

Effects of Hyflex Instruction Using the ECRIF Method on the Enhancement of English-Speaking Ability of Thai Upper Secondary School Students

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Abstract

This quasi-experimental mixed-methods study aimed to (1) explore the effects of HyFlex (Hybrid-Flexible) instruction using the ECRIF (Encounter, Clarify, Remember, Internalize, and Fluently Use) method on enhancing the five components of English speaking ability—pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension—of Thai upper secondary students, and (2) investigate students' perceptions toward HyFlex instruction using the ECRIF method, including its three instructional modes: onsite, synchronous online, and asynchronous online. Thirty students completed a B1-level speaking test before and after a ten-week intervention. Quantitative data were collected from pre- and post-tests—which assessed five components of speaking ability: pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension—and a 4-point Likert-scale questionnaire, while qualitative data were obtained through open-ended responses and semi-structured interviews. Results revealed a statistically significant improvement in students' speaking ability, with a mean difference of 0.88 ($t(29) = 5.17, p < .001$), particularly in grammar and vocabulary. Students expressed positive perceptions of the HyFlex instruction, citing increased flexibility, engagement, and confidence. Onsite mode was viewed as the most effective due to real-time interaction; synchronous online mode was appreciated for accessibility and structure; asynchronous online mode offered flexibility but was noted for lower engagement. These findings support integrating the HyFlex instruction with the ECRIF method in EFL (English as a foreign language) speaking classrooms.

Keywords: HyFlex instruction, ECRIF method, English speaking ability,
Thai upper secondary school students, perceptions

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Introduction

Globalization and digital advancement have fostered greater international connectivity, making English an essential tool for global communication and professional success. As a result, English proficiency is increasingly viewed as a gateway to accessing information, academic progress, and economic opportunities. Among the four primary language skills—listening, speaking, reading, and writing—speaking is widely recognized as the most immediate and practical indicator of language proficiency, particularly in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) context (Richards, 2008). In this study, communicating and speaking are used interchangeably; both refer specifically to English speaking ability.

Addressing these challenges requires a more dynamic and structured pedagogical framework that promotes active use of language. One such approach is the ECRIF method—Encounter, Clarify, Remember, Internalize, and Fluently Use—which emphasizes how learners progress through stages of language acquisition (Kurzweil & Scholl, 2007). ECRIF supports teachers in designing student-centered lessons that develop speaking systematically and reflectively.

At the same time, advancements in educational technology have created opportunities for flexible and accessible learning. The HyFlex model (Hybrid-Flexible), which allows learners to participate in onsite, synchronous online, or asynchronous online formats, has emerged as a viable solution to meet diverse learner needs. When combined with a structured speaking methodology such as ECRIF, HyFlex instruction can offer both pedagogical depth and delivery flexibility.

This study focuses on Thai upper secondary students, a group expected by Thailand's Basic Education Core Curriculum (B.E. 2551) to use English communicatively in real-world and academic settings (Ministry of Education Thailand, 2008). Many of these students also prepare for university programs taught in English or standardized English assessments such as TOEFL or IELTS, making speaking proficiency critical to their academic and career readiness.

In this study, the term “effects” refers to measurable changes in students' English-speaking ability—specifically in pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension—resulting from instruction. These changes are assessed through pre- and post-tests to evaluate the effects of the HyFlex-ECRIF instructional model.

As a result, this study aims to (1) explore the effects of HyFlex instruction using the ECRIF method on the English-speaking ability of Thai upper secondary students, and (2) investigate

their perceptions toward HyFlex instruction and its three instructional modes: onsite, synchronous online, and asynchronous online.

Research Objectives

1. To explore the effects of HyFlex instruction using the ECRIF method on enhancing five components of English-speaking ability—pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension—of Thai upper secondary school students.
2. To investigate the Thai upper secondary school students' perceptions toward HyFlex instruction using the ECRIF method to enhance English speaking ability and its three instructional modes: onsite, synchronous online, and asynchronous online.

Research Questions

1. To what extent does HyFlex instruction using the ECRIF method enhance five components of English-speaking ability—pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension—of Thai upper secondary school students?
2. What are the perceptions of Thai upper secondary school students toward HyFlex instruction using the ECRIF method to enhance English-speaking ability, including its three instructional modes: onsite, synchronous online, and asynchronous online?

Literature Review

Speaking ability

Speaking ability is recognized as a fundamental skill in language acquisition, particularly for real-time communication. It enables learners to interact effectively in social, academic, and professional contexts. Nunan (2003, as cited in Mart, 2012, p. 91) states that “speaking is a productive aural/oral skill and it consists of producing systematic verbal utterances to convey meaning”. Similarly, Brown (1994) and Burns and Joyce (1997) define speaking as “an interactive process of making meaning that includes producing, receiving, and processing information” (as cited in Leong & Ahmadi, 2017, p. 35). Frameworks such as the CEFR and ACTFL further emphasize the use of language in functional and communicative settings. Harmer (2001) and Cameron (2001) argue that fluency and spontaneity are key indicators of speaking competence, underscoring speaking as the primary mode of communication in EFL contexts.

Multiple frameworks have been proposed to break down the components of speaking. Harris (1969) identifies five essential components: pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension, which contribute to intelligibility and communicative success. Harmer (2007) aligns with this classification, while Goh and Burns (2012) propose an expanded view, incorporating turn-taking, repair strategies, and discourse management as part of core speaking skills. This diversity in conceptualizations reflects the complexity of speaking, requiring integration of both linguistic knowledge and communicative competence.

Moreover, speaking plays a facilitative role in the development of other language skills. Richards and Renandya (2002) note that learners often find speaking the most challenging skill, especially in foreign language contexts, due to its requirement for immediacy and sociolinguistic appropriateness. Despite these difficulties, speaking remains a core skill for expressing ideas, emotions, and intentions.

In this study, Harmer's (2007) five major components of speaking ability—pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension—were adopted as the foundation for both instruction and assessment. In the context of this study, these components appear to align with the instructional goals of the HyFlex instruction using the ECRIF method, which aims to enhance the English-speaking ability of Thai upper secondary students through structured and flexible language practice.

Speaking instruction and speaking assessment

Effective speaking instruction is essential for developing learners' ability to communicate fluently and accurately in real-life contexts. Among the four core language skills, speaking is often regarded as the most challenging to master, requiring both linguistic knowledge and pragmatic competence (Nunan, 2015; Brown & Lee, 2015). Speaking instruction involves not only the practice of language structures but also the integration of fluency, accuracy, and sociocultural awareness (Richards & Rodgers, 2014; Brown & Lee, 2015). To foster these skills, educators emphasize the importance of learner interaction, guided practice, and meaningful feedback (Richards & Bohlke, 2012; Anggraeni et al., 2020).

Key components of speaking instruction include pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, and fluency (Nunan, 2015; 2019). Pronunciation involves control of segmental and suprasegmental features such as stress, intonation, and rhythm (Yates & Zielinski, 2009). Grammar and vocabulary provide learners with the structural and lexical resources needed to construct accurate messages (Bygate et al., 2001). Fluency reflects the ability to express ideas

coherently and respond appropriately in real-time communication, involving ease in speech that helps maintain effective speaking (Richards & Schmidt, 2013). These elements are typically developed through communicative tasks such as role plays, discussions, and presentations that simulate authentic language use (Bygate et al., 2001), specifically in EFL instructional settings.

Speaking assessment complements instruction by evaluating learners' progress and the effectiveness of pedagogical strategies. It typically includes two forms: formative (conducted during instruction) and summative (administered at the end of a learning period) (Carnegie Mellon University, 2023). Formative assessments help monitor ongoing development through peer interaction and group tasks, while summative assessments, such as oral presentations or final speaking tests, measure cumulative achievement (Broadfoot et al., 2002).

Assessing speaking is inherently complex due to its spontaneous and interactive nature (Thornbury, 2005). Effective assessment tools must capture multiple dimensions of performance, including pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension (Harmer, 2007; Brown, 2004). Rubrics that align with communicative frameworks—such as the CEFR—ensure consistency, transparency, and fairness by focusing on descriptors such as accuracy, range, coherence, and interaction (Council of Europe, 2020).

To ensure validity and reliability, speaking assessment should reflect real-world communicative demands and align with instructional objectives (Nunan, 2015). Also, learner involvement in self- and peer-assessment is also encouraged to promote reflection and learner autonomy.

In this study, both formative and summative assessments were employed to evaluate speaking ability. The scoring rubric was adapted from Harmer (2007) and Brown (2004), focusing on five key components: pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension.

The ECRIF Method

The ECRIF method (Encounter, Clarify, Remember, Internalize, and Fluently Use) is a learner-centered instructional framework developed by Kurzweil and Scholl (2007). Originally introduced in *Understanding Teaching Through Learning*, the method guides teachers in designing activities that promote progressive language acquisition, especially in speaking, by focusing on what learners do and experience at each stage.

Each stage represents a phase of language development. *Encounter* introduces learners to new language through listening, reading, or observation. *Clarify* helps them resolve

misunderstandings through explanation and interaction. *Remember* includes repetition or recall strategies. *Internalize* involves communicative practice to build confidence. *Fluently Use* encourages spontaneous application in real-world tasks such as debates or presentations.

The ECRIF method supports instructional planning, material adaptation, formative assessment, and learner reflection. It provides teachers with a principled approach to lesson design and offers students a scaffolded path toward meaningful language use and fluency. Table 1 outlines how ECRIF was applied to speaking instruction in this study and was adapted from Kurzweil and Scholl (2007).

Table 1

Sample Instructional Stages Using the ECRIF Method

The ECRIF Stage	Activities/Tasks	Approximate time (Total 60 minutes)
Encounter (E)	Students encountered new knowledge or learning input (e.g., vocabulary) through certain activities, such as watching assigned YouTube videos and participating in a simple discussion guided by the teacher.	10 minutes
Clarify (C)	Students were required to perform exercises (e.g., choosing the best answer) using Quizlet or Kahoot.	10 minutes
Remember and Internalize (R, I)	Students learned vocabulary through questioning, think-pair-share, games, and/or information gap-activities either in pairs or small groups.	20 minutes
Fluently Use (F)	Students openly interacted with the whole class or in groups using either simulations, 4/3/2, and/or describing activities.	20 minutes

Note. Adapted from *Understanding Teaching Through Learning* by J. Kurzweil & M. Scholl, 2007, The School for International Training.

This sequence reflects a scaffolded progression toward fluency, integrating cognitive engagement with communicative use. Teachers are encouraged to observe students' engagement closely and make instructional adjustments as needed. Throughout the stages, formative assessments play a critical role in monitoring learning and informing teaching decisions, ensuring that learners move steadily toward more fluent language use.

Recent studies provide converging evidence of the ECRIF method's effectiveness in enhancing speaking skills, particularly through structured, student-centered instruction. AlSaleem (2018) found that ECRIF significantly improved vocabulary retention and motivation among seventh-grade EFL students, attributing these gains to its learner-focused design. Extending this to virtual contexts, Caiza Aucapiña et al. (2023) implemented the method through ten Zoom consecutive sessions with students in grades 8 to 10 and reported notable improvements in both fluency and accuracy—demonstrating that ECRIF retains efficacy even in online environments.

Tamayo et al. (2024) similarly emphasized affective outcomes, observing increases in confidence and motivation alongside fluency among Ecuadorian ninth graders. This aligns with AlSaleem's (2018) findings, suggesting that ECRIF benefits learners both linguistically and emotionally across different age groups and delivery modes. In a comparative study, Benlaghrissi and Ouahidi (2024) evaluated ECRIF against mobile-assisted project-based learning (MALL-PBL) with ninety-one Moroccan secondary students. While MALL-PBL produced higher overall gains, the ECRIF group showed substantial speaking improvements—underscoring ECRIF's value as a foundational instructional model.

In previous studies, the ECRIF method facilitated meaningful learning activities that supported students' development in skills such as speaking, vocabulary, and overall communicative competence, depending on each study's focus. Teachers, as a result, can benefit from ECRIF to define learning targets, structure tasks, and assess progress. Given its adaptable structure and emphasis on active engagement, ECRIF offers a systematic way to guide students through progressive stages of language use. This study applied the method specifically to speaking instruction, as its clear sequence and flexible application were expected to enhance students' English-speaking ability while aligning with the study's instructional objectives.

Technology in English Language Instruction (ELT)

Technology has become integral to modern English language instruction, offering diverse tools that enhance engagement, flexibility, and learner autonomy. Although few studies have specifically investigated the integration of technology in the ECRIF method, its focus on staged, scaffolded learning corresponds with pedagogical approaches that benefit from digital support. Research on technology-enhanced communicative and task-based instruction—both of which share similarities with ECRIF—indicates that multimedia platforms, interactive applications, and collaborative tools can facilitate language input, practice, and fluency development (Yulian & Damaianti, 2025; Tamayo et al., 2024). This study intentionally integrated technology into ECRIF-based instruction, using platforms such as YouTube for comprehensive input during the Encounter stage and Padlet or Flip for interactive practice and production during the Fluently Use stage.

Kurzweil and Scholl (2007) emphasized the utility of digital resources for lesson planning and activity design, particularly when integrated within structured instructional methods such as ECRIF. Platforms such as Quizizz and Kahoot can reinforce speaking practice and learning by providing instant feedback during exercises in the Clarify and Remember stages, while tools such as Padlet and Google Classroom promote interaction in the Internalize and Fluently Use stages through teacher-assigned exercises. This scaffolded use of technology complements the cognitive and communicative demands of speaking instruction.

A clear distinction must be made between Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL) and Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC). CALL refers to the broader application of software and digital resources for language learning, including apps such as Duolingo, which offers individual practice. In contrast, CMC involves synchronous or asynchronous interaction between learners via platforms such as Zoom or Google Classroom, supporting real-time or delayed communication. Both contribute to different dimensions of speaking development.

CMC tools have shown particular promise in enhancing speaking proficiency. Nejad et al. (2021) reported that synchronous CMC significantly improved pronunciation skills, while Bagheri and Zenouzagh (2021) found that even when learners preferred face-to-face interaction, CMC encouraged verbal and functional engagement. Multimedia content such as podcasts and YouTube was also found to improve learners' pronunciation and intonation (Gholamshahi & Pazhakh, 2015). Gesture-based interaction in CMC settings further supported vocabulary retention (Morett et al., 2012).

Research by Alfuhaid (2021) demonstrated that Duolingo, although a CALL tool, helped improve speaking fluency and learner confidence. This suggests that both CALL and CMC approaches can be complementary, with CALL offering foundational input and CMC enabling real-time practice. These findings contrast earlier assertions by Ko (2012), which downplayed the role of learning environments.

Despite its advantages, technology integration presents challenges. Lafford and Lafford (2005) identified key concerns including cost, infrastructure, and curriculum alignment. Similarly, Rintaningrum (2023) emphasized the need to balance benefits such as increased learner autonomy with issues such as instructor workload and digital literacy.

In summary, technology—whether in the form of CALL or CMC—plays a vital role in English-speaking instruction. When strategically aligned with pedagogical frameworks such as ECRIF and flexible delivery models such as HyFlex, it can support scaffolded language development and promote learner engagement across varied instructional modes.

HyFlex Model of Instruction

The Hybrid-Flexible (HyFlex) model is an instructional design that integrates face-to-face, synchronous online, and asynchronous online learning, providing students with the autonomy to choose their mode of participation. Developed at San Francisco State University, HyFlex was introduced to improve access and accommodate diverse learner needs (Beatty, 2019; San Francisco State University, 2023; Columbia University, 2023). It combines the structured nature of hybrid learning with the flexibility of student choice, enabling learners to shift between modes without compromising academic outcomes.

This model centers on learner agency, accessibility, and pedagogical equivalency. Its core principles include student choice, equivalent learning activities across modes, content reusability, and technological accessibility. Rather than merely mixing formats, HyFlex represents a learner-centered approach that blends pedagogy and technology to support personalized, inclusive learning paths (Milman et al., 2020; Nasongkhla & Sujiva, 2022).

Recent empirical studies have reinforced HyFlex's effectiveness. Miftahov-Rapoport (2022) identified essential factors such as technology integration, increased learner autonomy, and institutional support. Likewise, Guidry (2021) and Barclay et al. (2022) highlighted the model's flexibility in adapting to students' evolving needs and participation patterns. Overall, HyFlex fosters equitable access and engagement, especially in diverse or uncertain learning contexts.

Terminological variants have emerged to describe similar approaches. For example, He et al. (2015) used “flexible hybrid” to describe a course combining online, hybrid, and flipped formats, while Leiberman (2018) proposed “Blendflex,” offering learners full choice across in-person and online modalities. These models echo HyFlex’s core emphasis on student-driven learning.

According to Beatty (2019), “Hybrid” refers to combining online and in-person instruction, whereas “Flexible” denotes students’ ability to choose their mode of engagement without experiencing a learning deficit. Thus, a HyFlex course allows students to either attend in-person synchronous sessions or engage online, with some implementations offering both real-time and on-demand options.

HyFlex Modes of Instruction

1) Onsite or face-to-face instruction, delivered in traditional classroom settings, enables immediate feedback, direct interaction, and collaborative engagement (Beatty, 2014; Qiu & McDougall, 2013). This mode facilitates instant feedback and spontaneous clarification, enabling instructors to address any misunderstandings students may have and improve their explanations as needed. This helps students understand more clearly and meets their immediate needs (Niyomves et al., 2024). Additionally, instructors can adapt lessons dynamically based on students’ needs and enhance learning experience with technological support. However, challenges include logistical barriers, travel constraints, and limited accessibility for remote learners, potentially affecting equity and continuity (Williams & Jacobs, 2004; Etzelmüller et al., 2020).

2) Synchronous online instruction, a core element of HyFlex, allows students and teachers to interact in real time through platforms such as Zoom or Google Meet (Beatty, 2019; Fadde & Vu, 2014). This mode promotes active participation, timely feedback, and community building (Hrastinski, 2008; Perveen, 2016). Features such as live sessions, chat tools, and recording playback improve accessibility and student support (Moser & Smith, 2015). Nonetheless, it poses limitations in scheduling, engagement, and assessment integrity, particularly for practical tasks or low-bandwidth contexts (Mukhtar et al., 2020). Mitigation strategies include interactive design, cognitive scaffolding, and proctoring tools.

3) Asynchronous online instruction enables students to engage with content independently of time and location (Beatty, 2019). It is ideal for those with external responsibilities or variable schedules, offering flexibility and self-paced learning (Chen & Chen,

2017). Kim et al. (2011) demonstrated that the incorporation of various media formats and instructor-facilitated interactions raises learners' sense of social presence and satisfaction, which are essential for effective participation in asynchronous online learning. However, delayed communication and reduced social interaction may lead to isolation or disengagement (Liu & Carless, 2006; Bennett et al., 2008; Conrad, 2002). Well-structured support systems are essential for maximizing its effectiveness.

Together, these three instructional modes empower learners to choose how they engage, while offering instructors multiple pathways to deliver content equitably and flexibly. Research affirms that HyFlex instruction, through its multimodal approach, enhances learner autonomy, fluency, and confidence in language learning (Milman et al., 2020; Kohnke, 2022). Studies by Lin (2021) and Yamada (2022) emphasize its resilience during educational disruptions, though technical and pedagogical complexities persist. Overall, the HyFlex instruction offers a promising, learner-centered framework that supports learner agency and self-regulation in EFL contexts. While previous studies have not directly measured gains in student's speaking ability, these learner-centered benefits can create favorable conditions for its development.

Perceptions

Perception can be defined as a belief or opinion based on how things seem (Cambridge University Press, 2023) and as the processing of sensory information into meaningful experiences (Twedt & Proffitt, 2013). In the context of language learning, perception is significant because it directly influences learners' engagement, motivation, and outcomes (Kurniawan, 2015).

For this study, the questionnaire assessing students' perceptions toward HyFlex instruction using the ECRIF method was adapted from Stepp-Greany's (2002) five-category model. However, only four out of the five categories were selected for their relevance to this study's instructional context, as the focus was on instructional design and delivery modes rather than teaching style or teacher behavior. These categories included: 1) *Usefulness and availability of resources or classroom environment*, 2) *Effect of the HyFlex instruction using the ECRIF method on learning*, 3) *Interest and relevance*, and 4) *Impact of the HyFlex instruction using the ECRIF method on learner confidence, technical skills, and assessment*. These categories were used to assess how students perceived the instructional approach.

In contrast, to examine students' perceptions of the specific HyFlex modes of instruction (onsite, synchronous online, and asynchronous online) within the ECRIF method, a different set of perception categories was employed. These categories were adapted from Rhoads (2020) and Bakach (2021), whose studies provided empirically supported frameworks for assessing learner perceptions across HyFlex modes, aligning with this study's aim to investigate students' perceptions of the three modes of HyFlex instruction: onsite, synchronous online, and asynchronous. The selected categories included: (1) Content and delivery, and (2) Satisfaction and perceived learning. By tailoring these categories to address both the overall instructional method and individual learning modes, the questionnaire offered a structured yet nuanced understanding of students' experiences.

Statement of hypothesis

After receiving HyFlex instruction using the ECRIF method to enhance their English-speaking ability, Thai upper secondary school students are expected to demonstrate a statistically significant increase ($p < 0.05$) in their average post-test scores compared to pre-test scores, with an expected moderate effect size (Cohen's $d \approx 0.4-0.6$). This improvement is anticipated due to the structured, interactive nature of the ECRIF method combined with the flexible, multimodal engagement offered by the HyFlex model of instruction.

Scope of the study

The study was conducted using a pre-and post-test design with a single group with the aim to explore the effects of HyFlex instruction using the ECRIF method on the enhancement of English-speaking ability of Thai upper secondary school students. The sample of this study consisted of 30 Thai secondary school students from a diverse range of institutions or schools in numerous Thai provinces, mainly in Bangkok, Thailand. Purposive sampling was employed, as these students met the study's inclusion criteria of being in the target educational level and having consistent access to the HyFlex learning environment. The research involved two phases: development and implementation. The implementation phase involved ten weeks of instruction, with each lesson lasting sixty minutes. Data was collected through questionnaire surveys and semi-structured interviews. While the study aimed to assess instructional impact, it is important to acknowledge potential threats to internal validity such as self-selection bias or external factors that may have influenced speaking ability during the intervention. The study also discussed pedagogical implications for future research.

Limitations of the study

This study was subject to several limitations that may have affected the generalizability and depth of its findings. Firstly, the sample size was relatively small and was limited to upper secondary students, which restricted the applicability of the results to broader educational contexts, such as primary, lower secondary, or tertiary levels. Secondly, the HyFlex instructional environment was constrained by the availability of only basic classroom equipment, lacking the advanced and fully integrated systems that were typically found in professional institutions or university settings. This may have impacted the quality and consistency of the learning experience for participants. Thirdly, the timeframe for data collection was limited to ten weeks, with data gathered only once per week. This short duration may not have been sufficient to capture long-term patterns or changes in student engagement and learning outcomes. Fourthly, the presence of self-selection bias cannot be ruled out, as participants voluntarily enrolled in the program, which may have influenced their motivation levels and responsiveness to instruction. Additionally, external variables—such as prior language learning experiences, extracurricular exposure, or familiarity with the test format (given that the pre- and post-tests were identical)—may have affected participants' speaking ability during the intervention. Furthermore, given the single-group pre-test–post-test design, the potential for a Type II error and the general tendency for post-test scores to be higher in treatment groups without a control group were acknowledged when interpreting results. Lastly, the data collection methods, questionnaire surveys and semi-structured interviews, also presented limitations, as they may not have fully captured the complexity or subtlety of participants' experiences and perspectives, particularly given the dual role of the researcher as both instructor and data collector, which may have influenced the openness or candor of student responses.

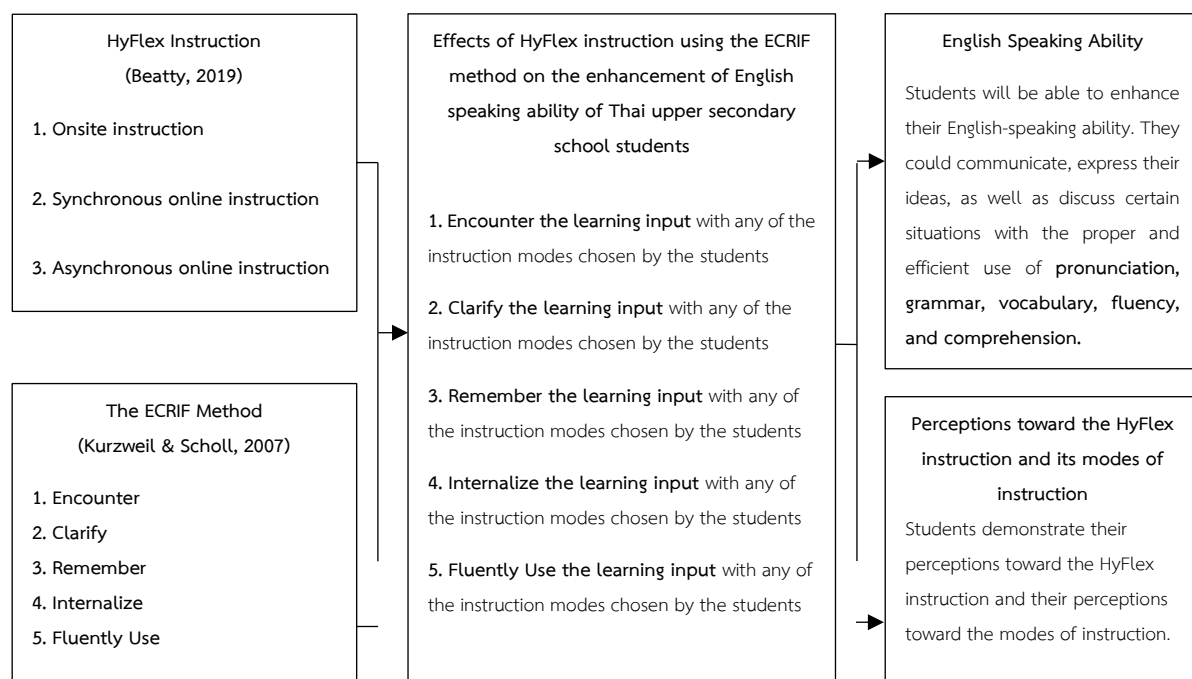
Conceptual framework

This study employed a conceptual framework integrating the HyFlex instructional model (Beatty, 2019) and the ECRIF teaching method (Kurzweil & Scholl, 2007) to enhance Thai upper secondary students' English-speaking ability. HyFlex was selected for its flexible and inclusive structure, offering three instructional modes—onsite, synchronous online, and asynchronous online—to accommodate diverse learning contexts. ECRIF was chosen for its structured, student-centered approach that facilitates progressive language development through five stages: Encounter, Clarify, Remember, Internalize, and Fluently Use.

Together, this framework supported the investigation of both instructional effects and student perceptions. Perceptual dimensions were informed by prior studies (Stepp-Greany, 2002; Rhoads, 2020; Bakach, 2021), allowing for a comprehensive understanding of learners' experiences. This alignment reflects the study's dual aims: (1) to examine the effects of HyFlex instruction on speaking ability, and (2) to explore student perceptions of HyFlex and its instructional modes.

Figure 1

Conceptual framework of the study



Research Methodology

This study employed a quasi-experimental one-group pre- and post-test design using a mixed-methods approach. The quantitative strand assessed the effects of HyFlex instruction using the ECRIF method on students' English-speaking ability, while the qualitative strand explored students' perceptions of the instruction and its delivery modes. The study did not utilize a control group, which may reduce the strength of causal interpretations. However, this decision was made to maintain instructional continuity and reflect the natural learning environment in which the intervention was applied.

Quantitative data were collected using B1-level English speaking pre- and post-tests and two structured perception questionnaires. Qualitative data were gathered through open-ended questionnaire items and semi-structured interviews to gain deeper insights. The study was implemented over a ten-week period, with instruction delivered once per week. Pre- and post-test comparisons were used to evaluate improvement in speaking ability.

Participants

This study employed a purposive sampling technique to recruit 30 Thai upper secondary school students (Grades 10–12) from diverse educational backgrounds, including General Educational Development (GED) candidates and students enrolled in equivalent academic programs. Participants voluntarily enrolled in the HyFlex instruction course offered at a private tutoring school located in Bangkok, Thailand. The course was specifically designed to enhance English-speaking ability for high-stakes purposes such as university admissions, oral examinations, and international standardized tests.

Demographically, the sample consisted of 17 females (56.67%) and 13 males (43.33%), with ages ranging from 16 to 19 years. Twelve students (40%) were in Grade 10, seven (23.33%) in Grade 11, and eight (26.67%) in Grade 12. Three participants (10%) were GED candidates who had previously completed Grade 4 or 5. Regarding academic programs, 36.67% were in Mathematics and English, 33.33% in Language and Arts, and 30% in Science and Mathematics.

To ensure instructional appropriateness, the course content and assessments were aligned with the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) at the B1 (intermediate) level, which is considered a suitable benchmark for upper secondary students. Participants' English proficiency levels were not formally pre-screened but were assumed to align with B1 level expectations based on their academic standing and stated goals.

Research instruments

This study employed both (1) instructional instruments and (2) data collection instruments to assess the effects of HyFlex instruction using the ECRIF method in enhancing Thai upper secondary students' English-speaking ability.

1) Instructional Instrument

The instructional instrument consisted of a ten-week lesson plan comprising four CEFR B1-level thematic units: Travel the World, Technology: Online Citizens, Nation & Culture, and Educational Life & Goals. Each unit integrated the five ECRIF stages—Encounter, Clarify,

Remember, Internalize, and Fluently Use—across three HyFlex delivery modes: onsite, synchronous online, and asynchronous online. Students had the flexibility to switch between modes weekly. The lesson content was aligned with tasks from standardized tests such as IELTS and TOEFL iBT and designed to support the development of speaking skills relevant to real-world contexts.

To ensure instructional validity, the lesson plan was reviewed by three experts using the Index of Item-Objective Congruence (IOC). Most items met the acceptable threshold ($\text{IOC} \geq 0.67$), while a few initially rated at 0.33 were revised. The final version achieved an overall mean IOC score above 0.70, indicating strong alignment between instructional objectives and lesson content. A sample unit—*Unit 1: Travel the World (Part I)*—is provided in Appendix A to illustrate the integration of HyFlex delivery modes and ECRIF stages in practice.

2) Data Collection Instruments

Three data collection instruments were employed.

First, pre- and post-tests assessed students' English-speaking ability through five interview-style tasks adapted from IELTS speaking prompts. These tasks evaluated pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension. Responses were rated using an analytic rubric adapted from Songchat (2016) and Harmer (2007), with a total maximum score of 20. The same set of questions was used for both pre- and post-tests to ensure consistency. However, the content was intentionally unrelated to the instructional materials to avoid content familiarity and better reflect genuine improvement in speaking ability. Inter-rater reliability was ensured through rater training, and a strong positive Pearson correlation ($r = 0.897, p < .001$) between pre- and post-test scores confirmed test reliability. The content of the tests and rubric was validated via IOC by three experts. Mean IOC scores for the test items ranged from 0.33 to 1.00, with an overall mean score of 0.73, while the rubric received a perfect mean score of 1.00 across all items.

Second, a questionnaire measured students' perceptions toward HyFlex instruction using the ECRIF method and the three instructional modes. The first section, adapted from Stepp-Greany (2002), examined four dimensions: classroom materials and environment, instructional effects, learner interest and relevance, and learner confidence. The second section, adapted from Rhoads (2020) and Bakach (2021), focused on content delivery and learner satisfaction in onsite, synchronous online, and asynchronous online modes. All items were rated on a 4-point Likert scale to avoid neutral responses and encourage students to

express a clear opinion, and were supplemented by open-ended questions. The questionnaire was reviewed by three experts, and all items received a mean IOC score of 1.00, confirming strong content validity.

Third, semi-structured interviews were conducted with six students representing different performance levels (high, mid, low) based on post-test results. The interviews comprised ten open-ended questions—three on general perceptions of HyFlex instruction and seven focusing on specific instructional modes. The interview protocol was also validated through IOC review, with each question receiving a mean score of 1.00, indicating strong alignment with the study’s objectives. (See the semi-structured interview questions in Appendix B.)

All instruments demonstrated strong content validity through expert validation using the IOC procedure and were aligned with the research objectives.

Data Collection

The data collection process employed pre-tests, post-tests, questionnaires, and semi-structured interviews to gather both speaking ability and perceptions data. Pre- and post-tests were administered individually via Zoom outside of class hours to ensure student convenience. With consent, all speaking responses were recorded and evaluated using the validated scoring rubric. The scoring rubric, adapted from Harmer (2007), assessed five components of speaking ability—pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension—each rated on a 1–4 scale, yielding a total score of 20.

Questionnaires were distributed electronically after the instructional period. These consisted of 60 items across closed-ended and open-ended formats, designed to explore students’ perceptions of both the HyFlex instruction and its three modes. Semi-structured interviews were conducted online with six selected students to obtain deeper insights into their experiences and perceptions of the HyFlex-ECRIF approach. Interview responses were audio-recorded and transcribed for thematic analysis.

All instruments used in the data collection process had been previously validated through IOC review by three experts, and revisions were made accordingly to ensure strong content alignment and methodological rigor. Ethical procedures were followed, and all participants gave informed consent to participate in the study.

Data Analysis

To address the research questions, both quantitative and qualitative methods were employed. For Research Question 1, pre- and post-test scores were analyzed using SPSS to calculate the mean and conduct a paired-sample t-test. Additionally, Cohen's d was computed to assess the effect size, offering insight into the practical significance of the observed score differences.

For Research Question 2, data from the 4-point Likert scale questionnaires were analyzed using descriptive statistics, specifically mean scores. The Likert scale was interpreted as follows: 4 = The Most, 3 = More, 2 = Less, and 1 = The Least, following the interpretation guidelines proposed by Best and Kahn (2006). Mean scores were used to determine the level of agreement toward HyFlex instruction and its delivery modes. Specifically, mean scores ranging from 3.50 to 4.00 were interpreted as very high agreement, 2.50 to 3.49 as high agreement, 1.50 to 2.49 as moderate agreement, and below 1.50 as low agreement, based on the adapted scale from Boone and Boone (2012).

In addition, qualitative data collected from open-ended questionnaire responses and semi-structured interviews were analyzed through Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis method. This involved thematic coding to identify recurring patterns in students' perceptions, which were then triangulated with the quantitative findings to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the results.

Research Results

Results of research question 1: To what extent does HyFlex instruction using the ECRIF method enhance English speaking ability of Thai upper secondary school students?

The research question aimed to explore the effects of HyFlex instruction using the ECRIF method to enhance the English-speaking ability of Thai upper secondary school students. To answer the research question, the scores from the pre- and post-tests were analyzed quantitatively using SPSS to calculate the mean, standard deviation (SD), a paired-sample t-test, and Cohen's d to determine the effect size. Table 2 indicates the descriptive statistics and inferential test results, with a total score of 20.

Table 2

The descriptive statistics of the participants pre- and post-scores, with a total score of 20

Test Type	Mean Score	SD	t-value	df	p-value	Cohen's d	Interpretation
Pre-Test	11.63	1.80					
Post-Test	12.51	2.10	-5.17	29	< 0.001	0.45	Statistically significant improvement

The results indicate that the mean pre-test score was 11.63, while the mean post-test score increased to 12.51, suggesting an overall improvement in students' English-speaking ability following the intervention. The standard deviation (SD) increased slightly from 1.80 in the pre-test to 2.10 in the post-test, indicating a greater spread of scores in the post-test. This suggests that while most students improved, the degree of improvement varied across individuals.

The paired-sample t-test yielded a result of $t(29) = -5.17$, with a p-value of < 0.001 , indicating a statistically significant difference between pre- and post-test scores. Given that the p-value was below the conventional threshold of 0.05, the findings suggest that the observed improvement is unlikely to have occurred by chance, although statistical testing does not entirely rule out error. The effect size, calculated using Cohen's d, was 0.45, which represents a moderate effect according to Cohen's (1988) guidelines. This result provides evidence that the instructional intervention contributed to a measurable gain in English-speaking ability.

In other words, this outcome directly addresses Research Question 1, confirming that HyFlex instruction incorporating the ECRIF method was effective in enhancing the English-speaking performance of Thai upper secondary school students. The increase in average test scores, supported by statistical significance, suggests that the combination of flexible learning modes and the structured language development process offered by the ECRIF method (Encounter, Clarify, Remember, Internalize, Fluently Use) created a learning environment conducive to speaking ability improvement. Therefore, the results support the conclusion that HyFlex instruction using the ECRIF method had a meaningful and positive impact on students' English-speaking ability.

Results of Research Question 2: What are the perceptions of Thai upper secondary school students toward HyFlex instruction using the ECRIF method to enhance English speaking ability, including its modes of instruction?

To address this research question, a mixed-methods approach was employed. Quantitative data were obtained from a 4-point Likert-scale questionnaire, while qualitative data were gathered from open-ended questionnaire responses and semi-structured interviews. Thematic analysis was conducted using Braun and Clarke's (2006) method. The results are reported using a theme-by-theme structure, integrating both quantitative trends and qualitative insights across two areas of focus: 1) students' perceptions toward HyFlex instruction using the ECRIF method and 2) students' perceptions toward its three modes of instruction—onsite, synchronous online, and asynchronous online.

1) Results of students' perceptions toward HyFlex instruction using the ECRIF method

The results of students' perceptions toward HyFlex instruction using the ECRIF method were derived from both quantitative and qualitative data sources. Quantitative data were obtained from a 23-item, 4-point Likert-scale questionnaire (see Table 3), and qualitative data were collected from open-ended questionnaire responses and semi-structured interviews. Thematic analysis was conducted using Braun and Clarke's (2006) method. Results are presented by emergent themes, integrating both quantitative trends and qualitative insights.

Table 3

Descriptive statistics of participants' questionnaire responses

(N = 30; 4 = the most, 3 = more, 2 = less, 1 = the least; Mean = average level of agreement, SD = standard deviation indicating response variability)

Question No.	Mean	SD
1. The instructions, lessons, and activities were easy to understand and follow.	3.50	0.51
2. Access to the materials and the classroom environment were good and adequate.	3.13	0.57
3. The materials and the classroom environment helped facilitate my studying.	3.23	0.63
4. The materials and the classroom environment were ready.	3.23	0.61
5. Overall, my English-speaking ability improved as a result of the HyFlex instruction.	3.27	0.45

Question No.	Mean	SD
6. The information from the lessons and activities of the HyFlex instruction improved my English-speaking ability greatly.	3.27	0.45
7. I learned a lot from the lessons and activities of the HyFlex instruction.	3.53	0.51
8. I was able to use learning materials from the lessons and activities to practice English speaking-ability at my own pace.	3.07	0.70
9. I was able to further explore learning materials from the lessons and activities of the HyFlex instruction to improve my English-speaking ability.	3.10	0.76
10. The HyFlex instruction helped me enhance at speaking English.	3.57	0.50
11. Overall, I enjoyed the HyFlex instruction.	3.67	0.48
12. The learning experiences provided by the HyFlex instruction made the English-speaking course more interesting.	3.67	0.48
13. The activities and tasks I performed were relevant to the real-life English-speaking situation.	3.60	0.57
14. The activities and tasks I performed were enjoyable and interesting.	3.57	0.50
15. I enjoyed the HyFlex instruction more when compared to the traditional instruction, which offers only in onsite mode.	3.60	0.50
16. The HyFlex instruction made me have more time to practice English-speaking ability.	3.67	0.48
17. The HyFlex instruction made me save more cost to practice English-speaking ability.	3.73	0.45
18. The HyFlex instruction made me more comfortable to practice English-speaking ability.	3.47	0.51
19. I would like to register for the course using HyFlex instruction in the future.	3.70	0.53
20. I gained more confidence in speaking English.	3.50	0.51
21. The learning experiences from the HyFlex instruction helped me perform English-speaking ability better in my daily life.	3.57	0.50
22. The learning experiences from the HyFlex instruction helped me perform English-speaking ability better in the higher education examination such as university entrance examination.	3.23	0.50
23. The learning experiences from the HyFlex instruction helped me perform English-speaking ability better in the English proficiency tests such as IELTS, TOEFL, and English interview examinations.	3.00	0.59
Total	3.43	0.53

Table 3 presents the statistical results of questionnaire items 1 to 23, which assessed students' perceptions toward the HyFlex instruction using the ECRIF method. The data show that students responded positively overall, with mean scores ranging from 3.00 to 3.73 on a 4-point Likert scale (1 = the least, 4 = the most). This range indicates that students generally agreed or strongly agreed with the questionnaire items, reflecting positive perceptions toward the instruction. The highest mean score was found in item 17 ($M = 3.73$, $SD = 0.45$), indicating that the HyFlex instruction had made students save more cost to practice English-speaking ability. Other high mean scores included item 11 ($M = 3.67$, $SD = 0.48$) and item 16 ($M = 3.67$, $SD = 0.48$), suggesting that students found the HyFlex instruction enjoyable.

On the other hand, the lowest mean score was observed in item 23 ($M = 3.00$, $SD = 0.59$), which asked about students' learning experiences from the HyFlex instruction that helped them perform English-speaking ability better in the English proficiency tests such as IELTS, TOEFL, and English interview examinations. Despite this, all items received mean scores of 3.00 or higher, indicating that students maintained generally favorable perceptions toward the instructional model. The overall mean score across all 23 items was 3.43 ($SD = 0.53$), indicating that students consistently agreed that the HyFlex instruction, when combined with the ECRIF method, positively impacted their English-speaking enhancement and provided an engaging learning experience.

These quantitative findings aligned with and were further enriched by themes that emerged from the qualitative data, as detailed in the following section.

Theme 1: Positive Learning Experience and Improved Speaking Skills

Students perceived HyFlex instruction with the ECRIF method as beneficial for improving their English-speaking ability. Questionnaire items 5, 6, and 10 all received high agreement scores ($M = 3.27$ to 3.57). Most students agreed that the instruction enhanced their speaking ability (Item 10, $M = 3.57$, $SD = 0.50$), and that lesson activities significantly contributed to their development.

Qualitative responses reinforced this. One high-achieving student stated, *"I got better at speaking because we practiced step-by-step in each ECRIF stage."* Another mid-achieving student added, *"The activities helped me become more confident in real conversations."* Interviewees also confirmed that the structured flow from encountering language to fluently using it supported their progress.

Theme 2: Enjoyment and Engagement in the HyFlex Experience

Participants in both interviews and open-ended responses commonly noted enjoyed the HyFlex instruction. Item 11 (“Overall, I enjoyed HyFlex instruction”) received a high score ($M = 3.67$, $SD = 0.48$), along with Items 12, 14, and 15, all above $M = 3.50$.

Qualitative data aligned with this sentiment. Students frequently mentioned they liked the “interactive and flexible” approach and appreciated that activities were more *“interesting than traditional classes.”* One low-achieving student expressed, *“It was fun, and I felt more motivated to speak English.”* These responses suggest that combining HyFlex and ECRIF created a dynamic and engaging environment that promoted speaking confidence.

Theme 3: Flexibility and Accessibility of the HyFlex Model

A key advantage noted was the flexibility HyFlex provided. Items 16 and 17 received some of the highest mean scores ($M = 3.67$ and 3.73 , respectively), indicating that students valued having more time and saving costs for English-speaking practice. Item 8 also showed students could practice at their own pace ($M = 3.07$).

Qualitative data reflected similar themes. Several students in the open-ended responses appreciated being able to *“review the materials later”* and *“save travel expenses.”* One mid-achieving student noted, *“I liked that I could join online when I couldn’t come to class. It helped me keep learning.”*

Theme 4: Supportive Learning Materials and Classroom Environment

Items 2 to 4 addressed materials and environment, with mean scores between 3.13–3.23. Students generally agreed that materials and the learning setting supported their progress. Some open-ended responses highlighted the usefulness of worksheets and recorded materials. One low-achieving student stated, *“The videos and class notes were helpful when I didn’t understand something.”* Another mid-achieving student mentioned that the classroom was *“organized and easy to follow.”*

Theme 5: Confidence and Real-World Application

Students expressed increased confidence in speaking. Item 20 (“I gained more confidence in speaking”) scored $M = 3.50$ ($SD = 0.51$), and Item 21 (“helped me perform English better in daily life”) scored $M = 3.57$ ($SD = 0.50$). These data suggest that HyFlex instruction was perceived as practical and applicable beyond the classroom. Qualitative

responses supported this theme. One mid-achieving student remarked, *“I’m not scared to speak in front of people anymore.”* Another high-achieving shared, *“I used what I learned in job interviews and university entrance mock interviews.”*

Theme 6: Limited Perceived Impact on Standardized Test Preparation

The only relatively low-scoring item was Item 23 ($M = 3.00$), which assessed the perceived usefulness of HyFlex for English proficiency exams such as IELTS or TOEFL. This was also reflected in qualitative comments. One high-achieving student admitted, *“I don’t think we practiced test-like questions,”* and another mid-achieving student stated, *“It’s more useful for speaking in daily life, not for exams.”* These insights suggest that while students felt their overall speaking improved, they did not strongly connect HyFlex-ECRIF lessons with test preparation.

In summary, students’ perceptions toward HyFlex instruction using the ECRIF method were generally positive across all themes. Quantitative results from the 23-item questionnaire showed consistently high mean scores (overall $M = 3.43$), and qualitative feedback confirmed that students valued the flexibility, engagement, and confidence-building nature of the lessons. While students appreciated the impact on real-life communication, they saw less relevance for formal test preparation. These findings support the effects of HyFlex instruction integrated with ECRIF in enhancing speaking ability in practical, learner-centered ways.

2) Results of students’ perceptions toward the three modes of instruction—onsite, synchronous online, and asynchronous online in HyFlex instruction using the ECRIF method

The results of students’ perceptions toward HyFlex instruction using the ECRIF method were derived from both quantitative and qualitative data sources, using a mixed-methods approach. Quantitative data were obtained from a 36-item, 4-point Likert-scale questionnaire (items 25–60, excluding open-ended questions 36, 48, and 60; see Table 4), while qualitative data were gathered from open-ended questionnaire responses and semi-structured interviews. Thematic analysis of qualitative data was conducted following Braun and Clarke’s (2006) method.

The findings are presented thematically, integrating both quantitative and qualitative insights to reveal students’ perceptions of each instructional mode in the HyFlex model—

onsite, synchronous online, and asynchronous online—using the ECRIF method to enhance English-speaking ability.

Table 4

The statistical results of questionnaire items 25 to 60 (excluding open-ended items 36, 48, and 60; N = 30; 4 = the most, 3 = more, 2 = less, 1 = the least; Mean = average level of agreement, SD = standard deviation indicating response variability)

Question No.	Mean	SD
25. Overall, the instructor provided clear course requirements and expectations.	3.76	0.44
26. Overall, the instructor's assignments were properly challenging.	3.53	0.57
27. Overall, the instructor demonstrated subject and content expertise.	3.87	0.35
28. Overall, the instructor provided meaningful learning activities.	3.67	0.48
29. The instructor interacted with me to facilitate/provide help difficulties in activities, the use of online materials, devices, websites, applications, and activities.	3.23	0.50
30. Overall, the instructor organized the course to maximize learning.	3.47	0.50
31. Overall, the course content was presented in ways that were easy for participation.	3.53	0.50
32. Overall, the instructor provided an appropriate learning environment.	3.43	0.50
33. Overall, I am satisfied with the onsite mode of instruction.	3.73	0.45
34. The onsite mode of instruction participation had a positive impact on my learning.	3.73	0.45
35. I will enroll to study in the onsite mode of instruction in the future.	3.90	0.30
37. Overall, the instructor provided clear course requirements and expectations.	3.43	0.50
38. Overall, the instructor's assignments (activities and tasks) were properly challenging.	3.27	0.58
39. Overall, the instructor demonstrated subject and content expertise.	3.77	0.43
40. Overall, the instructor provided meaningful learning activities.	3.47	0.51
41. The instructor interacted with me to facilitate/provide help difficulties in activities, the use of online materials, devices, websites, applications, and activities.	2.77	0.63
42. Overall, the instructor organized the course to maximize learning.	3.03	0.61
43. Overall, the course content was presented in ways that were easy for participation.	3.13	0.78

Question No.	Mean	SD
44. Overall, the instructor provided an appropriate learning environment.	3.00	0.64
45. Overall, I am satisfied with the synchronous online mode of instruction.	2.93	0.45
46. The synchronous online mode of instruction participation has a positive impact on my learning.	2.83	0.46
47. I will enroll to study in the synchronous online mode of instruction in the future.	3.23	0.72
49. Overall, the instructor provided clear course requirements and expectations.	3.46	0.50
50. Overall, the instructor's assignments (activities and tasks) were properly challenging.	3.27	0.59
51. Overall, the instructor demonstrated subject and content expertise.	3.67	0.48
52. Overall, the instructor provided meaningful learning activities.	3.47	0.50
53. The instructor helped me immediately when I had any difficulties with the use of online materials, devices, websites, and applications, or when I did not understand the activities.	2.83	0.75
54. Overall, the instructor organized the course to maximize learning.	2.87	0.63
55. Overall, the course content was presented in ways that were easy for participation.	2.90	0.40
56. Overall, the instructor provided an appropriate learning environment.	3.07	0.64
57. Overall, I am satisfied with the asynchronous online mode of instruction.	3.00	0.59
58. The asynchronous online mode of instruction participation has a positive impact on my learning.	3.03	0.61
59. I will enroll to study in the asynchronous online mode of instruction in the future.	2.94	0.94
Total	3.31	0.54

Table 4 summarizes the mean scores and standard deviations of students' responses to each instructional mode. Students reported generally positive perceptions across all modes, with mean scores ranging from 2.77 to 3.90. The highest mean score was found in item 35 ($M = 3.90$, $SD = 0.30$), reflecting strong preference to re-enroll in onsite instruction. Conversely, the lowest score appeared in item 41 ($M = 2.77$, $SD = 0.63$), highlighting challenges in teacher support during synchronous online learning. The overall mean score was 3.31 ($SD = 0.54$), suggesting favorable views toward all modes, with some differences in how effective each mode was considered. These quantitative findings aligned with and were further enriched by themes that emerged from the qualitative data, as detailed in the following section.

Theme 1: Onsite Mode as the Most Effective for Speaking Skill Development and Interaction

Quantitative data indicated strong student preference for onsite learning. Items related to satisfaction with onsite instruction (Items 33–35) received the highest mean scores: Item 35 (“I will enroll to study in the onsite mode in the future.”) scored $M = 3.90$ ($SD = 0.30$), and Items 33 and 34 both received $M = 3.73$ ($SD = 0.45$). Additionally, Item 27 on instructor expertise scored $M = 3.87$ ($SD = 0.35$), suggesting high confidence in instructional quality during onsite sessions.

Qualitative responses echoed this preference. Students cited immediate teacher feedback, clearer pronunciation modeling, and real-time interaction as key benefits. One participant wrote, *“I liked onsite because I could ask questions right away, and I spoke more with friends.”* Another added, *“Face-to-face activities made speaking easier and more fun.”* Interview data further confirmed that all six participants—regardless of proficiency level—favored onsite instruction for developing speaking skills and classroom engagement.

Theme 2: Synchronous Online Mode Offers Accessibility but Faces Technical and Engagement Barriers

Synchronous online instruction was appreciated for its convenience. Items 37–47 showed moderate to positive agreement, with Item 39 (“Instructor demonstrated subject expertise”) scoring $M = 3.77$ ($SD = 0.43$), while Items 37 and 40 received $M = 3.43$ and $M = 3.47$, respectively. However, interaction and engagement indicators were comparatively lower: Item 41 on teacher interaction received the lowest score in the entire set ($M = 2.77$, $SD = 0.63$), and Item 45 on satisfaction with synchronous mode received $M = 2.93$ ($SD = 0.45$).

Students’ qualitative feedback highlighted both benefits and drawbacks. Many valued being able to *“learn from home,”* saving time and travel costs. However, challenges included unstable internet, device limitations, and delayed teacher responses. One student wrote, *“Sometimes I waited long for answers. I didn’t feel as connected.”* Interviewees, particularly those at high- and mid-achieving levels, noted that online group work was less dynamic, with some peers keeping cameras off or not participating. Recommendations from those students included *“adding a second camera to show the classroom”* and ensuring equal teacher attention to online learners.

Theme 3: Asynchronous Online Mode Supports Review and Flexibility but Limits Interaction

Asynchronous online instruction received mixed but generally positive feedback. Items 49–59 ranged from $M = 2.83$ to $M = 3.46$, with Item 49 (“Instructor provided clear course requirements”) scoring the highest in this mode ($M = 3.46$, $SD = 0.50$), and Items 57–59 (satisfaction, impact, and intention to re-enroll) scoring $M = 3.00$, 3.03 , and 2.94 , respectively.

Students appreciated the flexibility of reviewing recorded content and completing tasks at their own pace. Comments included, *“I liked reviewing the lessons when I had time,”* and *“It helped me remember grammar and vocabulary.”* However, others felt disconnected due to the lack of real-time instruction. One low-achieving student said, *“Sometimes I didn’t understand the instructions clearly, and it was hard to ask.”* Interviewees, notably those at high- and mid-achieving levels, agreed that while asynchronous learning helped reinforce lessons, it lacked the immediacy and confidence-building aspects of live interaction. Some recommended clearer video instructions and quicker teacher feedback on submitted tasks.

Theme 4: Instructor Quality Consistently Valued Across Modes

Across all three instructional modes, students rated instructor competence highly. Items 27 (onsite), 39 (synchronous), and 51 (asynchronous) all received high scores— $M = 3.87$, 3.77 , and 3.67 , respectively. This consistency suggests students found the ECRIF-based teaching approach effective regardless of delivery format.

Qualitative responses reinforced this. Interviewees and questionnaire respondents frequently praised the structured delivery and clarity of content. A high-achieving student remarked, *“The teacher explained clearly no matter the mode.”* Another high-achieving student noted, *“ECRIF stages helped me understand and practice speaking systematically, even when studying online.”*

Theme 5: Peer Interaction Stronger in Onsite, Limited Online

Students valued peer collaboration in onsite classes but found it diminished in synchronous and asynchronous settings. Item 29 (onsite peer/teacher interaction) scored moderately at $M = 3.23$ ($SD = 0.50$), but dropped in online modes—Item 41 (synchronous) scored the lowest overall at $M = 2.77$, and Item 53 (asynchronous interaction support) scored $M = 2.83$.

Qualitative responses indicated that some students felt *“hesitant”* to interact in online platforms. Interview data confirmed that peer dynamics weakened during online instruction. One low-achieving student noted, *“I was shy to speak during Zoom, especially when no one turned on the camera.”* Others, particularly those at mid- and low- achieving levels, reported group activities were less engaging due to delayed communication.

Theme 6: Recommendations for Improvement Across Modes

While students expressed overall satisfaction, several improvement suggestions emerged. Overall, for onsite mode, students requested extended class time and access to more learning tools. For synchronous mode, recommendations included better internet infrastructure, dual cameras in class, and increased teacher engagement with online learners. For asynchronous mode, students asked for clearer task instructions, more engaging materials, and faster teacher feedback.

These recommendations align with the quantitative findings, particularly the lower scores for items related to online interaction and ease of participation. Despite these challenges, students remained open to engaging with all modes, especially when blended through the flexible HyFlex-ECRIF approach.

In conclusion, students generally held favorable perceptions toward all three modes of instruction in the HyFlex model using the ECRIF method. Onsite mode was consistently rated highest in terms of satisfaction, speaking ability development, and peer/teacher interaction. Synchronous online mode was valued for convenience but hindered by technical issues and reduced engagement. Asynchronous online mode provided flexible review opportunities but lacked immediacy and interaction. These findings, drawn from both quantitative and qualitative data, underscore the value of a well-structured, learner-centered HyFlex approach in fostering English-speaking ability, while highlighting areas for future refinement across modes.

Discussion, Implications, and Recommendations for Future Research

This study set out to explore the effects of HyFlex instruction using the ECRIF method to enhance the English-speaking ability of Thai upper secondary school students, alongside examining their perceptions toward the different instructional modes: onsite, synchronous online, and asynchronous online. The findings offer a number of valuable insights into how flexible learning models, when paired with structured pedagogical frameworks, can support English language development in diverse contexts.

The statistically significant improvement observed in post-test scores, particularly in grammar and vocabulary, highlights the potential of the ECRIF method as a structured and scaffolded approach to speaking instruction. These results are consistent with prior research showing the importance of structured frameworks such as ECRIF for oral development. For example, Chasi Hidalgo and Ichina Guangatal (2023) found that although students in rural Ecuador perceived speaking as their most difficult skill and struggled with fluency and motivation, the use of structured, interactive methods such as ECRIF provided valuable support in improving confidence and oral practice. However, smaller gains in components such as fluency and pronunciation suggest that more time and targeted feedback may be necessary to support improvement in these areas, aligning with the argument that these skills often require extended exposure and interactive practice (Harmer, 2007; Kormos, 2006).

Students' perceptions revealed both benefits and challenges across the HyFlex modes. Onsite instruction was viewed most favorably, offering immediate interaction, peer collaboration, and greater ease in practicing speaking skills. Synchronous online learning, while praised for its convenience and real-time access, was occasionally hindered by technical difficulties and reduced spontaneity in classroom dynamics. Asynchronous online learning allowed for flexibility and repetition but lacked immediacy and real-time feedback—essential elements for developing spontaneous speaking ability. These perceptions are echoed in previous studies that highlight the importance of interaction quality and structured support in hybrid learning environments (Sofyan & Aeni, 2024; Al-Shahrani & Mahmoud, 2022).

Importantly, the integration of educational technology played a central role in enabling the HyFlex-ECRIF approach. Tools such as Zoom, Padlet, Kahoot, and YouTube supported interaction, content delivery, and student engagement across modes. These digital tools, when used to reinforce each ECRIF stage, helped create a more constructivist, learner-centered environment, where students could engage with content through multiple modalities based on their preferences and contexts (Vygotsky, 1978; Sheerah & Yadav, 2022). However, the study also exposed limitations, including occasional internet instability, reduced engagement in asynchronous settings, and an imbalance in teacher attention across modes—factors that must be addressed to fully realize the potential of HyFlex learning.

The findings offer practical implications for English language educators and institutions. Teachers are encouraged to adopt HyFlex instruction as a viable alternative that enhances accessibility, especially in contexts where face-to-face learning is limited. The ECRIF method should be embedded into curriculum design, as it provides a clear, staged approach to

teaching speaking skills. Moreover, teacher training should include not only technological proficiency but also instructional agility to adapt lesson delivery across modalities. Institutional support through improved infrastructure and professional development is essential to ensure smooth implementation and sustainability.

For students, HyFlex learning—particularly when guided by the ECRIF method—may offer increased autonomy, flexibility, and control over their learning experiences. By allowing students to choose how and when to participate, the model is likely to foster self-regulated learning behaviors and to strengthen their motivation to engage with speaking activities. Nevertheless, additional support is needed to help learners manage their time, particularly in asynchronous settings where task completion and interaction may decline without teacher presence.

Despite its strengths, this study is not without limitations. The absence of a control group restricts the ability to attribute observed gains solely to the intervention. The short instructional period may also have limited the full development of higher-level speaking skills. Additionally, individual differences in learner engagement and access to technology may have influenced the results. Future research should take these limitations into account, offering more longitudinal and comparative designs to validate and extend the findings.

Several directions are suggested for future research. Expanding the participant pool to include lower secondary, vocational, or tertiary-level learners can enhance the generalizability of results. Comparative studies evaluating the ECRIF framework alongside other speaking-focused approaches—such as PPP, ESA, or task-based learning—could further clarify its relative effectiveness. Future research should also examine the application of HyFlex-ECRIF in specialized contexts such as English for Specific Purposes (ESP) or standardized test preparation (e.g., IELTS, TOEFL), which often require intensive and targeted skill development. Innovative directions include integrating AI-based pronunciation tools, speech recognition software, or interactive simulations to support real-time feedback and engagement, particularly in asynchronous environments. Additionally, using learning analytics and reflective tools could help monitor learner progress and tailor instruction more effectively.

Conclusion

This study explored the effects of HyFlex instruction using the ECRIF method to enhance the English-speaking ability of Thai upper secondary students and investigated their perceptions toward the HyFlex instruction using the ECRIF method and its three instructional

modes: onsite, synchronous online, and asynchronous online. The findings revealed that students generally held positive perceptions of the HyFlex-ECRIF approach, appreciating its flexibility, adaptability, and student-centered design. The model enabled learners to engage with content in ways suited to their individual needs, while the ECRIF method provided a structured pathway for developing speaking fluency, confidence, and participation.

Overall, the integration of HyFlex instruction with the ECRIF method presents a promising pedagogical approach to supporting English-speaking development in flexible learning environments. Beyond improving learners' performance, it also empowered them with greater autonomy, choice, and motivation—key traits in modern language education. These findings hold practical relevance for English language educators, curriculum designers, and policymakers aiming to implement effective and inclusive language instruction across both conventional and disrupted educational contexts. As learning environments continue to evolve, the HyFlex-ECRIF model offers a robust, sustainable, and student-centered strategy for fostering meaningful speaking outcomes in EFL settings.

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AI Declaration Statement

During the preparation of this work the authors used QuillBot in order to check grammar and proofread. After using this tool, the authors reviewed and edited the content as needed and take full responsibility for the content of the publication.

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Appendices

Appendix A

Sample of a unit lesson plan

Unit 1: Travel the World (Part I)

Week: 2

Time allocation: 60 minutes

Level of proficiency: B1 or above

Learning outcomes:

Students will be able to

1. improve their speaking ability on the topic of travel and given situations.
2. exercise the speaking ability content through the provided tasks and activities.
3. apply vocabulary, words, phrases, sentences, and utterances on certain topics appropriately and effectively.

HyFlex Instruction procedures

Activity/ Time estimate	ECRIF Stages	Learning activities in each mode			CMC tools
		Onsite	Synchronous Online	Asynchronous Online	
Introduction & Warm-up/ 5 minutes	Encounter	- In-class Greetings - The instructor raises some specific questions in order to activate students' background knowledge and students think about the answers and share to the class	- On-zoom Greetings - The instructor raises some specific questions in order to activate students' background knowledge and students think about the answers and share to the class Example of questions: "Have you ever been to a foreign country?"	Students log in into Google classroom to watch the appropriate sources (videos) from platforms such as YouTube, after that, students are required to perform activities/tasks given	Zoom Meeting <i>(Synchronous Online)</i> Google Classroom <i>(Asynchronous Online)</i> Canva <i>(All modes: Instructor's)</i>

		Example of questions: “Have you ever been to a foreign country?” “What are some great destinations you would like to visit?” “Would you prefer to travel alone or with a group of friends or family?” - The instructor introduces the topic of Unit 1: Travel the World	“What are some great destinations you would like to visit?” “Would you prefer to travel alone or with a group of friends or family?” - The instructor introduces the topic of Unit 1: Travel the World		<i>Presentation and Learning Materials)</i>
Mini-lecture/ 15 minutes	Encounter + Clarify	- The instructor grabs students’ attention by watching a short video provided via YouTube: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0z0E30uOMbs (1:29 minutes) - After the video, the instructor gives a small discussion in relation to the video and raise some questions, essential learning content, and/or related	The instructor grabs students’ attention by watching a short video provided via YouTube: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0z0E30uOMbs (1:29 minutes) - After the video, the instructor gives a small discussion in relation to the video and raise some questions, essential learning content, and/or related meaningful information e.g. vocabulary words and expressions questions	- Appropriate sources (videos) from platforms such as YouTube, learning resources, and given tasks are provided via Google Classroom posts: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0z0E30uOMbs (1:29 minutes) - Students perform given tasks and activities via Google Classroom; they get also feedback from this portal	Zoom Meeting (Synchronous Online) Google Classroom (Asynchronous Online) YouTube (All modes: Appropriate videos) Canva (All modes: Instructor’s Presentation and Learning Materials)

		meaningful information e.g. vocabulary words and expressions questions Example of vocabulary words: An aisle seat, luggage, destination country, a boarding pass, and to board a flight - In turn, students encounter and clarify about the significant learning content	Example of vocabulary words: An aisle seat, luggage, destination country, a boarding pass, and to board a flight - In turn, students encounter and clarify about the significant learning content		
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In-class activities/ 25 minutes	Remember + Internalize	- The instructor provides in-class activities, e.g., discussing the provided topic–students select a topic to discuss in pairs or in groups: a topic of travel destination, processes at the airport, in-flight information, and tourist attractions. - Students perform in-class exercises, certain tasks with Wordwall	- The instructor provides in-class activities, e.g., discussing the provided topic–students select a topic to discuss in pairs or in groups: a topic of travel destination, processes at the airport, in-flight information, and tourist attractions. - Students perform in-class exercises, certain tasks with Wordwall	- Appropriate sources (videos) from platforms such as YouTube, learning resources, and given tasks are provided via Google Classroom posts - Students perform given tasks and activities via Google Classroom	Zoom Meeting (Synchronous Online) Google Classroom (Asynchronous Online) YouTube (All modes: Appropriate videos) Canva (All modes: Instructor's Presentation and Learning Materials) Wordwall (All modes: Activities, such as vocabulary matchings)
Review, Revise, and Give Overall Feedback/ 10 minutes	Remember + Internalize	- The instructor reviews and revises students' activities responses and give them an overall feedback, either immediate feedback and/or out-of-class feedback, in accordance with the speaking assessment rubric:	- The instructor reviews and revises students' activities responses and give them an overall feedback, either immediate feedback and/or out-of-class feedback, in accordance with the speaking assessment rubric: pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension	- Appropriate sources (videos) from platforms such as YouTube, learning resources, and given tasks are provided via Google Classroom posts - Students receive their out-of-class feedback after they have submitted their work via the tasks	Google Classroom (Asynchronous Online) YouTube (All modes: Appropriate videos) Canva (All modes: Instructor's Presentation)

		pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension		provided in Google Classroom, nevertheless - Feedback follows the speaking assessment rubric: pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension	<i>and Learning Materials)</i> Wordwall <i>(All modes: Activities, such as vocabulary matchings)</i>
Wrap-up/ 5 minutes	Remember + Internalize	- The instructor concludes the learning content from Unit 1: Travel the World - The instructor assigns out-of-class activities for students to practice the learning content in spoken form	- The instructor concludes the learning content from Unit 1: Travel the World - The instructor assigns out-of-class activities for students to practice the learning content in spoken form	- Appropriate sources (videos) from platforms such as YouTube, learning resources, and given tasks are provided via Google Classroom posts	Google Classroom <i>(Asynchronous Online)</i> YouTube <i>(All modes: Appropriate videos)</i> Canva <i>(All modes: Instructor's Presentation and Learning Materials)</i> Wordwall <i>(All modes: Activities, such as vocabulary matchings)</i>
Assignment / Out-of-class activities	Internalize + Fluently Use	Students are assigned to submit their homework via Google Classroom	Students are assigned to submit their homework via Google Classroom	Students are assigned to submit their homework via Google Classroom	Google Classroom <i>(All modes)</i>

Appendix B

Semi-structured interview questions

The semi-structured interview questions are divided into two parts, according to Research Question 2 that aims to investigate students' perceptions toward the HyFlex instruction (Part 1) and its three instructional modes (Part 2).

Part 1: What are the perceptions of Thai upper secondary school students toward HyFlex instruction using the ECRIF method to enhance English speaking ability?

Q1: นักเรียนรู้สึกอย่างไรเกี่ยวกับการเรียนการสอนผสมผสานแบบยืดหยุ่นโดยใช้วิธีสอนอีซีอาร์ไอเอฟเพื่อเสริมสร้างความสามารถในการพูดภาษาอังกฤษ? พร้อมให้เหตุผลประกอบ

How do you feel about HyFlex instruction using the ECRIF method to enhance English speaking ability? Give some supporting reasons.

Q2: นักเรียนคิดว่าการเรียนการสอนผสมผสานแบบยืดหยุ่นโดยใช้วิธีสอนอีซีอาร์ไอเอฟช่วยเสริมสร้างความสามารถในการพูดภาษาอังกฤษหรือไม่/อย่างไร?

Do you think HyFlex instruction using the ECRIF method helps you enhance English speaking ability? Why or why not?

Q3: นักเรียนต้องการแนะนำหรือติชมเกี่ยวกับการเรียนการสอนผสมผสานแบบยืดหยุ่นโดยใช้วิธีสอนอีซีอาร์ไอเอฟเพื่อเสริมสร้างความสามารถในการพูดภาษาอังกฤษหรือไม่/อย่างไร?

What are your suggestions about HyFlex instruction using the ECRIF method to enhance English speaking ability?

Part 2: What are the perceptions of Thai upper secondary school students toward the three instructional modes: onsite, synchronous online, and asynchronous online in HyFlex instruction using the ECRIF method to enhance English speaking ability?

Q1: นักเรียนคิดว่าการเรียนการสอนรูปแบบ onsite ช่วยเสริมสร้างความสามารถในการพูดภาษาอังกฤษหรือไม่/อย่างไร?

Do you think the onsite mode of instruction helps you enhance English speaking ability? Why or why not?

Q2: นักเรียนรู้สึกอย่างไรเกี่ยวกับการเรียนการสอนรูปแบบ onsite? (ผู้เรียนและผู้สอนอยู่ในเวลาเดียวกัน ณ สถานที่เรียน) พร้อมให้เหตุผลประกอบ

How do you feel about the onsite mode of instruction? Give some supporting reasons.

Q3: นักเรียนคิดว่าการเรียนการสอนรูปแบบ synchronous online ช่วยเสริมสร้างความสามารถในการพูดภาษาอังกฤษหรือไม่/อย่างไร?

Do you think the synchronous online mode of instruction helps you enhance English speaking ability? Why or why not?

Q4: นักเรียนรู้สึกอย่างไรเกี่ยวกับการเรียนการสอนรูปแบบ synchronous online? (ผู้เรียนและผู้สอนอยู่ในเวลาเดียวกัน ใช้ Zoom Meeting เพื่อการเรียนการสอน) พร้อมให้เหตุผลประกอบ

How do you feel about the synchronous online mode of instruction? Give some supporting reasons.

Q5: นักเรียนคิดว่าการเรียนการสอนรูปแบบ asynchronous online ช่วยเสริมสร้างความสามารถในการพูดภาษาอังกฤษหรือไม่/อย่างไร?

Do you think the asynchronous online mode of instruction helps you enhance English speaking ability? Why or why not?

Q6: นักเรียนรู้สึกอย่างไรเกี่ยวกับการเรียนการสอนรูปแบบ asynchronous online? (ผู้เรียนและผู้สอนไม่อยู่ในเวลาเดียวกัน ใช้ Google Classroom เพื่อการเรียนการสอน) พร้อมให้เหตุผลประกอบ

How do you feel about the asynchronous online mode of instruction? Give some supporting reasons.

Q7: นักเรียนต้องการแนะนำหรือติชมเกี่ยวกับทั้งสามรูปแบบการเรียนการสอนในโมเดลการเรียนการสอนผสมผสานแบบยืดหยุ่นโดยใช้วิธีสอนอีซีอาร์ไอเอฟเพื่อเสริมสร้างความสามารถในการพูดภาษาอังกฤษหรือไม่/อย่างไร?

What are your suggestions about the three modes of instruction in the HyFlex model using the ECRIF method to enhance English speaking ability?