

Using English Audio-Visual Media to Motivate the Learning of English Pronunciation in Second-Year English Major Students at Thaksin University

การใช้สื่อโสตทัศน์เพื่อจูงใจในการเรียนการออกเสียงภาษาอังกฤษของนิสิตวิชาเอกภาษาอังกฤษชั้นปีที่ 2 มหาวิทยาลัยทักษิณ

วราลดา สารสนับสนุน^๑
Walaiporn Sasanapradit

Abstract

This paper is based on a classroom research study that was to find out whether there were any significant differences in terms of motivation in the learning of English pronunciation before and after the use of audio-visual media in second-year English major students at Thaksin University. Copies of questionnaire with twenty statements in English version were distributed to the subjects after the pilot study was completed. Individually, they were asked to complete the questionnaire. Each subject was required to complete the questionnaire twice: before and after using audio-visual media. A five-level Likert scale was applied in the questionnaire to examine the motivation of the respondents. All data were collected and compared. Concerning data analysis, the Microsoft Excel program was used to compute the collected data. Such data were calculated into percentage (%).

¹ Lecturer of English at Western Languages Program, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Thaksin University Walaiporn97@gmail.com

The results of this study revealed that there were differences in terms of motivation in learning pronunciation before and after the use of audio-visual media. For instance, the study showed that one useful technique to improve pronunciation was to imitate native speakers' pronunciation in the cartoon clip and the song. Pronouncing like a native speaker of English will greatly facilitate communication with foreigners. Furthermore, the study showed that better motivation led to better pronunciation because with better motivation the students would practice pronunciation more. In doing so, they achieved better pronunciation as long as they kept practicing it.

บทคัดย่อ

บทความนี้เขียนขึ้นโดยอิงงานวิจัยในหัวเรียนของผู้เขียน โดยมีวัตถุประสงค์เพื่อที่จะค้นหาว่าแรงจูงใจในการเรียนการออกเสียงภาษาอังกฤษของนิสิตวิชาเอกภาษาอังกฤษชั้นปีที่ 2 มหาวิทยาลัยทักษิณก่อนและหลังใช้สื่อโสตทัศน์มีความแตกต่างกันหรือไม่ โดยข้อมูลวิจัยได้ถูกรวบรวมผ่านแบบสอบถามการจัดลำดับแรงจูงใจ ซึ่งแบบสอบถามดังกล่าวจัดทำขึ้นโดยใช้ Five-level Likert Scale จำนวน 20 ข้อ ข้อมูลที่ได้จากการสัมภาษณ์โดยใช้โปรแกรม Microsoft Excel และประมวลผลออกมาในรูปของเปอร์เซ็นท์

ผลของการศึกษาพบว่าแรงจูงใจในการเรียนการออกเสียงภาษาอังกฤษของนิสิตวิชาเอกภาษาอังกฤษมหาวิทยาลัยทักษิณก่อนและหลังใช้สื่อโสตทัศน์มีความแตกต่างกันในหลายๆ ประเด็น อาทิเช่น การเลียนแบบการออกเสียงภาษาอังกฤษของเจ้าของภาษาจากเพลงและภาษาตุน เป็นเทคนิคหนึ่งที่มีประโยชน์อันจะช่วยให้นิสิตได้รับการพัฒนาในด้านการออกเสียงที่ดีขึ้น และการที่นิสิตสามารถออกเสียงเหมือนเจ้าของภาษาจะช่วยให้พวกรเข้าสามารถใช้ภาษาอังกฤษเพื่อการสื่อสารกับพวกร่างประเทศได้ดียิ่งขึ้น ดังนั้นจะเห็นได้ว่า ยิ่งนิสิตมีแรงจูงใจในการเรียนมากขึ้น ก็จะเปิดโอกาสให้ตนเองได้ฝึกออกเสียงมากขึ้น ตามช่องทางต่างๆ ที่อื้อ แนะนำที่สุดว่าการกระทำเช่นนี้จะส่งผลให้การออกเสียงภาษาอังกฤษของพวกร่างดีขึ้นเรื่อยๆ ตราบเท่าที่ยังมีการฝึกฝนอย่างต่อเนื่อง

Introduction

The interest in learning English has increased rapidly around the world since English is used as the international language which facilitates communication among most people in the world. Therefore, learning English is like learning to communicate by using the world language. Regarding Thailand's situational language learning, English is used as a foreign language. Moreover, English subject is considered as a compulsory course which all students have to pass before going to a higher level of education or completing other degree programs. Obviously, students seldom have the opportunity to use English as a means of communication outside the classroom. In a real situation communication or environment, most Thai students focus on delivering their message; they neglect the pronunciation features they should consider for conveying a more efficient meaning. Few pay attention to pronunciation which is actually very important in communication and should be learned when students learn a foreign language, especially English. The above facts have been supported in Wei and Zhou's study (2002), "English pronunciation is arbitrarily overlooked in Thailand". In cases like these, more pronunciation practice and opportunities to use the language can be paramount to success. It is now taken for granted that good pronunciation can create good first impressions between speakers and interlocutors, whereas communication can break down easily without good pronunciation or at least acceptable pronunciation (Morley, 1998). In order to gain more attention in learning pronunciation, creating positive motivation will play a critically important role. It has been proved that better motivation leads to better pronunciation because the students give themselves more opportunities to practice pronunciation.

Apart from the importance of pronunciation in learning English, the use of appropriate teaching aids to motivate the students' interest in the class is also the main factor. With ten years of experience in teaching English pronunciation, the writer has observed that useful knowledge and information represented in cassettes or textbooks are not good enough to motivate her students to eagerly learn pronunciation. In contrast, one useful technique which can stir the interest of students and produce strong motivation is the use of audio-visual media, such as cartoon clips and songs.

Significance and Role of Pronunciation in Communication

Since English has long been the common language of the world, it plays an important role in all aspects of society such as communications, academic matters, economics, politics, and technology. Consequently, a good command of English would be of enormous advantage to the people in these related fields. In terms of learning oral English, communication skills, correct pronunciation should be emphasized. Pronunciation is defined as "a way of speaking a word, especially a way that is accepted or generally understood" (American Heritage Dictionary, 3rd edition, 1992). As Baker (1992) mentioned, pronunciation is very important and students should pay close attention to it as early as possible. It is actually an integrated part of foreign language learning, so it directly affects students' communicative competence. To communicate with others, we definitely have to have a good pronunciation. Good pronunciation is considered as a foundation of effective spoken communication pointed out in Garrigue (1999). Conversation among speakers and interlocutors will run smoothly and pleasantly enough if speakers pronounce correctly and clearly; interlocutors will be able to easily understand what speakers want to say.

However, if the speakers pronounce words incorrectly, a misunderstanding may occur causing a break down of communication.

Most people agree that one of the main aims of learning English is the wish to communicate with both English natives and non-natives (foreigners). Morley (1991) stated that 'intelligible pronunciation is an essential component of communication competence. This means that speakers can make some mistakes which do not cause misunderstanding to the listeners or interlocutors. Morley (1991: 496) supports Ken worthy's view (1987) and advocates that "the goal of pronunciation should be changed from the attainment of 'perfect' pronunciation to the more realistic goals of developing functional intelligibility (the speaker produces sound patterns that are recognizable as English), communicability, increased self-confidence, the development of speech monitoring abilities and speech modification strategies for use beyond the classroom." Therefore, with intelligible pronunciation, both native and non-native speakers of English find it much easier to communicate with each other. There are differences between native English speakers and non-native English speakers in terms of learning English. While native English speakers learn pronunciation, and other supra-segmental features (involving stress, pitch, rhythm, intonation) first and then learn the spelling of words, most non-native English speakers have learned English in a classroom setting only (like in Thailand); thus most are able to read and write clearly, in fact, some excel in vocabulary and grammar. Although the non-native English speakers are able to read and write well, there is no guarantee that they are literate enough in the English language, especially in speaking. Owing to the importance of pronunciation to effective communication mentioned earlier, it should be necessary for the students of English as foreign language to learn

to pronounce the words of the target language. Also, teachers should include pronunciation in their courses and expect students to do well in them.

Harmer (2001: 183) stated that teaching pronunciation not only makes students aware of different sounds and sound features, but also can improve their speaking proficiency. Teaching pronunciation shows where sounds are made in the mouth, and in addition, also makes the students aware of where words should be stressed—all of which gives them extra information about spoken English, including correct sentence intonation—differences, which could cause different meanings.

When regarding pronunciation, consonant and vowel sounds, stress, rhythm, and intonation must be considered for smooth communication. Incorrect pronunciation bores the listeners and may make them feel unpleasant. On the contrary, good pronunciation creates a good first impression among speakers and listeners. However, if one speaks English with a strong foreign accent, known as mother tongue interference which is native language influence in the pronunciation of the target language, one might be judged harshly. Consequently, people may even avoid you intentionally or unintentionally if your accent is unacceptable. Furthermore, people may not understand what you want to say even if you use excellent vocabulary and grammar. On the other hand, people will enjoy talking to you and want to spend time with you if you have a pleasant accent or at least an acceptable one. As stated by Otlowski (1998), when speakers had inadequate pronunciation skills, their ability in communication could be limited.

Similarly, Fauziati (2005: 155) stated that people cannot communicate effectively or express their ideas properly in both oral and written form without sufficient vocabulary. So, vocabulary is of critical importance to language learners. Even though vocabulary is an important element in foreign language, in all reality, the most important element is how to pronounce the vocabulary correctly. In other words, language is communicated not only in the written form but also in a spoken form. No matter how many words a student knows, if he/she cannot pronounce them correctly, he/she will not communicate effectively because the mispronunciation will distort the message and the listener may misunderstand what is being conveyed.

Teaching pronunciation is definitely important in any stage of learning. Not only segmental language features but also supra-segmental language features should be taken into serious consideration in teaching and learning pronunciation in the classroom since they are equally important to improve oral communication competence. Doing this helps students use English as a tool to communicate successfully and naturally.

Harmer also pointed out (2001: 183) that "for all these people, being made aware of pronunciation issues will help them gain benefit not only to their own production but also to their own understanding towards spoken English." That is to say, constancy of practicing pronouncing is needed to make correct pronunciation and effective communication which affect the communicative competence of speakers and listeners. Regarding such practice, motivation which means "enthusiasm for doing something" (Cambridge University Press, 2003) is stressed as a major factor in improving students' English pronunciation proficiency. Because of constant practice, they will be able to pronounce English properly and naturally. One possible way to help students to overcome the sound

problems is listening or imitating native speakers from audio-visual media. In other words, their pronunciation will gradually improve by practicing as frequently as possible. The role of the teachers can be to help their students in pronouncing English sounds that are nonexistent in their own language through the use of audio-visual media. For example in the Thai context, /θ/, /ð/, /v/, /ʒ/, /g/, /dʒ/, /tʃ/ English sounds do not have a corresponding sound in Thai language, and that is why Thai students face pronunciation difficulties with the words that include these sounds and therefore never obtain a native-like accent—they produce those sounds under the influence of their mother tongue. In order for students to continue practicing pronunciation and to enhance better motivation, audio-visual media has been spotlighted since it does enhance better motivation in the learning of English pronunciation.

With the importance of pronunciation in effective communication earlier mentioned, pronunciation is seriously needed to teach for EFL students. At Thaksin University, English Phonetics course is a compulsory subject for second-year students majoring in English. To make this course more beneficial for them and suitable towards their needs, this research study was conducted. The study not only enhanced the students' interest in learning pronunciation and improving pronunciation proficiency, but it also taught pronunciation techniques and helped develop teaching materials.

Factors Affecting Pronunciation Learning and Teaching

There are many factors affecting pronunciation learning and teaching. Only three main factors were mentioned as follows:

1. Age

One of factors affecting students' pronunciation ability is the age in which they started to learn English. According to Critical Period

Hypothesis proposed by Lenneberg (1967), it is stated that everyone has a critical age period for language learning. Students who have studied English since they were young tend to have better English pronunciation than others who studied when they were older. Likewise, Krashen (1988: 43) mentioned, acquirers who begin exposure to a second language during childhood generally achieve higher second language proficiency than those beginning as adults. This means, non-native English students will be able to pronounce target language, English, with a native-like accent if they started to learn the language during their childhood or before the age of puberty. Thus, age is one of the most important factors affecting the learning of pronunciation of a foreign language.

2. Motivation and Exposure

According to Wei and Zhou's study (2002) "English pronunciation is arbitrarily overlooked in Thailand". Since Thailand is a non-English speaking country, Thai students have a little chance or opportunity to use or listen to English in a real environment. The necessity of being exposed to the target language should be considered as an important factor for the development of pronunciation. Richards & Renandya (2002) pointed out that teaching can play an important role in helping students develop ways of improving their pronunciation and shaping their attitude towards the importance of pronunciation. Also, Fraser (2000) concluded that most ESL teachers agree that confidence in pronunciation allows learners to communicate more successfully in the target language.

Generally, motivation study is one field of L2 acquisition that tries to investigate the factors that contribute to L2 learners' performance. Motivation refers to "enthusiasm for doing something" (Cambridge University Press, 2003) in Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary. The definition stated above matched to Brown's (1997: 114-115) "The motivation is thought of as an inner drive, impulse, emotion, or desire that moves one to a particular action." Marinova-Todd et al., (2000) state that if adults are motivated to become highly proficient, even native-like speakers of second languages, they can do so. Likewise, Moyer (2007) found that the development of native-like pronunciation is based on a combination of experience with a positive orientation to the language. Therefore, motivation seems to be the main factor for successful pronunciation. With proper motivation, students will become more eager to participate in activities and pay more attention to practice pronunciation of the target language; moreover they make use of any chances for using the target language if they have highly motivation to have a better pronunciation. Clearly, if students pay a lot attention to learning pronunciation; they will eventually reach a good pronunciation performance.

3. Material used in Learning and Teaching

Although many researchers have confirmed the importance of pronunciation in the effectiveness of communication, the teaching of English language pronunciation remains largely neglected. To help Thai students become more successful in improving pronunciation, teachers have an important role to play. The best exposure in the practice of English would be through native speakers, videos shows, films, radio or TV programs. The teacher uses media to facilitate achieving the goal of better pronunciation in teaching learning process.

Media (medium) derives from the Latin word 'medium' that means 'between'. The term refers to anything that carries information between a source and receiver. In general, media are means of communication. The term is also considered to be instructional systems of teaching learning process. Media are needed in the teaching learning processes to help the students become active. The teacher can select media from traditional or modern sources.

Arsyad (2006: 4) said that teaching messages was conveyed by teaching medium which is one form of communication. The medium can be either printed or audio visual form. In short, teaching media are used by teachers to convey teaching materials to their students. In this study, a cartoon clip, and a song are used and play the key roles in teaching EFL students in terms of how to pronounce words correctly and naturally. Because of several benefits of using media, they are needed in the teaching and learning process pointed out by Sudjana and Rifai (citing Arsyad. 2006: 24).

The benefits are as follows:

1. Media are used in the teaching and learning process which helps improve the students' motivation to learn English language. In regard to watching a cartoon clip, students are expected to imitate cartoon characters speech. Learning pronunciation in this manner has many advantages. Firstly, learners can gain knowledge which has been well designed. Secondly, media can increase learners' appreciation of a language. Lastly, watching a cartoon clip will be an effective medium to encourage learners in learning English especially in conversation with right pronunciation including both segmental language features and supra-segmental ones. Through listening to and watching cartoons, learners not only are entertained,

but are also motivated to learn English pronunciation in a fun manner.

2. Students find it easier to catch the sounds of consonants and vowels presented by teachers through media. Using media is one attractive way which can get rid of the student's feeling of boredom by putting song in the spotlight-it is used as a media in teaching English pronunciation. Song, according to Parto (1996: 99), "is a group of arrangements which consists of lyrics and elements of music like rhythm, melody, harmony and expressions". Based on The International Webster Comprehensive Dictionary of the English Language (2003: 1127), "a song is a musical composition for the voice of several voices", and also "a song is a short poem whether intended to be sung or not: a lyric or ballad". Mardiyatun (2007) concluded "song is a group of beautiful words in which there is a message in it to be conveyed to other people and presented with beautiful music".

As mentioned above, using song in teaching pronunciation is in concordance with Harmer (1991) who states that language teaching methodology must be comfortable and relaxing for the students. They need something that can encourage their motivation in teaching learning process in the class; moreover, they also need to be involved in some thing active in the class because they like to participate in activities which are interesting and fun. Using song in teaching pronunciation helps students remember the correct way of pronouncing the words easily, including learning the intonation of the song. Hence, song is an interesting fun activity to be used in the classroom when teachers focus on pronunciation. Lo, R. and Li, H. C. (1998) as cited in Mardli yatun (2007), say that a song is applied in teaching and learning process as follows:

"First, teacher hands out the lyrics of song to the students or write it on the board. Then the teacher explains the meaning of the lyrics and tells the way how to pronounce it. After that, teacher asks the students to read the text aloud. Next, let the students listen to the songs three times. The first time students purely listen, the second time sing with the tape, and the last time sing without tape. Lastly, ask the students to do exercises."

3. To meet students' needs, media are used in the classroom to attract students' attention on the focused lesson. It helps students enjoy the teaching and learning process. In contrast, if the teacher only explains while teaching, students will find the lesson boring. English Cartoon clip is one of useful and effective ways in teaching pronunciation, especially when the teacher focuses on intonation. The different feelings of cartoon characters show different kinds of intonation—when someone gets angry, he/she speaks in a high tone, but if he/she is sad, he/she speaks in a low tone. Students do not only hear the sound but also can see the pictures that make them better understand.

The statements above, clearly imply that by using audio-visual media, the process of communication can be accomplished in a more effective manner and can be an effective instructional medium for delivering information. Also, students are motivated to learn and they can catch the material from the teacher easily and clearly. In addition, students will be more active in practicing English pronunciation.

Research Studies Related to Pronunciation Learning and Teaching

The aim of teaching pronunciation is to help the students to acquire intelligible pronunciation. Gilbert (1984) appealed to teachers

to believe in the importance of intelligible pronunciation—a pronunciation easily understood throughout the English-speaking world. She based her research on an interesting study by Suter (1976) in which the belief in the importance of pronunciation was the best predictor of pronunciation success, except for the even more important mother tongue influences. In 1994, Gilbert mentioned the importance of pronunciation instruction again.

The techniques used for teaching pronunciation pointed out by Celce-Murcia, Brinton, and Goodwin (2000), 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, recordings of the learners' production, including new techniques such as adaptation of authentic materials and use of instructional technology.

According to Scott, Wandy A. and Ytleberg, Lisbeth H. (1990: 6), the pleasant, relaxed atmosphere fostered by songs has proven to be highly conducive to efficient learning. To make learners' communication with the foreigners more effective and pleasant, learners should study and constantly practice their pronunciation. As classroom teachers, it is necessary to bring mass media into classrooms due to the following reasons: using various types of media in the classroom has always been a challenge, and how to bring these media in the classroom is more than a challenge. Media provide teachers and students with creative and practical ideas. Media enable teachers to meet various needs and interests of their students.

Media also provide students with a lot of language practice through activities using newspapers, magazines, radio, TV, movies, books, the Internet, etc, and tasks which develop reading, writing, speaking and listening skills. Media entertain the students and encourage reading English in general both inside and outside the classroom, promoting extensive reading by giving the students the confidence, the motivation and the ability to continue their reading outside the classroom. Media also provide students with much language practice through activities using movies. Media entertain students: encourage listening-speaking English in general both inside and outside the classroom, promoting their confidence in speaking English, the motivation and the ability to continue their speaking outside the classroom (Tafani, 2009).

Anggar (2008) studies the implementation of audiovisual aids to improve students' pronunciation. The results of the study revealed that the students' responses to the implementation of audiovisual aids were positive. They looked enjoyable and interested in the implementation of audiovisual aids. Besides, their pronunciation ability, especially in pronouncing the correct word-stress, improved. The students were very interested in learning English pronunciation by watching video because they could watch the characters' expressions and listen to the native speaker's voice. To sum up, audiovisual aids could be used as a technique to teach English pronunciation to students.

Using Audio-Visual Media towards Motivation in Learning Pronunciation

Generally, the English language learning circumstances of Thailand are different from other countries using English as an official language. The learning process takes place mainly in the classroom. As a result, Thai students lack the opportunity to use English in real life.

Most of the students seem to pay attention to grammar, vocabulary, reading, and writing but not to pronunciation. 'Vocabularies' can be an example. If students cannot pronounce words correctly they will not effectively function because the mispronunciation will definitely distort the messages and will impart different meanings to the listeners or interlocutors no matter how many vocabularies the students know. With the importance of pronunciation to effective communication, thus it should be viewed in the same light as the other skills or aspects of the English language since it is a crucial part of communication, especially through listening and speaking. To succeed in learning English pronunciation, motivation will be a key factor in enhancing students' interest in learning it. However, without audio-visual media: a cartoon clip and a song used in the classroom, motivation will not work. In other words, the use of audio-visual media in the classroom creates degrees of satisfaction in learning of English pronunciation and what should keep in mind is that teachers have to select things to suit students' interests.

A small classroom research study entitled "Using English Audio-Visual Media to Motivate the Learning of English Pronunciation in Second-Year English Major Students at Thaksin University" was undertaken by the researcher. The findings revealed that there were differences in terms of motivation in the learning of English pronunciation before and after the use of audio-visual media. The results also showed that degrees of satisfaction of watching an English cartoon clip and listening to an English song before and after using audio-visual media used in phonetics course changed positively. Most of the respondents (58.06%) claimed that they liked watching English cartoons and listening to English songs. It implied that using media

in phonetic course enhanced students' motivation in learning pronunciation. The result was in accordance with Tafani's statement (2009), namely it was cited that media entertain students; encourage listening-speaking English in general both inside and outside the classroom, promoting their confidence in speaking English, the motivation and the ability to continue their speaking outside the classroom.

Regarding the questionnaire statement "I like to imitate how native speakers of English pronounce English in cartoon clips and songs," the majority of respondents disagreed (32.26%) or even strongly disagreed (25.81%). Surprisingly no one (0.00%) strongly agreed with this pronunciation strategy while only 16.13% of them expressed their opinions that they agreed with the statement. After using audio-visual media in phonetics course, the percentage of respondents who disagreed and strongly disagreed with the statement had dropped to 0.00% while the percentage of respondents who strongly agreed with the statement was significantly higher at 80.65% along with those who agreed with the statement at 19.35%. This showed that one useful technique to gain the improvement of pronunciation was imitating native speakers' pronunciation in the cartoon clip and the song. The result of study was in line with Scott, Wandy A. and Ytleberg, Lisbeth H.'s study (1990 : 6) in that children have an amazing ability to absorb language through play and other activities which make them enjoyable. The pleasant, relaxed atmosphere fostered by songs has proven to be highly conductive to efficient learning.

Regarding the questionnaire statement "Pronouncing like a native speaker of English is important for me," the post results showed that most of the respondents (41.94%) strongly agreed. It can help them get along well with the foreigners. For this statement none of the

respondents strongly disagreed–neither before nor after the use of media. This can imply that most of respondents pay attention to the importance of pronunciation and they desire for native-like pronunciation. The result clearly supported the study of Marinova-Todd et al., (2000) if adults motivated to become highly proficient, even native-like speakers of second languages, they can do so. Likewise, Moyer (2007) found that developing native-like pronunciation is based on a combination of experience with the positive orientation to the language.

Conclusion

In short, the result of the study showed that better motivation led to better pronunciation because students gave themselves more opportunity to practice pronunciation. In doing so, they achieved better pronunciation as long as they continued to practice. The study also emphasized the important role that the teacher of ESL and EFL plays in their students' pronunciation efficiency. Specifically, the teachers need to promote different strategies and use more effective teaching methods. In addition to audio-visual media, teachers need to motivate pronunciation and speaking through the use of speaking contests, role play activities or interviews with native speakers.

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