

The English Pronunciation of Bachelor of Arts Students at Faculty of Humanities, Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University, Khon Kaen Campus, Thailand

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Abstract

The purposes of this study were 1) to study the problems of the English pronunciation of Bachelor of Arts students at Faculty of Humanities, Mahachula longkornrajavidyalaya University, Khon Kaen Campus, Thailand 2) to propose the solution of the English pronunciation skills of Bachelor of Arts students at Faculty of Humanities, Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University, Khon Kaen Campus, Thailand. The study was mixed researches between a quantitative method and qualitative method. A questionnaire was used for collecting quantitative data from 40 students who are studying In Bachelor of Arts at Faculty of Humanities, Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University, Khon Kaen Campus. And in-depth interview was used for collecting qualitative data from 15 key informants, including 10 students who are studying and 5 teachers who are teaching at Faculty of Humanities, Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University, Khon Kaen Campus. The statistics used for quantitative data analysis were frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation and a content analysis was used for analyzing qualitative data.

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The results of the research were as follows:

The study of “The English pronunciation of Bachelor of Arts Students at Faculty of Humanities, Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University, Khon Kaen Campus. According to the research methodology, there were mixed research between quantitative research and qualitative research. The quantitative data that the researcher collected from 4 parts of questionnaires with 40 students as follows: 1) The overall level of the students’ attitudes to the English pronunciation was high level with (\bar{x}) 4.48. The overall level of the students’ methods of learning the English pronunciation was the high level with (\bar{x}) 4.14. 3) Therefore, the overall level of the students’ difficulties in learning English pronunciation was the high level with (\bar{x}) 3.74. 4) the overall level of the teachers’ roles of developing the English pronunciation was the high level with (\bar{x}) 4.47. And qualitative data were as follows: as the results was found that the students lacked the opportunity, they did not have space and time to practice themselves, just only in the class of in the university. Because of cultural aspect, they always spoke Thai and Isan at home, they had also lack of motivation, they felt shy to speak. When they were practicing, someone laughed at them. They did not have motivation to practice the English pronunciation. And the result of the way to solve the problem was firstly, asking them to read more English books, practicing to read aloud and correcting their pronunciation. Since the students felt shy to speaks, they had to motivate themselves to practice and speak in the public space and encouraged them to listen to English songs, watching the VDO of native speakers on YouTube, to see how they pronounce, how they produce the words. And then they try to pronounce or practice following the native speakers.

Keywords: English pronunciation, English skill, English Learning

Introduction

Nowadays, we are well known that English is the international language that most of people all around the world use English Language to communicate on their business or even on their daily life. Communication in English has a very important role in Thai society. Most Thai people know English and are aware that if who can speak or use English as well, English is an important tool for academic and professional advancement. English is compulsory since elementary school. In addition, tourism is promoted by both the public and private sectors, making the use of English, especially speaking, play an increasingly important role in Thai society, resulting in awareness of English language learning, respectively, as well. To make clear in conversation, they have to correct their pronunciation too.

According to Cambridge Dictionary as defined that “Pronunciation” means how we say words. Most people speak the dialect of Standard English with an accent that belongs to the part of the country they come from or live in. Learners of British English commonly hear RP (Received Pronunciation), which is an accent often used on the BBC and other news media and in some course materials for language learners, but it is also common to hear a variety of regional accents of English from across the world. How we use spoken stress and rhythm is also an important part of pronunciation. For example, it is important to know which syllables in a word are stressed and how different patterns of stressed and unstressed syllables were pronounced. There were also common patterns of intonation in English which enable us to give special emphasis to particular words, phrases and sentences.

Moreover, Thai has more varieties of sounds than English. However, Thai students also have much confusion about some English sounds although there are fewer letters in English than in Thai. The main problems for Thai students are English consonants, especially, consonant clusters cause some problems for Thai students. English vowel sounds are represented by just five

letters in English spelling but each of them has more than one sound. This causes problems for Thai students who learn English as a foreign language. (Sumon Ariyapitipun, 1988, Abstract)

As pronunciation is very important in communication, many Thai learners of English want to develop their English pronunciation. To develop English pronunciation, however, it is important to find out what sounds are problematic for Thai learners. This independent study investigates Thai learners of English's pronunciation problems. (Nattaporn Thongsin, 2007)

One of the most important problems in learning English involves students' ability to read aloud, which is essential in learning English for communication. Reading aloud or oral reading requires good pronunciation and spelling skills. While reading aloud, students have to use both spelling and pronunciation skills; therefore, spelling and pronunciation are so closely related that they cannot be separated clearly. Poor students who cannot link spelling and pronunciation are nervous when speaking English in class. If they cannot read out loud, they are also afraid of learning English. They will be shy, afraid of making an error or mistake, and then become bored of learning English. Some students can pronounce each of the English letters when it appears separately. But they fail to put the letters together in order to form a word and pronounce it. They always misunderstand a word with the same pronunciation with another, especially for writing and listening skills. (Tipaporn Pasaree, 2008)

O'Connor (2002) stated that in language there are a small number of sound units that are put together in the box to form the words and sentences that are used everyday. It is like the human head has a certain fixed number of boxes for sound. So, when listening to the speaker's language, the accent will be heard everyday. So, it is easy to use what has been heard since being a child. As a result, the main problem of English pronunciation sound is to

build a new set of boxes corresponding to the sounds of English. If learners want to have a good pronunciation, practice is important. Besides, a mother language is one of learning English pronunciation problems, there is another problem that is about sound and it is difficult for learners to use good pronunciation.

This study aims to identify the English pronunciation problem of Bachelor of Arts students at Faculty of Humanities, Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University Khon Kaen Campus. Specifically, this study investigated the learners about how the learners produce the English sounds. By studying the principles of use Phonemes, Consonant Sounds, Vowel Sounds, Linking, Intonation and Stress.

From the foregoing, we will find that English pronunciation incorrectly according to economics is a huge problem for Thai people learn English as a second language. Therefore, the researcher studies the problems with the pronunciation skills of Bachelor of Arts Students at Faculty of Humanities, Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University.

The researcher hopes this study was useful for the learners and teachers, who were interested in English pronunciation and made some suggestions to improve their pronunciation ability.

Objectives of Research

1. To study the problems of the English pronunciation skills of Bachelor of Arts students at Faculty of Humanities, Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University Khon Kaen Campus, Thailand.

2. To propose the solution of the English pronunciation skills of Bachelor of Arts students at Faculty of Humanities, Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University Khon Kaen Campus, Thailand.

Research Methodology

This study mixed-method was qualitative and quantitative research.

Quantitative data was to provide the respondents' attitudes towards the pronunciation problems. The information collected from the questionnaires and analyzed by mean (\bar{X}) and standard deviation (S.D.), and then it was interpreted.

Qualitative data was to determine the improvement of key informant's attitudes pronunciation skills and teaching ability, interview and discussion.

Percentages, average mean (\bar{X}), and standard deviation (S.D.) are employed to provide the level and extent in studying The English Pronunciation Skills of Bachelor of Arts Students at Faculty of Humanities, Mahachulalongkorn rajavidyalaya University Khon Kaen Campus. Therefore, research design was the most important of data collection.

Population and Key Informants

1. There were total 40 students in Bachelor's degree students at Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya university, Khon Kaen Campus. They were taking an English course in the second semester of academic years 2019.

2. There were 15 key informants including with 10 students who were studying and 5 teachers who are teaching at Faculty of Humanities, Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University, Khon Kaen Campus, selected as in-depth interviewed for a qualitative research.

Instruments

This study consists of a questionnaire and interview. They are the main tools of doing research.

The tools for collecting data in this study with questionnaire, the researcher uses instruments of questionnaire include 5 main parts as follows:

Part I: General background information.

Part II: Students' attitudes to the English Pronunciation.

Part III: Students' methods of learning the English Pronunciation.

Part IV: Students' difficulties in learning the English Pronunciation.

Part V: Teachers' roles of developing the English Pronunciation.

The five points like the scale are used in this questionnaire with the following criteria as 5 = Strongly agree, 4 = Agree, 3 = Uncertain, 2 = Disagree, 1 = Strongly disagree

For the collecting qualitative data had to take In-depth interview was collected information from the teacher and students, about their opinions and suggestions on solving problems of English Pronunciation

Data Collection

The researcher has used two methods called primary data and secondary data. The primary data is directly collecting information from the target group of research that consists of 40 students from the B.A. English program at Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University, Khon Kaen Campus, and face to interview including with 10 students who are studying and 5 teachers who are teaching at Faculty of Humanities, Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University, Khon Kaen Campus.

Secondary data is collecting information from documentary survey such as academic books, thesis, journals; these things are used for supporting information in this study. The documentary survey is provided as guidelines to amplify the research to be completed from the previous study.

Data Analysis

The statistic devices used in the study are employed as follows:

The results from questionnaires of the students' background information such as gender, age, year of speaking English was calculated by frequency and percentage.

The student's opinions on the problems of English Pronunciation were analyzed by using arithmetic mean (\bar{X}) and standard deviation (S.D.).

The students' opinions on the way to solve the problems of English Pronunciation were analyzed by using arithmetic mean (\bar{X}) and standard deviation (S.D.).

The In-depth interviews were transcribed immediately after each interview. Data collection collected from the interviewees noted from voices recorder and analyzed by using the three competencies which were identified by Henderson (1995) as follows: organized disparate information into categories, analyzed the key points that support decision-making and detached self from the finding and report negative finding data for decision-making.

Results of Research

Findings were presented in response to the research questions as follows.

Table 1: Students' attitudes to the English Pronunciation.

No	Statements	\bar{X}	S.D.	Level
1	Pronunciation is useful for real life.	4.43	.78	High
2	It is important to learn pronunciation.	4.65	.58	Very High
3	It is very easy to understand the rule of pronunciation.	4.30	.75	High
4	Always active when I have to learn English pronunciation.	4.35	.77	High
5	Pronunciation is created for native speakers.	4.55	.63	Very High
6	I feel great and fun when pronunciation subject starts.	4.53	.64	Very High
7	I am interested in English pronunciation.	4.58	.78	Very High
Total		4.48	.70	High

Therefore, the overall level of the Students' attitudes to the English Pronunciation was high level with (\bar{X}) 4.48.

Table 2: Students' methods of learning the English Pronunciation.

No	Statements	\bar{x}	S.D.	Level
1	I try hard to learn pronunciation subject.	4.08	1.18	High
2	I always note down my pocket book when I get a new word.	4.03	.92	High
3	I try to look at Dictionaries when I do not know how to pronounce words.	4.25	.92	High
4	I always watch English Movies to improve my pronunciation skills.	4.20	.99	High
5	I always ask foreigner if I do not know that words.	4.05	1.10	High
6	I further practice by myself after learning pronunciation from class.	4.33	.88	High
7	I always read English Newspaper to improve pronunciation skills.	4.05	1.06	High
Total		4.14	1.01	high

Therefore, the overall level of the Students' methods of learning the English Pronunciation was the high level with (\bar{x}) 4.14.

Table 3: Students' difficulties in learning English Pronunciation.

No	Statements	\bar{x}	S.D.	Level
1	English Pronunciation is not good for me.	3.53	1.41	High
2	I do not have much time to give the English pronunciation.	3.65	1.35	High
3	I do not have devices to help me in practicing pronunciation.	3.95	1.39	High
4	When I try to practice pronunciation, someone laughs at me.	3.85	1.07	High
5	I have negative thinking in English pronunciation.	3.68	1.55	High
6	I do not know Phonetics Symbols, so I do not know how to practice my pronunciation.	3.78	1.42	High
Total		3.74	1.36	High

Therefore, the overall level of the Students' difficulties in learning English Pronunciation was the high level with (\bar{x}) 3.74.

Table 4: Teachers' roles of developing the English Pronunciation.

No	Statements	\bar{x}	S.D.	Level
1	Teachers always teach me.	4.63	.58	Very High
2	Teachers allow to ask when I have a question in pronunciation.	4.58	.67	Very High
3	Teachers emphasize about English pronunciation.	4.48	.71	High
4	We have teachers that can make clear in pronunciation.	4.45	.67	High
5	When teachers teach English pronunciation, I always understand it.	4.25	.98	High
6	Teachers have strategies for teaching pronunciation.	4.45	.81	High
Total		4.47	.74	High

Therefore, the overall level of the Teachers' roles of developing the English Pronunciation was the high level with (\bar{x}) 4.47.

From in-depth interviews

According to data interview with 15 key informants was found that:

Findings 1: the research was found many problems encountered by 5 teachers and 10 students such as; 1) The students lack the opportunities and confidence was limited make them facing the most problems when speaking. Furthermore, they don't have the space for practice the English pronunciation. 2) The students are always used their mother language more than the English language so that the sound, accent, and rhythm of them were not clear. 3) The students felt shy, anxious, and scared. They were afraid of making a mistake when practicing pronunciation.

Findings 2: proposing the way to solve the problems of English Pronunciation skill, problems found from 15 key informants as follow:

First thing, they need to practice to read aloud, because to read aloud can improve their voice or accent by using the phonetics symbol for checking and correct pronunciation. Second, they need to motivate

themselves. To have the encouragement to show and able to speak or practice their English pronunciation without feeling embarrassed. Third, students should encourage themselves to practice by using social media e.g. watching the VDO or listen to English songs. To using electronics dictionary is another way that can help them to pronounce the word correctly.

Conclusion and Discussion

According to the results was found from 4 main questionnaires. There were high level for table 1, table 2, table 3, and table 4 is also high, that is they love and they really want to practice English pronunciation. But they don't give much time with this, and don't have space for them. When they are trying hard to practice, someone laugh at them. Furthermore, the most important thing is Phonetics Symbols, some of them do not know about the phonetics symbols, then they do not know how to practice their pronunciation. Besides that, nobody speaks English with them while staying in a room, they spend time around 10-20 minutes to practice speaking English per day or sometimes they do not speak English at all, and just speak the mother language or they just speak Thai and Isan at home. They usually spend time doing homework or assignment in the room and spend less time to practice English pronunciation.

From the data get interviewed with 15 key informants that the most problems of students encountered: 1) The students lack of opportunity, they did not have space and time to practice themselves, only in the class of in the university. Because of cultural, they always spoke Thai and Isan dialect at home. 2) The students used their mother language more than the English language so that the sound, accent, and rhythm of them were not clear. 3) The students felt shy, anxious, and scared. They were afraid of making a mistake when speaking.

Regarding the respondents “the needs of English pronunciation skills” according to the researcher found that most of them needed; 1) Asked them to practice with the activities, practiced to read aloud, practiced to give a speech in front of the class with a topic to improved their pronunciation skills. 2) Using social media, e.g. Watching the VDO of native speakers on Youtube to see how their pronounce, how they pronounce the words. And then tried to pronounce or practice follow them. Other thing was practice to listen the English songs. 3) Made understanding with the people to understand, not just laughing, but motivate them. Gave them a space to practice their English.

Yim-on (2002) mention that not know phonetic alphabet can be a problem for EFL learners because knowing phonetic alphabet will be beneficial to know how to pronounce each word correctly. The phonetic alphabet is a writing system in which each letter corresponds to a particular sound in language. A word that is written in the phonetic alphabet will be pronounced exactly the way that it is written, since the same sound is always represented by the same letter.

O’Connor (2002) stated that in language there are a small number of sound units that are put together in the box to form the words and sentences that are used everyday. It is like the human head has a certain fixed number of boxes for sound. So, when listening to the speaker’s language, the accent will be heard everyday. So, it is easy to use what has been heard since being a child. As a result, the main problem of English pronunciation sound is to build a new set of boxes corresponding to the sounds of English. If learners want to have a good pronunciation, practice is important. Besides, a mother language is one of learning English pronunciation problems, there is another problem that is about sound and it is difficult for learners to use good pronunciation.

Suggestions for Research

6.1. Suggestion for further education

According to this research, it had been conducted from the respondents and the teachers at Faculty of Humanities, Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University, Khon Kaen Campus, and found the best information of suggestion which was concerned with this research as follows:

1. Making understanding with the people, not just laughing but motivate them, and students also should have to motivate themselves to practice English pronunciation. They must dare to show and practice in the public space.

2. Students have to practice themselves e.g. practice to read aloud, speak alone in front of the mirror or try to make a conversation with their friends or teachers.

3. Lecturers should have to encourage the students to practice their English pronunciation with Phonetics Symbol that is the best way to improve their English pronunciation. Furthermore, encourage them to practice through social media e.g. watching VDO of native speakers on Youtube and try to improve by listen to the English songs.

6.2 Suggestions for the further studies

According to this research, it had been conducted from the respondents and the teachers at Faculty of Humanities, Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University, Khon Kaen Campus, and it found the best information of suggestion for the future studies, which were concerned with this research as follows:

1. It should be a research on the importance of English pronunciation in the conversation.

2. It should be a research on the efficiency of using entertainment media such as games, movies, music to practice English pronunciation.

3. It should be a focus of using phonetic symbols to practice English pronunciation.

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