

Thai University Students' Perspectives on English Pronunciation Awareness: Is It Ignored or Awakened ?

มุมมองของผู้เรียนในระดับมหาวิทยาลัยที่มีต่อความตระหนักในการออกเสียงภาษาอังกฤษ: ตระหนักหรือไม่

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Abstract

In this paper, I firstly review pronunciation and its importance, pronunciation instruction and theories, factors that affect learners' English pronunciation, and research studies related to English pronunciation learning and instruction. Then the emphasis is on perspectives from Thai students at a tertiary level on their pronunciation awareness.

The article is mainly based on my classroom research study on pronunciation awareness with the data collected from my first-year English major students enrolling Pronunciation course in the academic year 2010 at Thaksin University. To me, not only does the raised question of "Is pronunciation awareness ignored or awakened?" matter to students, it also MATTERS to us as teachers who must decide whether to ignore or awaken it.

บทคัดย่อ

บทความเรื่องนี้ในขั้นแรกมีการทบทวนวรรณกรรมเกี่ยวกับการออกเสียงภาษาอังกฤษ ความสำคัญของการออกเสียง ทฤษฎีและการสอนการออกเสียง ปัจจัยที่มีผลต่อการออกเสียงของผู้เรียน ตลอดจนงานวิจัยต่างๆ ที่เกี่ยวข้องกับการเรียนและการสอนการออกเสียงภาษาอังกฤษ โดยมุ่งประเด็นสำคัญอันจะนำไปสู่การชี้ให้เห็นถึงมุมมองของผู้เรียนชาวไทยในระดับมหาวิทยาลัยที่มีต่อความตระหนักในการออกเสียงภาษาอังกฤษ

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บทความเรื่องนี้ได้กล่าวถึงงานวิจัยของผู้เขียนในเรื่องความตระหนักในการออกเสียงเป็นหลัก ซึ่งมีการเก็บข้อมูลจากนิสิตชั้นปีที่ 1 วิชาเอกภาษาอังกฤษ มหาวิทยาลัยทักษิณ ในปีการศึกษา 2553 ผู้เขียนเชื่อว่า คำถามที่ว่าประเด็นการออกเสียงภาษาอังกฤษนั้นถูกเพิกเฉยหรือมีการตระหนักนั้นหาได้มีความสำคัญแต่เฉพาะกับตัวผู้เรียนเองไม่ หากแต่ยังมีผลต่อตัวผู้สอนเองเช่นกันในการที่จะตัดสินใจว่าสิ่งนี้ควรจะมีการเพิกเฉยต่อไปหรือมีการตื่นตระหนกกันเสียที่

1. Introduction

One day when I was teaching pronunciation to my first-year English major students, there was one thing unexpectedly coming into my mind and then gladdening my heart. I felt that my students in the year of 2010 were very lucky. Simply but truly, they were lucky because they have had abundant opportunities to learn English pronunciation.

While it seems useless to some to mention this, it can probably be more useless to most of others not to mention it. Here, I am making a comparison between my generation and theirs. When I started learning English at an upcountry school with a large group of my classmates numbering almost 50 and without any educational technologies for learning assistance provided; learning English at that time, to me, was defined as learning a corpus of English vocabulary. Even when I was a university student, scant environment conducive to learning English plus inadequate authentic learning materials were still major problems. Learning English from the Internet was, needless to say, farfetched since there were not many internet cafés available and those existing seemed to be for students who could afford an expensive cost per hour.

Undoubtedly, in my generation it was rather uncomfortable to learn English, particularly for communication. It should be valued by the present generation that they are very lucky to be provided with a great number of materials and technologies to learn English. Their opportunities should not be wasted. To be precise, to me and many others they are precious and regarded as "the golden opportunities".

So, awareness of these opportunities is priceless and the students should avoid any wastage of them. Provided materials and easily accessible technologies for learning English, especially learning English for communication can be greatly used by the students. Here, I am specially referring to English pronunciation, an important component of English communication and a language learning aspect the students can learn even outside the classroom.

2. Pronunciation and its importance

Pronunciation is defined as "a way of speaking a word, especially a way that is accepted or generally understood" (American Heritage Dictionary, 3rd ed., 1992). In communication skills, pronunciation is perceived as one of the important elements. When communicating with one another, people are to have a correct pronunciation in order that their effective communication can be achieved.

Concerning pronunciation in language teaching, its role has been more recognized nowadays. It has significantly resulted from a change in position on language learning and teaching. This change has obviously influenced a move from teacher centered to learner centered classrooms. Moreover, there has been a shift from specific linguistic competencies to broader communicative competencies as goals for teachers and students (Morley, 1991). More attention, therefore, has been directed to intelligible pronunciation which is considered to greatly help

create meaningful communication. In other words, without adequate pronunciation skills, the students' ability to communicate can be limited (Otlowski, 1998). More importantly, it is crucial to mention that the skills for listening comprehension, ability in speaking a language, and pronunciation are interdependent (Gilbert, 1984). Many research studies support Gilbert's belief. This illustrates the need to integrate pronunciation with communicative activities: to give students situations to develop their pronunciation by listening and speaking. The emphasis is, consequently, stressed on the teaching of pronunciation.

With regard to teaching and learning English pronunciation, it is obviously beneficial for second/foreign language learners or students. Not only does it help the speaking skill of the students, it also helps them more comprehend the language obtained through listening. Additionally, it can promote the students' motivation to learn the English language. This is simply because the better they are able to employ their pronunciation skills in English communication, the more self-study in learning the language can be activated. Simply put, the ability in pronunciation can, to some extent, motivate the students to learn more.

However, it should be noted that pronunciation is still found neglected even though Morley (1991) insists that this skill is significant and perceived necessary for learners to be provided with. In a number of studies, the factual situation is illustrated. In Mexico, pronunciation is portrayed as "the Cinderella of language teaching", namely it is placed at a low level of language skill importance (Dalton, 2002). The ignorance of the Cinderella is also prevalent in Taiwan. According to Lin, Fan, and Chen (1995), some teachers in the country claim that very few tests require the learners to express their pronunciation and speaking abilities, and therefore, English pronunciation is not at all important. In Thailand, the skill is ignored in some universities'

curriculums (Syananondh, 1983). Thai learners' performance of English pronunciation is, as a result, rather limited. As cited in Khamkhien's study (2010), the Thai learners seemed to be faced with difficulties on English speaking and English oral communication. The difficulties also prevail among many learners of English as a second language (Fraser, 2000). With inadequate attention directed to the skill, the result is that the skill has not yet been mastered by many of them.

Nevertheless, the fact that the importance of pronunciation exists in English learning and teaching cannot be denied even if it seems to be denied. This is mainly because it unavoidably affects other skills of the language. Wong (1993) points out that the importance is apparent especially when the connection between pronunciation and listening comprehension is taken into consideration. What's more, Wong's study shows that reading and spelling of the learners can even be affected when they contain insufficient knowledge of pronunciation. In another study by Garrigue (1999), such importance is also presented and good pronunciation is viewed as a foundation of effective spoken communication. While good pronunciation is critically mentioned, realization of poor pronunciation is pointed out in Morley's study (1998). It is claimed that such serious problems as communication breakdowns, anxiety, stereotyping and discrimination are caused by poor pronunciation.

With the negative result caused by such ignorance, many EFL classrooms have, thus, directed more and more attention to pronunciation. The basic skill should be seriously recognized and learners should be encouraged to acquire it for the skill can have an effect on the language accuracy and pronunciation (Celce-Murcia et al., 2000; Derwing et al., 2006; & Hahn, 2004). This is in line with the study of Lambacher (1996). Increasingly, at present it is found that the English pronunciation is recognized. Moreover, as for the learners they

themselves also view this skill as being very important and a priority for them (Willing, 1988).

Pronunciation is an integrated part of language learning. It consists of segmental (e.g., consonant and vowels) and suprasegmental (e.g., stress, intonation, rhythm, rate, and volume) elements. Clearly, mastering these elements support the communicative process. In other words, learners desiring to gain communicative competence are to learn and understand pronunciation.

When the importance of pronunciation is mentioned, it is more appropriate to claim also the importance of "good" pronunciation". Here, it comes to "intelligibility". Varonis and Gass (1982) cited that non-native English speakers are often judged by native speakers of English as being unintelligible if the former's pronunciation is not good as it should be. Towards this point, Morley (as cited in Otlowski, 1998) suggested that a needed component of communication competence is intelligible pronunciation. With respect to this, inadequate pronunciation skills mean limited ability of the learners in their communication. Furthermore, there is absolutely no "simple" pronunciation. It is for this reason that a person who does not have a good pronunciation is rated as the one with a bad pronunciation. In addition, Morley (1998) indicates that the learners' self-confidence can be reduced because of limited pronunciation skills. And their credibility and abilities can be negatively estimated.

Good pronunciation plays a significant role in creating the first impression between non-native speakers and native speakers as well. From the native speakers' point of view, it is not satisfactory at all to communicate with someone having poor pronunciation. Even though the major objective in any language communication is not just making the first impression, this aspect should not be given a low priority.

Having good pronunciation is likely to enhance good atmosphere and develop a better understanding when communicating. Contrarily, poor pronunciation can probably confuse people and lead to unpleasant talking and misunderstanding.

In Gelvanovsky (2002), pronunciation can express some social values. It is related to prestige. For example, such prestige includes intelligence, professional competence, persuasiveness, diligence, and social privilege. The speakers' geographical and social origins can be expressed through their pronunciation.

3. Pronunciation instruction and theories

Pronunciation instruction has been more and more valued as one of the important aspects of ESL (English as a second language) and EFL (English as a foreign language) learning. As mentioned by Pennington (1994, p.105), the pronunciation instruction is valued for the reason that it can develop the learners' interlanguage phonology by providing them with "the perceptual and the productive experience they need to reconceptualize the performance targets while offering motivation to change and social experiences to develop a new value set".

When the instruction of pronunciation is taken into serious consideration, it appears that instructional methods tend to be linked. In the Grammar-Translation Method of the past, pronunciation was perceived to be irrelevant and therefore rarely taught. Since the emphasized areas of this method were vocabulary, grammar, reading and writing, speaking and listening received less attention. Even worse, there was little attention given to pronunciation.

With such constraint, the Direct Method was later recognized for the reason that the first method could not prepare the learners

to use the target language communicatively. The name of this method came from the concept that meaning was to be connected directly with such language. Learning through the approach, the learners were able to learn to communicate a great deal since the language was primarily spoken, not written. As oral communication was regarded as basic, pronunciation then received attention from the beginning of the language course.

Afterward, the Audio-Lingual Method has come into the field of instruction of English as a second or foreign language. It should be noted that a number of its principles are similar to those of the Direct Method. However, some were different. In the approach, most of the attention was directed to the oral/aural skills. Thus, there was no doubt that pronunciation would be taught from the beginning, i.e. the learners of English often worked in English language laboratories on discriminating between members of minimal pairs. Concerning the pronunciation instruction, the teachers were to take a crucial role as a good model for imitation. Remarkably, through the Audio-Lingual Method practice, imitation and repetition were greatly emphasized.

Nonetheless, cognitive psychologists and transformational-generative linguists argued that learning a language did not take place through mimicry. Rather, language acquisition had to be a procedure whereby the learners used their own thinking processes, or cognition, to discover the language rules they were acquiring. It, for that reason, came to the appearance of the Silent Way Method. Since the sounds of the language were basic to the language learning, pronunciation was worked on from the beginning.

Next, the concentration on helping the learners use the language communicatively remained. Another approach called the Community Language Learning Method was provided to the teachers. Here,

the language was for communication. One of its important characteristics was that the learners design syllabuses of what they wanted to practice in the language. Intuitive and imitative was the approach.

Another approach named the Total Physical Response later gained in popularity. In the process of language acquisition, it was just as with that of the learners' native language: the oral modality was primary. The spoken language was highlighted over the written language. Pertaining to pronunciation classes, the learners would begin speaking when they felt ready. At first, the learners were not expected to speak perfectly. Errors were accepted and the teachers had to be tolerant of them. However, major errors should not be neglected. The corrections were to be unobtrusive. As the learners were more advanced, minor errors then could be corrected.

The last approach was the Communicative Approach. In the approach, pronunciation was completely emphasized. And the instruction of pronunciation was aimed to assist the learners to acquire intelligible pronunciation. As Celce-Murcia, Brinton, and Goodwin (2000) pointed out, the techniques used for teaching pronunciation were listening and imitating, phonetic training, minimal pair drills, contextualized minimal pairs, visual aids, tongue twisters, developmental approximation drills, practice of vowel shifts and stress shifts related by affixation, reading aloud/recitation, and recordings of the learners' production.

With reference to pronunciation instruction today, it should be remarked that the Communicative Approach is perceived as being considerably employed. Its popularity has been started in the 1980s and maintained until now. Moreover, technology is widely employed to assist the pronunciation nowadays. Based on the study of Celce-Murcia, Brinton, and Goodwin (2000), new techniques are applied in the teaching of pronunciation. They are, for instance, adaptation of authentic materials and use of instructional technology.

4. Factors that help learners have a good English pronunciation

Since there have been many pronunciation problems of the learners of English and these problems tend to obstruct their communicative competence, researchers have attempted to find out factors affecting their pronunciation. Pennington and Richards (1986) claim that a part of pronunciation should include such factors as native language interference and age. The study conforms to that of Kenworthy (1987). Apart from the factors of native language and age, Kenworthy (1987) refers to other relevant factors such as exposure, innate phonetic ability, identity and language ego, motivation, and concern for good pronunciation. As follows are some of the factors mentioned.

Age

Among the mentioned factors, age is considered as being an obligatory topic for pronunciation. A great number of results of research studies support the Critical Period Hypothesis (CPH). This hypothesis was proposed by Lenneberg in 1967. According to the CPH, it is stated that everyone has a critical age period for language learning. If a foreign language is not learnt before a certain age, it has a tendency that the learners may not be able to gain a better pronunciation, compared to those learning at an appropriate age. Nation and Newton (2009) stress the relevant statements as follows.

"Usually, if the learner began to speak in the second language before the age of six there will be little or no accent. If the learner began to speak between the age of seven and eleven, the learner is likely to have a slight accent." (p.78)

The studies of the researcher supporting the CPH demonstrates that the learners can acquire the target language, the second or the foreign language better if they start learning when they are young. Too, younger learners learn it easier and quicker than older learners

(Larsen-Freeman, 2008). However, Brown (1992) conducted a study examining the age factor on pronunciation learning. The study revealed that adult learners were probably able to learn pronunciation aspects as well as children did.

Native language

"Needless to say, learners of a language speak the target language in a different way: sometimes slightly different and sometimes highly different from what the native speakers do, which we call foreign accent, the nature of which is determined to a large extent by a learner's native language" (Avery and Ehrlich, 1987, p.9).

With regard to the statement above, it clearly implies that every language in the world has different varieties and different accents. The differences can lead to mother tongue interferences when the learners attempt to learn a new language. Probably, they can influence all (or almost) areas of the new language. And pronunciation is not an exception.

To consider factors contributing to the learners' pronunciation, their native language is extensively involved. It is with the reason that the native language seems to influence pronunciation of the target language. Numerous studies have been conducted to account for this respect. Kenworthy (1987) and Brown (1994) agree that phonological differences between their native language and second or foreign language are the factors causing pronunciation difficulties. Similarly, Senel (2006) emphasizes that the first language of the learners tend to cause errors on pronunciation in the target language. The errors can be found when there are differences of the rules for combining the sounds in forms of syllables in the two languages. Here, Kenworthy (1987) suggests that with a focused awareness and the learners' effort, many first and second language carryovers can possibly be overcome.

It can be seen that a lot of attempts have been made by many researchers in order to understand the differences in the processing of the target language pronunciation. In doing so, the sound systems between the native language and the new language to be learnt are compared. Zhang (2009) indicates that if the sound systems are more different, more difficulty the learners will encounter. In spite of this, it does not mean that acquisition of the new language pronunciation is impossible. On the contrary, the more similarities the sound systems of both of the languages have, the more ease the learners' learning will gain.

Language experience

Experience in learning English is another factor affecting pronunciation learning. Scant opportunity to practice English pronunciation is thought to be a critical problem. There is no doubt that lack of opportunity can be a barrier to advancing the learners' pronunciation.

As cited by Siriwisut (1994) and Serttikul (2005), pronunciation ability can be affected by language experience. The experience in their studies refers to opportunities to use the English language in daily lives. The learners with a good pronunciation are regarded as more experienced and then would better improve their pronunciation and vice versa.

As the opportunities to use the language in the learners' daily lives are pointed out, it can be underlined that if they spend their time for listening and speaking English as much as they can, their pronunciation will on and on be improved.

Therefore, it is likely that the learners living in the English speaking countries can more achieve benefits of using their English in their everyday's life than those who do not. Yet, there are some cases that exposure of the language cannot help much. Senel (2006) states the matter in the following terms.

"Exposure can be a contributory factor, but it cannot be a whole and necessary factor for the development of pronunciation. If a learner is aware of the necessity of being exposed to the target language, she/he should make use of its opportunities. If the learner does that, she/he will be more successful in case of improving his/her pronunciation. (p.115)."

At this point, the opportunities of speaking English in an English speaking environment may be meaningless if the learners do not realize and treasure the opportunities they have. It should be noted that those desiring to improve their pronunciation to be native-like or intelligible and being in the English speaking environment must make the most out of it. They need to take the best advantage of the opportunities to experience the language to the full. To sum up, the opportunities can mean nothing if the learners neglect to positively respond to them.

Individual differences

The focus of differences of each individual learner here will be on their different personalities. In connection with personality in pronunciation learning, Zhang (2009) notes that the learners with extroverted characteristics tend to do well on learning native-like pronunciation while the introverted learners do not. According to Senel (2006), shy learners do not prefer to take part in classroom activities. This makes them unable to benefit from the opportunities to use English in class. Their practice of pronunciation will then be less. Moreover, they are from time to time afraid of losing face if they make any mistakes while learning. The nervous feeling definitely impedes their pronunciation learning. In contrast, extroverted learners who like to express themselves and actively participate in learning activities tend to more benefit from the provided opportunities (Zhang, 2009). Being talkative, sociable, and courageous, they enjoy speaking out without the feeling of losing face. The more they practice, the more they undoubtedly improve their pronunciation learning.

Since some important factors affecting pronunciation learning are referred to, it should not be disregarded that these affecting factors have different influences on pronunciation. Some factors, such as age of the learners, are unchangeable while the others, such as attitudes and motivation, are changeable.

Furthermore, another essential factor in the process of pronunciation learning is "practice". Its concept is well-known in the field of language learning and also in other fields relevant to skill learning. There is no fixed way for the learning of pronunciation. It depends mostly upon the teachers who teach their learners and chiefly on the learners themselves. Here, it comes to individual differences. However, what should be kept in mind is that the learning responsibility is not only the teachers', it is also the students'. When both of them realize such responsibility, nothing at all can beat their practice. This, thus, benefits the two sides of them. While the learners' pronunciation is on and on improved, the teachers' profession and their communicative profession are also strengthened.

5. Research studies related to pronunciation learning and instruction

Even though a great deal of research on language communication has been conducted, it appears that they have not dealt with second language pronunciation per se. Rather, they have focused on speaking in general.

However, a number of pronunciation research studies can still be found in ESL and EFL learning and teaching areas. As follows are the selected studies with concentration on pronunciation learning and instruction.

Syananondh (1983) conducted a study on Thai-speaking graduate students' ability in understanding spoken English upon arrival in the United States. Also, their progresses of five years are estimated.

Interestingly, one of the major findings found is that an issue concerning differences in English pronunciation taught in Thailand is considered a major cause of their difficulty in learning English pronunciation.

The difficulty of English pronunciation learning seems to be encountered by most learners of English as a second and a foreign language. So, the learners tend to believe that pronunciation instruction is very advantageous to them. In the study of Edwards (1992), students taking an introductory course in English phonetics and phonology were selected as the study's samples. It was found that 94% of them agreed that learning pronunciation is useful. Another remarkable result of this study revealed that during the course laboratory sessions and transcription at the word level were the most valued.

A survey conducted by Cenoz and Garcia Lecumberri (1999) is also interesting. Their study demonstrates the importance of formal training of English pronunciation. Even if exposure factors were higher ranked than aspects relevant to formal training, the training was perceived positively influential in pronunciation learning. The authors highlight that "More than half of the participants (56.7%) think that pronunciation is better taught through phonetics in all cases" (p. 640).

As mentioned above, pronunciation is considered a difficult skill in learning the English language. Moreover, based on the studies the participants thought that pronunciation is important, and hence needed to be taught. Before teaching, it is also necessary to study English pronunciation awareness of learners so that the course can be effectively prepared and operated. Here, research directly related to pronunciation is then considered a necessity.

6. Pronunciation awareness of Thai students

In Thailand, English is considered a foreign language. In real life, scant environment for English communication is found. Furthermore; for Thai students learning English as a foreign language, they are probably faced with many difficulties due to the differences between the Thai sound system and the English sound system.

I have conducted a small classroom research study entitled "English Pronunciation Awareness of First-Year English Major Students at Thaksin University" to investigate my students' pronunciation awareness in Pronunciation course. The findings revealed that most of the students had an awareness of the importance of having a good English pronunciation and also agreed that they had a good pronunciation. In spite of this, they eagerly desired to have a better English pronunciation. It clearly implied that not only did they realize its importance, but they also wanted to improve their pronunciation more and more. It was mainly because, based on one of the research results, they believed good pronunciation helped them better communicate in English. This result was in line with Garrigues' study (1999) in that good communication was viewed as a foundation of effective spoken communication. Also, it supported what Otlowski (2007) has pointed out: speakers' ability in communication could be limited when they had inadequate pronunciation skills.

In connection with confidence, the majority of the students mentioned that they would feel very confident to communicate with foreigners if they possessed a good English pronunciation. The result was in accordance with Morley's statement (1998), namely it was cited that the learners' confidence could be reduced because of limited pronunciation skills.

Although pronunciation was represented as the "Cinderella of language teaching" (Dalton, 2002), most of the students expressed their opinions that having good pronunciation was more important than having good grammar. And it was important in learning English. Concerning the result of the study, it was in conformity with the study of Willing (1988) as it was stressed that the skills of pronunciation was regarded as being very important and a priority for the learners.

Moreover, there was a tendency that mispronunciation could lead to communication problems, and to solve the problems, as agreed by most of the students, good communication could help. Such mispronunciation here could be interpreted as poor pronunciation. The result clearly supported the study of Morley (1998). In the study, poor pronunciation was significantly taken into account and needed to call for a great deal of attentions for it could bring about serious communication problems such as communication breakdowns, anxiety, stereotyping and discrimination. However, it should be noted that not all of them were in this agreement. Some believed that the problems might be caused by other factors or limitations of other language skills. The group of these students was quite large at 24.99 percent.

Another interesting issue is the concept of 'good' pronunciation. Here, most of them felt that 'good' pronunciation could be identified as 'correct' pronunciation. So, it could be implied that incorrect pronunciation was probably judged as bad pronunciation.

Apart from being considered by the students as important as learning other skills, pronunciation was remarked as being necessary for development of listening and speaking skills. Their opinions matched a point of Wong's study (1993). Wong indicated that the necessity was obvious when the connection between pronunciation and listening comprehension was taken into consideration. Furthermore, it was claimed by most of the

students that pronunciation should be taught and learnt communicatively. Thus, the value of Communicative Approach was mentioned, and hence suggested to be employed in the instruction and the learning of pronunciation.

Regarding native-like pronunciation, the majority of the questionnaire respondents thought that it was necessary. Even though it was pointed out by Otłowski (1998) that a vital component of communication competence was 'intelligible' pronunciation, that was pronunciation that could be easily understood: it seemed that the students still needed their pronunciation to be native-like.

In relation to the students' expectation of their English pronunciation teacher, the results in this part revealed that most of them needed their teacher to be a good role model. That is to say, they expected the teacher to have a good and correct pronunciation, correct their pronunciation mistakes, and provide them with more opportunities to practice English pronunciation. Importantly, they required him or her to speak English more. This result was because of the fact that in Thailand English has been a foreign language. As a result, exposure to the English language is rather limited. The teacher was, then, seen to be the major resource for them.

Besides, most of the students perceived that pronunciation would be advantageous to them in the future. With good pronunciation, their communication could be more effective and their listening and speaking skills could be improved. Too, they believed that such ability would make foreigners respect them more.

The last issue to be concluded and discussed was on the factors contributing to having a good pronunciation. Most of the students agreed that outgoing and talkative people had a better pronunciation, compared with shy people. This came, again, to individual differences, another factor of any language learning. The result here was in line with the study of

Zhang (2009). In his study, it is claimed that the learners with extroversive characteristics tended to learn pronunciation well, particularly when the learning goal was to gain native-like pronunciation. Senel (2006) also mentioned that shy learners did not prefer to take part in the opportunities provided to them to practice the language. The outgoing and the talkative learners, therefore, were likely to benefit more when learning pronunciation.

Another factor rated as being useful for pronunciation learning was related to language experience or exposure. Most of them thought that people who had been abroad, often watched English movies or listened to English songs, or/and learnt English with native speakers tended to have a better pronunciation. This was in accordance with the study of Siriwisut (1994) and Sertikul (2005) in that pronunciation ability could be affected by language experience. However, it should also be noted that duration of exposure or language experience was critical to consider.

7. Conclusion

In my study earlier mentioned, it showed that most of the students contained good attitudes towards pronunciation learning and they felt motivated to learn more. They had been trying to improve their own pronunciation as they realized that good pronunciation could be advantageous to them in the future as well as help them communicate effectively. Additionally, the attempt they made was due to the fact that they realized that mispronunciation could lead to communication problems. And the more they wanted foreigners to respect them, the harder they tried to improve this pronunciation ability. Although intelligible pronunciation was accepted, they still wished to strengthen their pronunciation to be native-like. The results evidently signified that they perceived pronunciation as being very important and its importance needed to be valued. Consequently, administrators and

committees at educational institutions should support the English Pronunciation course. If possible, the opportunities should not be limited only to English major students. Students from other majors and faculties should be provided with opportunities to enroll in this course.

Thailand has scant environment conducive to learning English. So, the major resource is the teacher. Based on my study, their expectation of their teachers of English in regard to pronunciation was quite high. This implied some valuable points for the teachers to keep in mind. First and foremost, they should value the prestige the students give to them. The realization will hopefully encourage such teachers to improve their pronunciation ability to be resourceful. Besides being a good and correct resource, they need to work harder to provide more opportunities to their students to practice English pronunciation. With high technological advances and information technology, they can be employed to promote English learning, especially English pronunciation. In exposing them maximally to the world of English and English pronunciation, the materials used for aiding instruction can be, for example, the Internet, TV programs, and movies. More importantly, when teaching English they have to try to speak English at every opportunity. In doing so, English pronunciation can be learnt by students naturally. The best attempt made in teaching the students could reward the teachers with a priceless pride as they do not only help advance the students, but at the same time also build up their professional performance and strengthen their own pronunciation ability. This is another charming aspect of being in a teaching profession and for those being a teacher of English it is worth attempting.

Last but not least, I still feel that my students are very lucky as most of them have awareness of good English pronunciation. On the professional teaching road of your life, are you the teacher of English awakened to it?

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