CAN USING PICTURE DESCRIPTION IN SPEAKING SESSIONS HELP IMPROVE EFL STUDENTS' COHERENCE IN SPEAKING?[i]

Bui Hue Phuong[ii]
An Khanh high school,
Can Tho city, Vietnam

Abstract

Research on teaching English with pictures has indicated that the use of pictures has positive impacts not only on learners' language performance but also learners' attitude towards language learning. Based on the background of previous studies and theories, the researcher hypothesizes that the implementation of picture description could help participants improve their coherence in speaking English as well as make them have positive attitudes towards the use of picture description in speaking sessions. The study is aimed at examining the extent to which picture description helps participants boost their coherence in speaking and to find out participants' attitudes towards the implementation of picture description in English speaking sessions. Participants were 39 grade- 10 students at a high school in Mekong Delta, Vietnam. Four instruments, a pre- test, a post- test, a post- questionnaire and interview, were used to collect the data for this study. The results indicated that the use of picture description had positive impacts on improving participants' coherence in speaking and participants had positive attitudes towards the implementation of picture description in English speaking sessions. Hopefully, the study will be shedding a light for ELT teachers in helping students to enhance their speaking skill by using picture description in speaking sessions.

Keywords: coherence in speaking, EFL students, picture description, speaking sessions

Tóm lược:

Nghiên cứu việc sử dụng tranh ảnh trong giảng tiếng Anh đã và đang cho chúng ta thấy rằng việc sử dụng tranh kèm theo gợi ý có những tác động tích cực đến việc thực hiện nhiệm vụ và thái độ học tập của người học. Dựa trên kết quả nghiên cứu trước đây và trên cơ sở lí thuyết có liên quan, tác giả đề tại này giả định rằng việc mô tả tranh

---

[i] VIỆC SỬ DỤNG MÔ TẢ TRANH TRONG TIẾT DẠY NÓI CÓ THỂ GIÚP HỌC SINH ĐANG HỌC TIẾNG ANH NHƯ NGOẠI NGỮ PHÁT TRIỂN TÍNH MẠCH LẠC TRONG KĨ NĂNG NÓI HAY KHÔNG?

[i] Correspondence: email bhphuong82@gmail.com

trong giờ học nói tiếng Anh có thể giúp người học cải thiện được tính liên kết ý trong khi nói cũng như người học sẽ có thái độ tích cực đối với việc mô tả tranh của giáo viên trong giờ học nói. Đề tài nghiên cứu này nhằm kiểm chứng xem ở mức độ nào việc mô tả tranh có thể giúp người học cải thiện được tính mạch lạc trong khi nói và tìm hiểu xem thái độ của người học đối với việc áp dụng mô tả tranh trong các giờ học nói tiếng Anh. Đối tượng tham gia nghiên cứu là 39 học sinh lớp 10 ở một trường THPT ở Đồng Bằng song Cửu Long. Bốn công cụ thu thập dữ liệu được sử dụng trong nghiên cứu này: Bài thi nói trước và sau nghiên cứu, một bảng hỏi khảo sát thái độ người học về việc giáo viên sử dụng mô tả tranh trong giờ dạy nói tiếng Anh và bảng câu hỏi phỏng vấn người học về thái độ của học sinh đối với việc học nói tiếng Anh có sử dụng tranh ảnh. Kết quả nghiên cứu cho thấy việc sử dụng tranh có tác dụng tích cực đối với việc tăng tính mạch lạc trong khả năng nói tiếng Anh của người học, và người học cũng có thái độ tích cực đối với việc áp dụng mô tả tranh trong các tiết học nói.

Từ khóa: tính mạch lạc trong khi nói, học sinh học tiếng Anh như ngoại ngữ, mô tả tranh, những tiết học nói.

1. Introduction

The teaching and learning English has been paid more attention in Vietnam recently due to increasing demand of English use in many social, cultural and educational circumstances. Vietnam's National Foreign Languages 2020 Project of Vietnamese MOET (MOET, 2014) has been acknowledged as an evidence of Vietnamese Government's concern with teaching and learning languages in general, and English in particular. The ultimate objective of the project is to enable by 2020 Vietnamese students to use a foreign language, especially English, confidently in communicating and working. In response to this increasing demand of English communicative competence for EFL learners, of the four major language skills, the mastery of speaking skills in English should be put on the first priority by learners. It is widely noticed because the ability to communicate in a second language clearly and efficiently contributes to the success of the learners in school and later in every phase of their life. With the onset of communicative language teaching and learning, this inclination has encouraged researchers to conduct studies and making recommendations and pedagogical implications as well.

According to Harmer (2007), a language leaner uses all language he knows when he communicates; therefore, there has been always a demand for research on teaching and learning for improvement of speaking skills, which enables the learners to communicate. This is in line with Nunan (1995), who argues that speaking is an important aspect of language learning whether it is as a second or foreign language, and the ability to use the language as a means of communication often judges one's successfulness in speaking class in language learning. Speaking is also considered a productive skill which is related to the competence of processing information during the conversation with others (Jeremy Harmer, Burns, A. & Joyce, H., 1997).

Accordingly, speaking instruction has become more significant because whenever the right speaking activities are conducted in the classroom, speaking can increase learners' motivation and make the English language sessions become more dynamic and interesting for the learners to attend. In addition, speaking can support other language skills. Recent research has acknowledged oral interaction as an important factor in shaping the learner's developing language. In summary, speaking is one of the language skills which becomes important topic to be taken into consideration when teaching or learning a language due to its influence on the other skills' achievement as well as learners' motivation in getting knowledge of the target language.

Nevertheless, during a period of fourteen years of teaching English as a foreign language in high school context with the learners who are EFL high school students, the researcher has witnessed that one of the revealing problems of students in speaking is that breaking or ignoring the coherence in speaking. That means they do not pay much attention to the cohesive device usage, the outline of speaking pieces, the interaction between the interlocutors.

The review of literature shows that using picture contributes positive impacts on English language learning and teaching. For instance, the use of picture can help students get more confidence, more motivation for speaking, In (Bowen, 1982), he states that *"learning is a complex process and visual aids are a great help in stimulating the learning of a foreign language"*…In a thesis titled as "Using Pictures as Motivating Factors in Speaking Lessons" written by (Nguyen, 2015), pictures do have an impact on students' motivation and interest. Most of previous studies figured out that stimulating discussions and interpretation of the topic is what a picture can do for students. Thanks to this, they can generate their ideas as well as connect their ideas by some connecting devices at ease. Moreover, by using pictures of different kinds in teaching, students' imagination can be inspired (Moore, 1982) and this is in line with (Wright, 1989) who claims that pictures can motivate students to take part in speaking activities.

Based on the results of previous studies, the students who were taught with using pictures got better score and were motivated in speaking English. However, speaking is hardly taken into consideration in light of using visuals or pictures for developing aspects of speaking in speaking assessment such as accuracy, fluency, coherence and cohesion, discourse management…, which arouses the idea for the researcher to do this study for investigation into the impact of using pictures on students' coherence in speaking, and whether describing pictures in speaking lessons is useful for improving students' coherence in speaking or not.

This current study aims to investigate the extent to which picture description impact on students' coherence in speaking. It also intended to explore students' attitudes towards the use of picture description in speaking class so that the picture description could be proposed as a technique that helps learners in learning speaking.

2. Literature review

2.1 Speaking
2.1.1 Definition of speaking

There is a variety of definitions of the term "speaking" which can be found in the literature. According to Itkonen (2010), speaking refers to the use of the articulatory system, the actual physical effort of producing sounds that results in speech, or in another definition, speaking is considered "*the verbal use of the language to communicate with others*" (Fulcher, 2003). Speaking is also acknowledged as an important skill in language teaching and learning that enables language learners to communicate effectively not only in expressing their view point but also in giving responses (Richard, 2008). Moreover, speaking is also considered a basically essential and granted behavior of human beings that if there is not something noticeable about it, we do not stop to analyze it (Bailey, 2005). Speaking is one of the four language skills (reading, writing, listening and speaking) and in almost any settings, speaking is the most frequently used language skill. It is the means through which learners can communicate with others to achieve certain goals or to express their opinions, feelings, intentions, hopes and viewpoints. In addition, people who know a language are referred to as 'speakers' of that language. The definitions above mention "speaking" as such an integral part in daily life and most frequently used skill among the 4 skills in language teaching and learning. Therefore, training speaking skills for students has become so essential in teaching languages, and sometimes it is considered the first and foremost skill in learning languages

In some other definitions, speaking is regarded as a process in which the roles of speakers and listeners are of the same significance. According to Brown (1994), speaking is an interactive process of constructing meaning that involves producing, receiving and processing information. Likewise, Florez (1999) in Bailey (2005) states that speaking consists of producing systematic verbal utterances to convey meaning, it is often spontaneous, open-ended, and evolving, but it is not completely unpredictable. Speaking is also considered "*the process of building and sharing meaning through the use of verbal and nonverbal symbols, in a variety of contexts*" (Chaney, A. L., and Burke, T. L., 1998).

Obviously, the above definitions reveal the significant social communicative functions of speaking in which the communicative targets between the interlocutors are focused through speaking activities carried out every day. Moreover, Kearney and Plax (1996) assert that human communication is a process by which sources use verbal and nonverbal symbols to transmit messages to receivers in such a way that similar meanings are constructed and understood by one another. Communication is also a process, which a series of stages in which something undergoes transformation at each step. In communication, a person serving as a source transforms her thoughts and ideas into messages by selecting appropriate words and gestures. And speaking is really vital for communication between interlocutors.

From the definitions above, the implications for teaching and learning speaking as the priority of the process of learning English are revealed, which is advisable to be taken into consideration because the essential features of this skill for both inside and outside the classroom. Apparently, they reveal the communicative functions of speaking in which the speakers produce meaningful utterances that can be received and comprehended by the listeners, and the real communication only happens when there is real speaking. Therefore, real- life- alike tasks are encouraged to be happened for achieving as meaningful as possible talks because we are also believed to use oral language in our daily life in a variety of communication, where we are supposed to speak correctly enough to communicate well, because any mistakes made may result in misunderstandings or problems in social contacts.

2.1.2 The significance of speaking in language teaching and learning

In human communication, not all people have writing and reading needs, but speaking and listening. There has been a variety of opinions related to the importance of speaking in learning a language and in daily communication. It is speaking that is the vehicle to help interlocutors maintain the social relationship, express feelings and motion, and get information. The mastery of speaking skills in English is a priority for many second – language or foreign langue learners. Consequently, learners often evaluate their success in language learning as well as the effectiveness of their English course on the basic of how much they feel they have improved in their spoken language proficiency (Richard, 2008). In addition, success in studying a language is measured by the learners' ability to speak in the target language (Manurung, 2015).

More significantly, according to Harmer (2007), a language learner uses all languages he knows when he communicates; therefore, there is always a demand for research on teaching and learning for improvement of speaking skills, which enable the learners to communicate. This is in line with Nunan (1995) who argues that speaking is an important aspect of language learning whether it is as a second or foreign language, and the ability to use the language as a means of communication often judges one's successfulness in speaking class in language learning. This is especially detected when a language learner can use the language to express his ideas, feeling, and thoughts in the form of monologue or dialogue. Moreover, Richard (2008) also states that speaking is an important skill in language learning that enables language learners to communicate not only in expressing viewpoints but also in giving responses. Speaking is also considered a productive skill which is related to the competence of processing information during the conversation with others (Jeremy Harmer, Burns, A. & Joyce, H., 1997).

Accordingly, speaking instruction becomes important because it helps students acquire EFL speaking skills so that they converse spontaneously and naturally with native speakers. Furthermore, if the right speaking activities are taught in the classroom, speaking can raise general learners' motivation and make the English language classroom a fun and dynamic place to be (Nunan D., Language Teaching Methodology: A Textbook for Teachers, 1999) & Celce-Murcia, (2001). In addition,

speaking can support other language skills. Recent research has acknowledged oral interaction as an important factor in shaping the learner's developing language (Gass & Varionis, 1994).

In summary, speaking is one of the language skills which become important topic to be taken into consideration when teaching or learning a language due to its influence on the other skills' achievement as well as learners' motivation in getting knowledge of the target language.

2.2 Coherence
2.2.1 Definition of coherence
Coherence is the property of unity in a text or a segment of spoken discourse that stems from the links among its underlying ideas and form the logical organization and development of its thematic content (Merriam, 2018). Apparently, it is one of the two qualities that gives a written or spoken text unity and purpose. Coherence refers to the general sense through the organization of its content. In writing, it is provided by a clear and understood structuring of paragraphs and sentences in writing. In another definition, coherence can be understood in many ways. It is regarded as a simple standard of utterances–making sense to the listeners or receivers. Apparently, coherence is also partly about linking speeches together. This can mean using linking words to make everything clearly and orderly presented. (dcielts, 2018). This means we have to organize what we say or what we write as "a whole", or the ideas should be linked together and produce the answer that illustrates our ideas so that the listeners can grasp them easily. This is really significant to any pieces of speaking because speaking comprehension is a combination of a number of components, among which coherence enables the listeners to understand the speech in the whole, not just this side or that side.

2.2.2 Coherence in speaking
According the Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary (Hornby, 2005), coherence is defined as the situation in which all the parts of something fit together well (p. 276). We cannot deny that the talks we make in conversations are comprehended or not mostly depend on the coherence or unity of them. On the contrary, without the coherence in speaking, the speeches will be difficult to understand and follow.

2.2.3 Coherence in speaking assessment
There are many criteria which are assessed in speaking performance of candidates in any oral examinations, and coherence is of great importance because it makes a piece a speaking be comprehensive in terms of logical and coherent characteristics.

According to the Common Reference Levels: Qualitative aspects of Spoken language use, coherence in speaking is acknowledged as an important part among 5 parts evaluated for a speaking performance (range, accuracy, fluency, interaction, coherence). It is described in a careful and detailed way according to the levels form C2

(the most competent) to A1 (the least competent) (Council for Cultural Co-operation, Education Committee, Modern Languages Division, Strasbourg, 1971) (p28, 29). We can have a general picture of descriptions of coherence levels from C2 to A1 of CEFR in the table 2.1.

Table 2.1: The description of coherence in CEFR

Levels	C2	C1	B2	B1	A2	A1
Description of coherence	Can create coherent and cohesive discourse making full and appropriate use of a variety of organizational patterns and a wide range of connectors and other cohesive devices	Can produce clear, smoothly flowing, well-structured speech, showing controlled use of organizational patterns, connectors and cohesive devices	Can use a limited number of cohesive devices to link his/her utterances into clear, coherent discourse, though there may be some "jumpiness" in a long contribution.	Can link a series of shorter, discrete simple elements into a connected, linear sequence of points.	Can link groups of words with simple connectors like "and", "but" and "because".	Can link words or groups of words with very basic linear connectors like "and" and "then".

Moreover, in IELTS band scores description (dcielts, 2018), we also have a very clear portray of coherence in speaking as following table:

Table 2.2: IELTS speaking band score description for coherence in speaking

Band	Description For Coherence Level
9	• Speaks coherently with fully appropriate cohesive features • Develops topics fully and appropriately
8	• Develops topics coherently and appropriately
7	• Uses a range of connectives and discourse markers with some flexibility
6	• Uses a range of connectives and discourse markers but not always appropriately
5	• May over-use certain connectives and discourse markers • Produces simple speech fluently, but more complex communication causes fluency problems
4	• Links basic sentences but with repetitious use of simple connectives and some breakdowns in coherence
3	• Has limited ability to link simple sentences • Gives only simple responses and is frequently unable to convey basic message

2	• Little communication possible
1	• No ratable language
0	• Does not attend

In VSTEP for A2 of Vietnam, for the speaking part, we also have a description of coherence in speaking (Which is included in part number 5- *organization of contents*- among 6 parts for speaking assessment: *pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar, fluency, organization of contents, communication strategies*). The description can be followed in this table:

Table 2.3: The description for coherence in VSTEP speaking

Band	0	1	2	3	4
Connection and Coherence	(Students are absent)	Mostly not organizing the ideas	Can use basic cohesive devices, but the ideas are separated, incoherent	Can link ideas with basic cohesive devices, and show the ability of using fairly	Knowing how to use coordinating connectors to link short and simple phrases, the ideas are arranged following spacial and chronological linears

From the extracts about coherence descriptions according to levels of proficiency and band scores in three standardized assessment systems CEFR, IELTS, and VSTEPS, it can be concluded two things. Firstly, coherence in speaking is of great importance. Nevertheless, the VSTEPS band score description seems not specific enough in describing the coherence part in assessing speaking, and the range of scores is also short (from 0- 4) while in IELTS description is larger (from 0 -9). Secondly, basing on the key descriptive words, the researcher can design the two tests (pre and post- test) with the rubrics should be related to assessing coherence closely such as: linking, organizing ideas, connecting phrases, using cohesive devices, using connectors, using discourse devices,.... As a result, the elements of tests are: making outline for content, using cohesive devices/ connectors to connect ideas, and using interactive strategies in communication.

2.2.3 How can we improve coherence in speaking?
A few methods are employed to help increase coherence in speaking are mentioned in (dcielts, 2018). The first method is that expressing personal ideas and opinions. This means a speaker freely expresses himself when in an oral exam. An oral exam can bring us awkwardness at first, but using this method can decrease our nervousness as well as helps us gain the fluency after some hesitation in speaking. That is because when speaking up someone's mind, the speaker will have a lot of things to speak and he can speak freely. The second method is using connecting words. This method is really

important in enabling the listeners to get the speaker's ideas more easily. This is particularly useful for long answers because using connecters can help the listeners keep track of long speeches. The third method for improving coherence in speaking is that always responding from general to specific information. This is really significant for a speaker to have a mind outline in his brain before expressing ideas. This mind outline, arranging the ideas from the most general to the most detailed, will be necessarily helpful for the listener to follow speaker's ideas without getting distracted.

2.3 Picture

2.3.1 Definition of picture

According to Webster dictionary (Merriam, 2018), picture is defined as a design or representation made by various means such as painting, drawing, or photography. It also understood as a description which is vivid or graphic as to suggest a mental image or give an accurate idea of something. Besides, Sinclair (1987) defines a picture as "*a visual presentation or image painted, drawn, photographed, or otherwise rendered on a flat surface*". There are many examples of picture cues such as: printed pictures from books, cuttings from paper calendars, magazines and newspapers, drawings from cards or boards, images from clips in the Internet or slides in Power Points.

2.3.2 Kinds of pictures

To categorize pictures, we have to base on their size and design. Each type has its own characteristics which teachers should consider carefully when adopting them as teaching tools in their language classes. Pictures can be classified into 3 kinds. The first type is wall pictures, which are considered "*a large illustration of a scene or events*". The second type is sequence pictures which presents a single subject that will "*reveal one story or theme, like a strip of cartoon, in a connected set of illustration*". The third one is flash cards, which are pictures drawn on cards. When using this type of picture, we can flip them quickly to help the learners learn the words and pictures accordingly (Bowen B., 1982).

2.3.3 Using pictures in speaking lessons

How and when to use pictures in teaching depend much on teachers' purposes, flexibility and ability. According to Wright (1989), picture practice can be mentioned as following two kinds: Mechanical practice and communicative practice.

2.3.3.1 Mechanical practice

In this kind of practice, the teachers merely want students to focus on imitating the sound of the language and less concerned with meaning. In another way, the students just concentrate primarily on phonological or grammatical accuracy. In this case, the teacher usually knows what the students should say because the use of pictures can motivate the learners and to remind him or her what to say (Pamila I Lavalle & Mark

Briesmaster, 2017). Practicing in this way, we have (1) repetition; (2) recombination; (3) pronunciation; (4) using folding paper and mechanical practice (Wright, 1989).

Repetition is a technique in which the teacher shows a picture or a series of pictures and the class or individual students repeat the descriptive sentences they have been taught to say by the teacher.

Recombination is a technique which includes questions, answers, substitutions and transformations. Using pictures, according to this technique, seems more flexible and creative than repetition. The teacher shows a picture from a pile of pictures, and asks students to practice a sentence pattern which has been taught. The pictures are used as visual aids cueing students to make meaningful sentences with them. More traditionally, the teacher shows a picture with many details and asks students a variety of questions about it, usually focusing on a point of teaching (egg. present continuous tense, prepositions,…).

In pronunciation technique, pictures can be used to illustrate certain sounds. The pictures are often on cards, big or small. The big cards are used for class practice and the small ones are used in the games such as "Pelmanism".

Using folding paper and mechanical practice is a technique of using folded, cut, torn and glued so that the teacher can handle the lessons in creative and flexible ways instead of mechanical ones as told in the 3 previous techniques. There can be a variety of variations and games related to this way of using pictures (e.g. the strips risen across one face for finding the words beneath, the strips risen across two faces for 3 comparison, closing the flaps and opening the flaps to find the differences in quantities of things, ...).

2.3.3.2 Communicative practice

In this kind of practice, the students make use of the patterns chosen by the teachers and the teacher gives the value of what they are saying. In this case, the teacher does not know exactly what the students want to say. We have many ways to exploit pictures of this kind such as (1) describing; (2) identifying; (3) matching; (4) grouping; (5) sequencing; (6) ordering; and (7) memorizing. For each way, teachers certainly can manage the pictures as flexible and creative as they want. For describing, students are given pictures and write the descriptions. Then the teacher can do a variety of activities around the pictures and their descriptive products such as exhibiting, sharing, matching….In identifying activity, students recognize the differences in 2 pictures and then report them in front of their class of. Matching and grouping are activities in which students recognize the relations between pairs of pictures, then match and group them in the most logic way and explain something about their matching and grouping. Sequencing and ordering are activities helping students imagine a story or a plot and arrange the pictures like what they imagine. Memorizing can make students more mechanical but it can be better if the teacher creates some more challenging activities such as memorizing and draw, or memorizing and describe…Sometimes, teachers can make full use of these techniques by combining some techniques for a session.

Eventually, the main goal of these visual techniques is giving students the chances to talk, or to communicate more freely, creative and flexible.

2.3.4 Benefits of using pictures in teaching language

It cannot deny that instructional techniques play important roles in developing the language skills in general. Among various approaches and techniques which have been applied in current English teaching, the pictures' application is one of the outstanding ones, which is enabling learners to generate their ideas easily. According to Byrne (1980), stimulating discussions and interpretation of the topic is what a picture can do for students. Thanks to this, they can generate their ideas as well as connect their ideas by some connecting devices at ease. Moreover, by using pictures of different kinds in teaching, students' imagination can be inspired (Moore, 1982) and this is in line with (Wright, Pictures for language teaching, 2004) who states that pictures can motivate students to take part in speaking activities. Therefore, teachers of language can use pictures as hints or cues for various pedagogical purposes during their lessons, especially in speaking lessons. Beside the effectiveness of using spoken discourses in teaching speaking, photographs from magazines, calendars, or the Internet can provide EFL learners with many things to talk about. Photos from calendars work particularly well because they are often manufactured in a large format. Also if the calendars are sealed in cellophane for sale, the back of the calendar typically has a small version of the picture for each month. We can save these small versions of the photos and mount them on index cards or some other stiff paper for use in classroom activities. Brown (2003) asserts that the picture-cued technique can be considered an important and powerful method to elicit students' oral language performance at extensive and intensive levels. He also argues that describing pictures can be an ideal activity to begin the class because learners focus on content.

There are many reasons for using pictures in language lessons. According to Curtis and Bailey (2005), there are ten advantages that the learners can get from using pictures. First and foremost, pictures provide something to talk about. They can take the focus off the language learner and put it on the picture being discussed. The second benefit is that pictures can introduce and illustrate topics of interest to the class which are not dealt with in the textbook, as well as topics beyond the teacher's own expertise (e.g., engineering problems, computer technology, soccer, and agriculture). Thirdly, pictures provide visual support for learning, as they activate mental images that can help the language learner remember a particular structure or vocabulary item. Next, pictures are more convenient than some other kinds of realism to bring into the classroom (e.g., pictures of animals, burning buildings, outdoor activities, etc.) The fifth good point of using pictures is that they can add color and interest to both discussions and writing exercises without being expensive or technologically top- heavy. Moreover, pictures can be used in many ways by different teachers for various lessons. They are not tied to any particular teaching method, class size, or proficiency level. The same photograph can evoke many different kinds of language use in different contexts. In

addition, pictures are convenient. They are easily transportable, lightweight, flat, and long-lasting (if properly mounted or laminated). Another decent reason for using pictures can be retrieved is that they are very adaptable to the technology of the teaching environment (e.g., they can be scanned in, reworked and projected, or used where even electricity is unavailable). The next benefit is that pictures can promote creative and critical thinking (for instance, in describing an everyday object photographed from an unusual angle, or clouds which appear to be different things to different people. Finally, pictures are not limited to use with a particular language. Hence, a picture file can be a valuable departmental resource in a context where several languages are taught.

3. Discussion

The research follows one- group- experimental design. In this study, a combination of quantitative and qualitative research approach was used to collect data. Participants of the study are 39 10- graders at a high school in Can Tho city. They were randomly chosen from 3 classes that the researcher was in charge at her school. Their ages ranged from 16 to 17. Participants were taught English, using the Textbook of Tieng Anh 10 (Hoang et al, 2007), which is used throughout Vietnam.

During the 6- week intervention, the participants were exposed to picture description in speaking sessions, centering on helping students to develop coherence in speaking English in terms of mind- outline making, cohesive device using and interaction strategies.

To investigate the impact of picture description on students' coherence in speaking, pre- test and post- test were employed to measure students' levels of coherence in speaking at beginning point and finishing point of the study. Participants' performances in two tests were voice- recorded and their scores of coherence were stored for analyzing, discussing and concluding.

Data from the 5- point Likert scale questionnaire and informal interviews were collected to explore participants' attitudes towards the use of picture description in terms of interest, the effectiveness, the difficulties, relationship and the suggestions.

The quantitative data gained from the speaking tests were subjected to Statistics Package for the Social Science (SPSS), version 20.0. Descriptive Statistics Test about Min, Max, Mean, and Standard Deviation were run to find out the extent to which the use of picture description in speaking class helps students enhance their coherence in speaking. The responses of students through questionnaire were also administered by SPSS to learn about their attitudes towards the use of picture description in speaking class. Moreover, the Scale Tests were used to test the reliability of the tests and the questionnaire. The Descriptive Statistics Test and One- sample T Test were administered to investigate students' attitudes towards the use of picture description in speaking class to enhance their coherence in speaking.

Besides the quantitative analysis, correlative students' responses in the interview data were qualitatively analyzed to provide more in-depth information of students' attitudes towards the program. All things which students answered were put together so that the researcher had the whole picture of students' attitudes towards the intervention they got. Thanks to that, the researcher could come up to valid and reliable conclusions later.

5. Results

4. 1. Students' coherence in speaking at the two points of measurement (Pre- test and Post- test)

4. 1. 1. Two speaking tests' results

Firstly, a Descriptive Statistics Test was run to explore the Min, Max, Mean and Standard Deviation of the two tests, the results can be found in the following table

Table 4.1: The results of Descriptive Statistics test for pre- test and post- test

	N	Min.	Max.	Mean	SD
Pre- total score	39	1.25	6.00	3.75	1.28
Post- total score	39	3.25	8.25	5.31	1.41

As can be seen from the Table 4.1, the scores of pre- test and post- test are different. The post- test Min, Max, and Mean are higher than those of the pre- test (*Pre Min = 1.25 < Post Min = 3.25; Pre Max = 6.00 < Post Max = 8.25; Pre Mean = 3.74 < Post Mean = 5.31*) with the 2 SD which are not obviously various (*Pre- test SD = 1.28, Post Test SD = 1.41*) Secondly, a Paired- Sample T Test was administered in order to compare the total scores of 2 tests as well as to check whether there was any difference between the two Mean of Pre-total and Post- total scores (*6.00 and 8.25*), the results can be found in the following table:

Table 4.2: The results of Paired – Sample T Test for Pre Mean and Post Mean

	N	Correlation	Sig.
Pre - total score & Post- total score	39	.880	.000

As can be seen from the table, the two Mean scores of two Tests are considered significantly different (*p= .000*). Thanks to this result, the conclusion on students' coherence in speaking can be figured out as the statement: students obtained the improvement in coherence in speaking.

4.1.2 Participants' coherence in speaking in the two tests

To have an insightful comparison of the same pair of components in the two tests, a Paired – Sample T Test was run to discover whether there were any differences in the scores obtained between these pairs of components (*Pre- outline and Post- outline, Pre- linking and Post- linking, Pre- interaction and Post- interaction*). The results is presented in Table 3.3

Table 4.3: Paired- Sample T Test of 3 pairs of components of Pre- test and Post- test

	Mean	N	SD	Sig.
Pair 1: Pre - outline &	1.47	39	.69	.000
Post - outline	2.05	39	.74	.000
Pair 1: Pre - linking &	1.13	39	.46	.000
Post - linking	1.79	39	.53	.000
Pair 1: Pre - interaction &	1.12	39	.32	.000
Post – interaction	1.45	39	.36	.000

As can be seen from the table 4.3, there is an obvious difference between each pair of components. They are better in making outline for their talks (*M Pre-outline = 1.4744, M Post- outline= 2.0577, p = .000*). They also get the higher Mean in Post- linking than Pre-linking (*M Pre-linking =1.1346, M Post-linking = 1.7949, p=.000*) (for using cohesive devices). Moreover, they get a slight improvement in Interaction (*M Pre- interaction= 1.1282, M post interaction =1.4551, p= .000*). We can conclude that there is an improvement in students' coherence in speaking.

4. 2 Students' attitudes towards the use of picture description in speaking class
4. 2. 1. Students' attitudes towards the use of picture description in speaking class via the questionnaire

A scale Test was run to examine the reliability of the questionnaire, the results show that the internal reliability coefficient is acceptable (α = .790)

A Descriptive Statistic Test was run to explore the Overall Mean of students' attitudes towards the use of picture description in speaking class in helping them enhance their coherence in speaking. The results from Descriptive Statistic Test are shown in the following table:

Table 4.4: The Overall Mean of the questionnaire

	N	Mean	SD
Participants' attitude	39	3.89	.35

From the table, it can be seen that the Overall Mean of students' attitudes towards the use of picture description in speaking (*M=3.89*). It is slightly lower than the scale 4.0 in the five- degree scale. Therefore, A One Sample T- Test was run to evaluate whether their Mean was significantly different from 4.0, the accepted mean for positive attitude, or not.

The Overall Mean of the sample (*M= 3.89, SD= .35)* was not significantly different from the scale 4.0 – the positive attitude (*t= -1.936, df = 38, p= .06).* The result supports the conclusion that students have positive attitudes towards the use of picture description in speaking class. This result matched the researcher's hypothesis that the students have positive attitudes towards the use of picture description in speaking class.

4.2.2 Students' attitudes towards the use of picture description in speaking class via the interviews

To get insightful information about students' attitudes towards the use of picture description in enhancing their coherence in speaking, the researcher conducted interview with six students among the whole sample. They are the participants whose scores ranged from the highest to the lowest. The interviews focused on these issues: (1) the enjoyment students have, (2) the effectiveness the course brought to them, (3) the difficulty students might get and (4) the suggestions students could give to improve teacher's the procedure of teaching with pictures. All responses of participants were recorded and transcribed for carefully analysis, which might lead to valuable conclusions and pedagogical implications.

The results from the interviews revealed that most of students share their enjoyment they could have with the course, they also asserted that the effectiveness which learning speaking with pictures brought them was an active, creative, interesting, colorful way of learning, which suitable for their confidence build-up and improvement in speaking coherence. Finally, all participants desired to apply picture description in upcoming curriculum.

However, the most competent student who was finally interviewed (who performed well in the post- test and in daily classes as well) said that he didn't feel the picture cues were really advantageous for him in terms of generating and elaborating ideas. Sometimes he felt that looking at a picture to talk is such an arbitrary thing to do. Therefore, this made him feel uncomfortable and constraint in brainstorming and imagining when talking, especially, about a topic. As a result, he couldn't speak as fast as usual.

In general, we can acknowledge that the picture description might be useful for students who are at the average and fairly good, not a good way of learning for more fluent and advanced students. This can be explained based on the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) theory and Scaffolding theory of Vygotsky, the Russian psychologist. In these theories, the instructional scaffolding is something that can assist the learners within their ZDP, which is defined as the range of tasks that a child can perform with the help and guidance of others but cannot yet perform independently. Therefore, when the learners are more fluent after a period of time, we do not need to scaffold them in doing tasks any more, and remove the scaffoldings gradually (Vygotsky, 1962).

5. Conclusion

The current research was conducted to aim at investigating the impact of picture description on students' coherence in speaking as well as determining students' attitudes towards the implementation of picture description in speaking sessions. Accordingly, respective lessons can be obtained as following:

Firstly, the use of picture description can be considered an effective and interesting way of teaching speaking on the purpose of enhancing students' coherence in speaking.

Secondly, the students' attitudes towards the use of picture description are positive. The majority of them asserted that they feel happy and joyful with such a teaching technique. They also state somehow similar reasons for their agreement with the use of picture description which are (1) bringing them the confidence and willingness to talk, (2) enhancing their ideas and providing them with the outline, linking devices and interest for generate a topic.

6. Recommendation

Firstly, it was proved that the use of picture description had positive impact on learners' coherence in speaking. Therefore, it could be implied that picture description could be taken into account as a referentially effective technique to help students develop their coherence in speaking in specific, and to enable them improve their confidence, obtain motivation of speaking, get the high eagerness for communication in speaking sessions. The principle of conducting this activity is that teachers ought to make thoughtful preparations in advance. If any teachers want to conduct the lessons with picture description successfully, they should be patient to spend much time choosing the pictures at home, printing them in colors (recommended), bringing with them into the classroom the magnets or gums, then they must be smart in choosing suitable types of pictures so that the themes of teaching can be covered totally and effectively. It will be time –consuming and energy- consuming, but the benefits it brings us can be considered a well- off compensation.

Secondly, the results from questionnaire and interview indicated that participants had positive attitudes towards the implementation of picture description in speaking lessons to enhance their coherence in speaking. In addition, they were also desired to apply this picture-using technique in upcoming curriculum of the current school, where the researcher is teaching. Therefore, the school managers could take this into consideration and then conduct the scheme with the two main steps: First of all, making a large- scale survey in order to explore whether the whole population of this school wish to learn with it or not. Next, looking for the donors because materials' expenses are expensive and they should be paid for by a certain Society or Organization in or out of the school. When the scheme came into existence, there would be new image of the speaking lessons, which could encourage students in learning English.

After all data collection and analysis, the researcher can come up with a conclusion: There are no teaching methods which can fit all students, such as the proverb "*no size fits all*", because our learners are different in personalities, interests and learning styles. Any methods have both strengths and weaknesses. Therefore, if there are methods of teaching which can bring satisfaction and advantages to the most learners, it is acceptable. In terms of effective teaching, we merely aim at the lessons

which continuously motivate our learners and activate them to achieve what we expect as the objectives of each session. Great efforts, enthusiasm combined with creativity, flexibility of any teachers can enhance students in different ways in various pedagogical contexts.

About the author

Bui Hue Phuong is an EFL high school teacher of An Khanh high school- a school in the center of Can Tho city. She earned her Bachelor Degree at Can Tho University in 2004. She has been teaching English as a foreign language for about 14 years in more than 3 high schools in Can Tho and has obtained a certain amount of experiences in teaching English for learners aging 16 to 18. Their different learning styles, competences and characteristics have made the author become more creative and flexible in teaching in terms of teaching skills. She has been getting a variety of awards for her pedagogical achievements as one of key EFL teachers of Can Tho city.

The courses participated:

- From August, 2013 to December, 2013: Earned the C1 Degree (trained and tested by SEMEO RETRACT);
- From November 2014: Earned 2 Certificates, one was on Teaching Methodology and another on Information Technology in Teaching English;
- In November 2015: Took a 3- week TESOL course in Sydney, Australia with the recommendation of Can Tho Department of Education and Training and the sponsor of Vietnamese Ministry of Education and Training (a plan of The National Foreign Language 2020 Project of Vietnamese Ministry of Education and Training);
- From August 2016 to August 2018: Attended an MA course (in Principles and Methods in English Language Education – cohort 23).

References

1. Bailey, K. M. (2005). *Practical English Language Teaching.* New York: McGraw Hill.
2. Bowen, B. (1982). *Look here! Visual aids in language teaching.* Macmillan.
3. Brown, H. D. (1994). *Teaching by Principles: An Interactive Approach to Language Pedagogy.* Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall Regents.
4. Brown, H. D. (2003). *Language Assessment Principle and Classroom Practices.* San Francisco, California: Pearson: Longman.
5. Canale, M. a. (1980). *Theoretical bases of communicative approaches to second language teaching.*
6. Chaney, A. L., and Burke, T. L. (1998). *Testing Oral communication in Grade K-8.* Boston: Allyn & Bacon.
7. Cobuild. (1987). *Collins COBUILD Dictionaries of English.* Heinle ELT Publishers.

8. *dcielts.* (2018, 3 20). Retrieved from http://www.dcielts.com/ielts-speaking/coherence-in-ielts-speaking-coherence-approaches/

9. Harmer, J. (2007). *How to teach English.* Essex: UK: Longman.

10. Hornby, A. S. (2005). *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English* (7th ed.). (S. Wehmeier, Ed.) New York: Oxford University Press.

11. Jeremy Harmer, Burns, A. & Joyce, H. (1997). *Focus on Speaking.* Sydney: National Center of English Language Teaching and Research.

12. Kearney, P. and Plax, T. G. (1996). *Public Speaking in a Diverse Society.* Mt. View, CA: Mayfield Publishing.

13. Lev Vygotsky, L. (1962). *Thought and language.* Cambridge: MA: MIT Press.

14. Manurung, K. (2015). Improving the speaking skill using reading contextual internet-based instructional materials an EFL class in Indonesia. *Procedia, 176*, 44-51. doi:10.1016/j.spspro.2015.01.442

15. MOET. (2014). *Thông tư ban hành khung năng lực ngoại ngữ 6 bậc dùng cho Việt Nam.* Retrieved from https://thuvienphapluat.vn/van-ban/Giao-duc/Thong-tu-01-2014-TT-BGDDT-Khung-nang-luc-ngoai-ngu-6-bac-Viet-Nam-220349.aspx

16. Moore, K. D. (1982). *Classroom teaching skill.* New York: NY: McGraw- Hill, Inc.

17. Nguyen, T. H. (2015). Using Pictures as Motivating Factors in Speaking Lessons. Retrieved from http://www.vnseameo.org/TESOLConference2015/Materials/Fullpaper/Ms.%20Nguyen%20Thi%20Huyen%20Trang.pdf

18. Nunan, D. (1999). *Language Teaching Methodology: A Textbook for Teachers.* London: Prentice Hall International.

19. Richard, J. C. (2008). *Teaching Listening and Speaking; from theory to practice.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

20. Roger Gover, Diane Phillips & Steve Walters. (1995). *Teaching Practice A handbook for Teachers in Training.* Mac Millan.

21. Savignon. (1991). Communicative Language Teaching: State of the Art. *TESOL Quarterly, Vol. 25* (No. 2.), 261-277.

22. *Teaching English.* (2018, 320). Retrieved from https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/article/coherence

23. Wright, A. (1989). *Pictures for language teaching.* New York: New York: Cambridge University Press.