Development of English Pronunciation Skills through English Songs

Suphakit Phoowong

Lecturer, Business English Program, Buriram Rajabhat University, Thailand

E-mail : gig_ice@hotmail.com

Abstract

The purposes of this research were 1) to develop English pronunciation skills through English songs, 2) to compare the students' learning achievements before and after studying through English songs, and 3) to investigate their satisfaction with the development of English pronunciation skills through English songs. The samples were composed of 35 English program freshmen in group 2 who were enrolled on the "English Phonetics" course in the second semester of the academic year 2014 at the faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Buriram Rajabhat University, selected by the simple random sampling method. The instruments consisted of a pre-test and post-test, six sets of lesson plans and a satisfaction questionnaire. The statistics of this research were percentage, mean, standard deviation, and a dependent sample t-test. The results revealed that the students' achievement after studying through English songs was overall found to be at a high level. The samples' post-test scores after studying were significantly higher than the pre-test scores at a statistical level of .01. Finally, their satisfaction with developing English pronunciation through English songs was overall found to be at a high level. Taking each aspect of the program into consideration, all were also found to be at a high level: the instructor was ranked first, followed by instructional activities, contents, pronunciation skills and pronunciation exercises respectively.

Keywords : Language development, English pronunciation skills, English songs, innovative language teaching methods

บทคัดย่อ

         การวิจัยครั้งนี้มีวัตถุประสงค์ 3 ประการคือ 1) เพื่อพัฒนาทักษะการออกเสียงภาษาอังกฤษ
ของนักศึกษาโดยใช้เพลงภาษาอังกฤษ 2) เพื่อศึกษาและเปรียบเทียบผลสัมฤทธิ์ในการออกเสียงภาษา
อังกฤษของนักศึกษาก่อนและหลังการเรียนโดยใช้เพลงภาษาอังกฤษ และ 3) เพื่อศึกษาความพึงพอใจ
ของนักศึกษาที่มีต่อการเรียนออกเสียงภาษาอังกฤษโดยใช้เพลงภาษาอังกฤษ กลุ่มตัวอย่าง คือนักศึกษา
สาขาวิชาภาษาอังกฤษชั้นปีที่ 1 หมู่ 2 จำนวน 35 คน ที่ลงทะเบียนเรียนวิชาสัทศาสตร์ภาษาอังกฤษ
ภาคการศึกษาที่ 2 ปีการศึกษา 2557 คณะมนุษยศาสตร์และสังคมศาสตร์ มหาวิทยาลัยราชภัฏบุรีรัมย์
ซึ่งได้มาโดยวิธีการสุ่มแบบง่าย (Simple Random Sampling) เครื่องมือที่ใช้ในการเก็บข้อมูล ได้แก่
แบบทดสอบวัดผลสัมฤทธิ์ก่อนและหลังการเรียน แผนการจัดการเรียนรู้ จำนวน 6 แผน และ แบบ
ประเมินความพึงพอใจ สถิติที่ใช้วิเคราะห์ข้อมูล คือ ค่าร้อยละ ค่าเฉลี่ย ค่าเบียงเบนมาตรฐาน และ
การทดสอบที แบบกลุ่มไม่อิสระ ผลการวิจัยพบว่า 1) ผลสัมฤทธิ์หลังการเรียนโดยภาพรวมอยู่ใน
ระดับสูงมาก 2) คะแนนการทดสอบผลสัมฤทธิ์ของนักศึกษาหลังการเรียนสูงกว่าก่อนการเรียน อย่าง
มีนัยสำคัญทางสถิติที่ระดับ .01 และ 3) กลุ่มตัวอย่างมีความพึงพอใจต่อการเรียนโดยภาพรวมอยู่ใน
ระดับมาก เมื่อพิจารณารายด้านพบว่า นักศึกษามีความพึงพอใจต่อทุกด้านอยู่ในระดับมาก และด้าน
ที่มากที่สุดคืออาจารย์ผู้สอน รองลงมาคือด้านกิจกรรมการเรียนการสอน ด้านเนื้อหา ด้านทักษะการ
ออกเสียง และด้านแบบฝึกทักษะการออกเสียง ตามลำดับ

คำสำคัญ : การพัฒนา ทักษะการออกเสียงภาษาอังกฤษ เพลงภาษาอังกฤษ

1. Introduction

Nowadays, communication through English has a very important role. It is used as the language of international communications. In Thailand, most people realize that English is one of the essential tools to help them develop in both academic works and professional positions (Thauycharoen, 2001).

In 2015, ten ASEAN countries consisting of Thailand, Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, Brunei, Vietnam, Laos, Myanmar, and Cambodia joined the ASEAN Economic Community. It means that these ten countries decided to use English for communication in all aspects such as economy, politics, education, arts and cultures, tourism and so on. According to Article 34 of the ASEAN Charter, "The working language of ASEAN shall be English", the Thai government realizes that Thai people all over the country need to use English for communicating in all aspects as mentioned above both with people in the ten ASEAN countries and others in the world.

Being aware of the significance of English language, both government sectors and private sectors focus on preparing readiness of people in their own sectors to enter the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) for better communication and for better profession. Every institute in every educational level started promoting the awareness of teaching and learning English intensively for more effectively practical communication. So, Teaching and learning English play a very important role at this time. However, Thai students are not good enough at English skills, especially listening and speaking skills for better communication. One problem making them not able to communicate correctly and effectively is to pronounce English correctly as native speakers do normally and naturally. So, the ability to understand English well is related to both pronunciation and speech perception (Jenkins, 2000). It is seen that, in teaching and learning English, learners have problems in listening and speaking that are directly related to pronunciation. Basically, that they cannot improve their listening and speaking skills effectively is when they learn how to pronounce English, there is often interference from their first language. By interference - I mean that they use the feature of Thai sounds instead of English sounds (Jotikasthira, 2003). Therefore, for correct pronunciation, learners need to practice listening to a native speaker's accent directly.

Owing to the above mentioned reasons, the researcher was interested in conducting research dealing with the development of English pronunciation skills

through songs. Teaching the second language through music is in accordance with Gardner's Theory of Multiple Intelligences because music can be used in teaching languages in many ways (Campbell and Dickinson, 1996). One way is teaching English pronunciation through songs, which is able to stimulate learners to be more interested in the lessons, to have more positive attitudes, and to feel more confident of studying English than before. Besides, less resistance to the lessons leads to more effective learning. In contrast, more resistance to the lessons leads to less effective learning. So, teaching and learning English through songs helps lower the resistance to the lessons and makes them more interesting, related to the Affective Filter Hypothesis which is one of five Krashen's (1982) theories of language learning.

Some studies on the development of English pronunciation skills through songs have been conducted by other researchers, for example, Pimwan's research entitled "The Effect of Teaching English Pronunciation through Songs of Prathomsuksa 4 Students at Watratchaphatigaram School" (2012), which was found that the students' post-test scores of pronouncing the final consonant sounds after studying through songs were significantly higher than the pre-test scores at a statistical level of .01 , Nusen's research entitled "Using Karaoke Activity to Develop English Pronunciation and English Listening Comprehension among Mathayom Suksa 4 Students" (2011), which was found that the students' post-test scores of English pronunciation after using Karaoke activity were higher than before the pre-test scores and their scores of English Listening Comprehension test after Karaoke activity were found to be a very high level, and Ulate's research entitled "Using songs to improve EFL students' pro-nunciation"(2011), which was found that students thought that in learning language, English pronunciation skills were found to be at the second level, suggesting that it was really useful to use songs to develop English pronunciation skills. It is clearly seen that the development of English pronunciation skills is very important for communi-cating in English effectively. Therefore, the researcher was interested in conducting the research entitled "Development of English Pronunciation through English Songs" for better communication among first-year students who are studying in the English program at Buriram Rajabhat University because good pronunciation leads to good communication in listening and speaking English. This research would be beneficial for teachers or instructors teaching English pronunciation to develop their students' English proficiency and also useful for those interested in improving their pronunciation through songs.

2. Research Objectives

This research had three objectives:

2.1 To develop students' English pronunciation skills through English songs;

2.2 To compare students' learning achievements before and after studying through English songs.

2.3 To investigate their satisfaction with the development of English pronunciation skills through English songs.

3. Research Hypothesis

The samples' learning achievement after studying through English songs was significantly higher than before studying through English songs.

4. Research Methodology

4.1 Samples

The sample for this study consisted of 35 English Program freshmen in group 2 who were enrolled on the "English Phonetics" course in the second semester of the academic year 2014 at the faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Buriram Rajabhat University. They were selected from a total population of 111 English program freshmen who were divided into three classrooms: group 1, group 2 and group 3. Because of the need to have one whole class for research purposes, one of them was chosen as the sample of the study. The selection of the sample was done randomly; all classes had a chance to be chosen. The researcher wrote the name of the class on small pieces of paper. Then he rolled the paper and put it into a bottle. After that he shook the bottle and let one rolled paper out. Finally, he got group 2 as the sample of the study. The choice of the sample is based on the following consideration: 1) the freshmen have been studying English when they were in Secondary school. However, their ability in pronouncing English is still poor. And 2) the researcher wanted to improve the students' ability in pronouncing English for better communication.

4.2 Research Instruments

The research instruments were a pre-test and post-test, six sets of lesson plans

and a satisfaction questionnaire. The quantitative data were analyzed by descriptive statistics consisting of percentage, mean, and standard deviation. The hypothesis was tested by a dependent sample t-test while the qualitative data were analyzed through content analysis.

4.3 Data Collection

The following were the stages of data collection:

The methods of developing the research tools were discussed as follows:

1) With reference to the pre-test and post-test, they were divided into four main parts with a total of 60 items: part 1 for a pronunciation test of vowel sounds with 15 items, part 2 for a pronunciation test of consonant sounds with 15 items, part 3 for a pronunciation test of word stress with 15 items, and part 4 for a pronunciation test of linking sounds with 15 items. After being examined and approved by three experts, ten items were selected for each part of the pre-test and post-test with a total of 40 items used for testing the 35 students' English pronunciation skills. The pre-test and post-test of this study was an experimental design used for testing the samples in the same target group, called "group pretest-posttest design"(Kidrakarn, 2001).

2)The lesson plans were composed of six sets used as the teaching tools for developing pronunciation skills after testing the capability of students' pronunciation with the pre-test. Each set was used in teaching their pronunciation for three hours per week with a total of 18 hours instruction.

According to above-mentioned pre-test and post-test and lesson plans, all the teaching contents were chosen from three selected English songs: "Let it go", "Haven't met you yet", and "As long as you love me", all of which were examined and approved by a foreign expert and three Thai experts for both content validity and face validity.

3) The satisfaction questionnaire was divided into four parts as follows : part 1 general information: gender, part 2 satisfaction with learning English pronunciation through English songs, divided into five parts with a total of 18 items: Instructor with five items, contents with two items, instructional activities with four items, pronunciation exercises with three items, pronunciation skills with four items, all of them were assessed as a rating scale with a LIKERT scale of 1-5 levels:

Levels of satisfaction Meaning

1   lowest level

2   low level

3   moderate level

4   high level

5   highest level

and *part 3* Open-ended questions for additional opinion and suggestion from the samples. The questionnaire had its face validity examined and approved by three experts, and it was used with the 35 samples students in the target group.

4.4 Data analysis

Testing the samples' learning achievement before and after studying was analyzed by using the statistics of mean and standard deviation. For the pretest and posttest, the content validity was examined by three experts and had the IOC of 0.66-1.00. The obtained scores from the pretest and the posttest were analyzed to find the differences between the samples' learning achievement before and after studying by using the statistics of dependent sample t-test. For a satisfaction questionnaire form, the face validity was also examined by three experts. The statistics used to analyze the form in order to find the samples' satisfaction levels of studying English pronunciation through English songs were percentage, mean, and standard deviation. The content analysis was also conducted for analyzing their opinions via the descriptive statistics.

5. Research Results

The results are presented according to the research objectives as follows :

Table 1 : The scores of the sample before and after studying through English songs
Student No.   Pre-test (scores on 40 items)Post-test (scores on 40 items)

Student No.	Pre-test (scores on 40 items)	Post-test (scores on 40 items)
1	28	35
2	33	40
3	21	33
4	24	31
5	24	33
6	26	35
7	22	31
8	23	30
9	20	30
10	20	27
11	23	29
12	16	21

Student No.	Pre-test (scores on 40 items)	Post-test (scores on 40 items)
13	24	32
14	19	26
15	14	25
16	24	26
17	26	35
18	20	31
19	22	29
20	23	31
21	33	39
22	26	36
23	26	33
24	25	34
25	24	32
26	19	27
27	19	29
28	19	31
29	18	29
30	22	32
31	22	29
32	16	27
33	26	35
34	21	34
35	12	20
mean	22.29	30.77
S.D.	4.50	4.35

Table 1 shows the 35 sample students' scores from the pretest and the posttest with the total of 40 items examined and approved by three experts indicating that the samples' scores after studying through English songs with an average of 30.77 were higher than before studying with an average of 22.29. It can be clearly seen that studying through English songs helped develop the students' English pronunciation skills according to the determined hypothesis of this study.

Table 2 : *The results of comparing the sample's learning achievement before and after studying through English songs*

	n	$\overline{\text{X}}$	S.D.	*t*	Sig.
Pre-test	35	22.29	4.50		
				22.535	.000* *
Post-test	35	30.77	4.35		

.000 * * The statistical level of significance of .01

        Table 2 shows that the samples' learning achievement after studying through English songs was significantly higher than before studying at the statistical level of significance of .01according to the determined hypothesis of this study.

Table 3 : *Personal information of the samples*

No.	Gender	Frequency (n=35)	Percentage (%)
1.	Male	7	20
2.	Female	28	80
	Total	35	100

        As shown in table 3 out of 28 respondents, the number of females (80%) was much greater than that of males (7%).

Table 4 : *Satisfaction with studying English pronunciation through English songs*

Items	N	Mean	S.D.	Levels
1) Instructor				
1. The instructor clearly explained the activities for the development of English pronunciation through songs to students.	35	4.51	.50	highest
2. The instructor gave advice and recommendation to all students for the development of English pronunciation through songs throughout.	35	4.20	.58	high
3. The instructor used various kinds of techniques to encourage students to be active for the development of English pronunciation through songs.	35	4.17	.74	high
4. The instructor completely gave the knowledge of the development of English pronunciation through songs and let students have a chance to ask questions freely.	35	4.40	.77	high
5. The instructor was able to let students learn and practice the development of English pronunciation through songs happily.	35	4.29	.51	high
Total	35	4.29	.52	high
2) Contents, rhythm, and melody of songs				
6. The selected song lyrics are suitable for students' ability	35	4.26	.74	high
7. Rhythm and melody of the selected songs are suitable for the development of English pronunciation skills.	35	4.14	.77	high
Total	35	4.20	.66	High

Items	N	Mean	S.D.	Levels
3) Instructional activities				
8. English pronunciation activities through English songs were interesting and also made students practice pronunciation joyfully.	35	4.23	.91	high
9. Students fully participated in doing the activities.	35	4.23	.73	high
10. Students practiced doing an imitation of native speakers' pronunciation through English songs directly.	35	4.31	.75	high
11. Students were able to practice by themselves with the activities used in the classroom.	35	4.14	.87	high
Total	35	4.22	.68	High
4) Pronunciation exercises				
12. Pronunciation exercises were appropriate for students' proficiency.	35	4.11	.63	high
13.They consisted of processes or procedures that stimulate students to learn about pronunciation effectively.	35	4.03	.70	high
14. They helped students get knowledge, and they could apply it in their daily lives.	35	4.34	.76	high
Total	35	4.16	.59	high
5) Pronunciation skills				
15. Pronunciation skill of vowels	35	4.31	.59	high
16. Pronunciation skill of consonants	35	4.06	.68	high
17. Pronunciation skill of word stress	35	4.17	.82	high
18. Pronunciation skill of linking	35	4.26	.81	high
Total	35	4.18	.68	high
Total of all	35	4.23	.52	high

Table 4 shows that the sample's satisfaction with studying English pronunciation through English songs was overall found at a high level ($\overline{x}$ =4.23). Taking each aspect of instruction into consideration, all were found to be at a high level: the instructor was ranked first ($\overline{x}$ = 4.29), followed by instructional activities ($\overline{x}$ =4.22), contents ($\overline{x}$ =4.20), pronunciation skills ($\overline{x}$ =4.19) and pronunciation exercises ($\overline{x}$ =4.16) respectively.

6. Discussion

The following points based on the research results are discussed:

1. The fact that the sample's learning achievement was higher after studying pronunciation through English songs might have many reasons as discussed below:

First, the students in the sample relaxed and enjoyed the activities of teaching and learning through English songs. This is because the selected songs were interesting, and those were also their favourite songs. So, their learning potential was completely stimulated via song activities in accordance with Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences (1983) that activates their existential intelligence of music.

Second, the research which had been done in order to develop the students' pronunciation skills through English songs not only helped lower their resistance to the instructional activities but also made them more interested, have more positive attitudes and feel more confident. So, their learning achievement after studying pronunciation through English songs was higher than before studying pronunciation through English songs, which is in line with the Affective Filter Hypothesis which is one of five Krashen's theories of language learning (1982), that is to say, less resistance to the lessons leads to more effective learning while more resistance to the lessons leads to less effective learning.

Third, using English songs in creating an atmosphere of teaching and learning activities was required to help the students in the sample express themselves in a completely-natural way. The selected songs for the lessons had an influence on creating an enjoyable atmosphere, which could help increase learning achievement in studying English pronunciation effectively. The result was similar to the findings of other research which revealed that after using English songs, the students' scores in pronouncing final consonant sounds increased significantly at the statistical level of .01(Pimwan, 2012). Besides, the result was in line with another research finding that indicated that the students' level of ability in pronouncing words in English after studying through songs was higher than before studying through songs (Ratnasari, 2007).

2. The result of the questionnaire revealed that students were satisfied with the development of their English pronunciation skills through English songs at a high level. This is because English songs were an interesting and pleasant media responding to their positive desires, emotions and attitudes. The result was related to a research

finding that indicated that 91 percent of students thought that songs were able to stimulate both psychological desire and emotional education (Jolly, 1978; cited in Nusen, 2011).

3. Students' suggestions for the development of English Pronunciation skills through songs indicated that they would like to have the teaching and learning activities through English songs used in everyday classes because the activities were not only advantageous to them but also made the lessons more interesting. Moreover, the selected songs should be well known and not too difficult to learn for everyone. As mentioned in the suggestions, it was clearly seen that the students' learning achievement increased after the lessons focused on the development of English pronunciation skills through English songs. This was in line with the students' suggestions revealing that the instructor should use songs to improve pronunciation skills because these were truly beneficial to pronunciation development (Ulate, 2011).

7. Conclusion

The learning achievement of students in the sample after the lessons developing English pronunciation skills through English songs was significantly higher than before the lessons developing English pronunciation skill through English songs. Finally, their satisfaction with the development of English pronunciation skills through English songs was found to be at a high level. Students in the sample also suggested using songs in teaching and learning activities in everyday class, as they found that it was useful and made the lessons more interesting.

8. Recommendations

The following are some recommendations based on the research results:

1. Recommendations for further application

1) An instructor who teaches English is able to apply the models and teaching techniques of using English songs to developing students' English pronunciation skills.

2) An instructor who teaches English is able to apply English pronunciation practice in teaching and learning activities such as an English singing contest.

3) An instructor is able to apply the research findings in selecting instructional media, such as choosing entertaining media that are interesting, relaxing,

and promote having fun.

4) The findings of the study implied that the students in the sample were satisfied with instructional media at a high level. So, an instructor should search for various teaching methods in using English songs for developing other English skills.

2. Recommendations for further research

1) When selecting English songs for better pronunciation practice, there should be at least five songs in order to get the appropriate contents consisting of vocabulary, phrases, sentences, and expressions. In addition, the researcher should carry out a survey of learners' preference for song styles because they will pay special attention to the lessons, making the teaching and learning activities more effective.

2) For further research, there should be two independent groups in order to compare the differences between an experimental group and a control group of students who are similar in educational qualification.

3) An instructor who teaches English can conduct research which is similar to this research model for students at all levels of proficiency.

References

Campbell, C. & Dickinson, D. (1996). Teaching and learning through multiple
          intelligences. Boston: Allyn & Bacon.

Gardner, H. (1983). Frames of mind: The theory of muliple intelligences. London:
          Poladin.

Jenkins, J. (2000). The phonology of English as an international language. Oxford :
          Oxford University Press.

Jotikasthira, P. (2003). English sound system. Bangkok: Chulalongorn University Press.

Kidrakarn, P. (2001). Effectiveness index: E.I. Mahasarakham: Department of Educational
          Communication and Technology, Faculty of Education, Mahasarakham
          University.

Krashen, D. S. (1982). Principles and practice in second language acquisition.Oxford :
          Pergamon.

Nusen, P. (2011). Using Karaoke activity to develop English pronunciation and English
          listening comprehension among Mathayom Suksa 4 students. Chiangmai :
          Chiangmai University.

Pimwan, K. (2012). The effect of teaching English pronunciation through songs
          of Prathomsuksa 4 students at Watratchaphatigaram school. Master's
          Project, Master of Arts (Teaching English as a Foreign Language). Bangkok:
          Graduate School, Srinakharinwirot University.

Ratnasari, H. (2007). Songs to improve the students' achievement in
          pronouncing English words: An action research of the year seventh
          students of MTs ANNUR Jepara in the academic year 2006/2007.
          Languages and Arts Faculty. Indonesia: Semarang State University.

Thuaycharoen, P. (2001). Speaking English according to linguistic principles. 2nd Edition.
          Bangkok : Thammasat University Press.

Ulate, N. V. (2011). Using songs to improve EFL students' pronunciation. LETRAS.
          2(44), pp. 93-108.