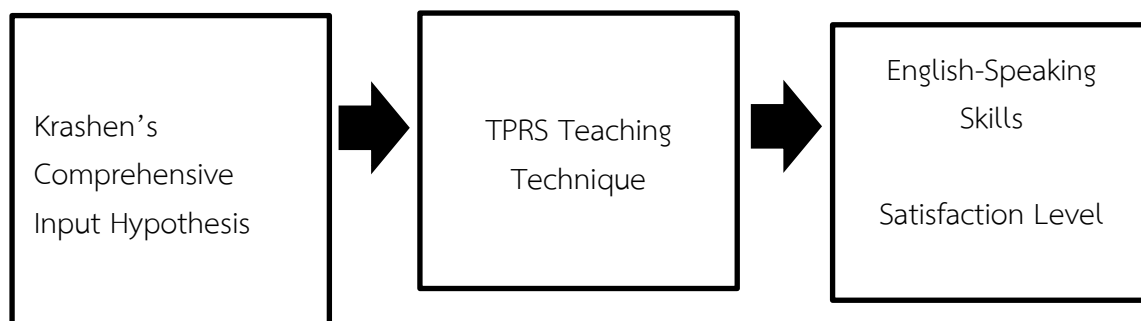
In practice Krashen argues that learners best acquire a new language when they are exposed to language that is just above their current proficiency but still understandable, which helps promote natural language learning.

In classroom practice, language is always context specific, presented mostly through stories in a way that students enjoy, and understand, using gestures, visuals and

sometimes translation into the student's native language. The focus is on students acquiring or absorbing the language naturally. Students then show comprehension through physical responses and simple answers. When words are introduced, teachers ensure students understand the meaning of words and phrases before expecting them to use those words. This allows time for children to build confidence and does not put pressure on them to provide a spoken "output" when they still don't understand. Vocabulary is taught systematically through repeated exposure in the form of stories, co-created by students and the teacher.

### Conceptual Framework

This research follows the conceptual framework as shown in this image:



**Figure 1:** Conceptual Framework

### Materials and Methods

#### Research Design

This study employs a quantitative and experimental research approach with a single sample group. The Chi-square statistical test is used to determine the significance level with data collected one time after the implementation of TPRS method in class (thus employing a One-Group Post-Test Only Design).

**Table 1:** One Group Post-Test Only Design

| Sampling | Group | Pre-test | Tested Item | Post-Test |
|----------|-------|----------|-------------|-----------|
| -        | E     | -        | X           | o         |

E denotes Experimental Group

X denotes Teaching approach using TPRS

O denotes English Speaking Skill Assessment



## Population and Sample Group

The population for this study consists of fourteen Grade 2 students at Wonder Valley International School, Phatong Subdistrict, Hat Yai District, Songkhla Province, studying in the second semester of the 2025 academic year.

The sample group comprised eight Grade 2 students from Wonder Valley International School, selected through purposive sampling during the second semester of the 2024 academic year. The researcher intentionally selected these students due to their limited exposure to English at home, which negatively impacted their spoken English performance in class, resulting in scores significantly below the pass criterion.

## Research Tools

1. A Lesson plan incorporating TPRS activities that consists of eight- 60 minutes teaching periods.
2. English Speaking Skills Assessment Form used to assess each student individually at the end of the final session. The total score given was 30 points. The expected performance criterion was 80% of the total points, which equals 24 points.

The evaluation criteria covered six aspects of speaking ability. These criteria include

1. Pronunciation, 2. Fluency, 3. Vocabulary Usage, 4. Grammar & sentence structure, 5. Comprehensibility, 6. Overall Confidence. Each criterion was then rated on a 5-point scale (1 = Needs Improvement, 5 = Excellent) to provide a structured evaluation of individual student's speaking performance.

3. Student Satisfaction Survey on Learning English through the TPRS Technique

The survey uses a 5-point Likert scale to measure students' satisfaction with learning English through the TPRS technique. After refining the wording for a more formal tone, the satisfaction levels are as follows:

1. Least satisfied (in student friendly language the term "Not happy at all" was used)
2. Less satisfied (in student friendly language the term "Not so good" was used)
3. Moderately satisfied (in student friendly language the term "Okay" was used)
4. Highly satisfied (in student friendly language the term "Happy" was used)
5. Most satisfied (in student friendly language the term Super Happy was used)

Research tools number 1 and 3 were reviewed by experts to ensure. Three experts provided feedback and evaluated the alignment between the assessment rubrics, the learning objectives, as well as the alignment between the satisfaction criteria and learning objectives. The Index of Item-Objective Congruence (IOC) was calculated to confirm the consistency and appropriateness of the tools.



## Data Collection

Data for this study was collected from a purposive sampling group with the following details:

1. The researcher conducted teaching activities using the TPRS lesson plan for eight teaching periods, each lasting 60 minutes, totaling 8 hours over a 2-month period.
2. After completing all eight teaching periods, the researcher assessed each child's English-speaking skills using a rubric scoring method mentioned above.
3. Finally, the researcher asked the children complete a satisfaction survey to evaluate their perception of the TPRS learning process and their feelings about using spoken English after learning through storytelling.

## Data Analysis

After collecting data using the above-mentioned tools, the researcher analyzed the data as follows:

1. Analyzed the learning achievement of Grade 2 students after learning through the TPRS method, comparing it to the 80% criterion using Chi-square statistics in SPSS.
2. Analyzed the satisfaction questionnaire regarding the TPRS teaching method, utilizing percentage, mean ( $\bar{X}$ ), and standard deviation (S.D.). The researcher evaluated the mean scores based on the following criteria:

Mean scores 4.51 - 5.00: Indicated the highest level of satisfaction.

Mean scores 3.51 - 4.50: Indicated an important level of satisfaction.

Mean scores 2.51 - 3.50: Indicated a moderate level of satisfaction.

Mean scores 1.51 - 2.50: Indicated a low level of satisfaction.

Mean scores 1.00 - 1.50: Indicated the lowest level of satisfaction.

## Results

**Table 2:** Chi-Square Test Findings

| Test Results | n | $\chi^2$ | Asymp. Sig. |
|--------------|---|----------|-------------|
| Pass         | 7 | 4.500    | 0.017       |
| Fail         | 1 |          |             |

\*\*  $p < 0.05$

From Table 2, it was observed that seven students scored above the criteria, while one student scored below the expected level. The p-value from the Chi-Square test was 0.017, which is below the acceptable significance level of 0.05. This indicated that the results were statistically significant at the 5% significance level.





**Table 3:** Satisfaction Survey Findings

| Evaluation Items  | $\bar{X}$   | S.D.        | Interpretation |
|---|-------------|-------------|----------------|
| 1. Satisfaction towards acting out the story together in class  | 4.13        | 0.83        | High level     |
| 2. Satisfaction towards helping to create a story in class with peers   | 4.38        | 0.52        | High level     |
| 3. Satisfaction towards understanding the context of the story in English   | 4.00        | 0.76        | High level     |
| 4. Satisfaction towards creating your own gestures and movements during the story to represent the words learnt   | 4.38        | 0.74        | High level     |
| 5. Satisfaction towards learning English through drawings and stories   | 4.38        | 0.52        | High level     |
| 6. Satisfaction towards your own ability to remember/recall new English Words after learning them through stories | 4.25        | 0.46        | High level     |
| 7. Satisfaction towards being able to pronounce more accurately after the TPRS lessons compared to before         | 3.86        | 0.35        | High level     |
| 8. Satisfaction with your teacher's involvement in class  | 4.86        | 0.46        | Highest level  |
| 9. Satisfaction towards being able to speak fluently using longer sentences than                                  | 3.75        | 0.46        | High level     |
| 10. Satisfaction about being able to recite stories in English now compared to before?                            | 4.25        | 0.46        | High level     |
| <b>Total</b>  | <b>4.22</b> | <b>0.40</b> | High level     |

From Table 3, it was found that Grade 2 students' satisfaction with teaching using the TPRS method had a mean score of 4.22, indicating a “high level of satisfaction”.

## Conclusions and Discussion

In conclusion, this study revealed that the implementation of the TPRS teaching method significantly improved Grade 2 students' spoken English proficiency and resulted in high satisfaction with the learning approach. Statistical analysis showed that the selected group of grade two students' spoken English proficiency scores significantly surpassed the predetermined 80% criterion following TPRS intervention ( $p < .05$ ). And students rated the method with high satisfaction.





The findings also confirm the importance of language learning theories that highlight contextualized language inputs, incorporating visuals, movement, and active co-creation of content by both students and teachers, as more effective methods for enhancing second language skills compared to memorization and rote learning.

English teachers at international schools can use this second language learning method to improve the spoken skills of students with limited exposure to English at home, helping them catch up with their peers. Similarly, teachers at Thai schools can also apply this method to help their students speak more fluently and confidently in general.

### Limitations and suggestions for further research

This study has some limitations that need to be acknowledged for further research to develop on. The main limitation of this study was the small sample size selected due to a required reason. Further research with a larger sample size or a different research design may be needed to more accurately assess the impact of the TPRS technique on improving spoken English skills in students speaking English as second language. Secondly, the duration of the study (8 hours in total) may not be enough to fully guarantee the effectiveness of the method. Hence further research with an extended duration is recommended, as developing language skills requires more time than acquiring knowledge.

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