Difficulties In Dealing With The English Pronunciation

for PWC 3/4 Students

Submitted By:

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Title of Research: Difficulties In Dealing With The English Pronunciation
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Chapter 1

The importance and the background of the problem

English pronunciation is one of the most difficult skills to acquire and learners should spend lots of time to improve their pronunciation. Understandable pronunciation is one of the basic requirements of learners' competence and it is also one of the most important features of a language. Good pronunciation should be one of the first things that students learn in English. They can live without advanced vocabulary — they can use simple words to say what they want to say. They can live without advanced grammar — they can use simple grammar structures instead. But there is no such thing as "simple pronunciation". If they don't have good pronunciation, they have bad pronunciation. And the consequences of bad pronunciation are tragic. Even if they use correct grammar, people may simply not understand them because they simply ignored the correct way of English pronunciation.

The objectives of research

English pronunciation is not a common problem for the students especially in PWC 3 level. The main objectives are the following:

1) To identify the problems and strategies addressing to the problems.

2) To find out factors causing the problems in phonetics learning of students.

3) To identify the solutions to the problem.

Research Framework

   Dependent variable **:** The numbers of students having difficulties in English
            pronunciation.

   Independent variable **:** Students should learn to pronounce the word in
            English well.

Hypothesis

Identify the problems you encounter during your teaching with PWC 3 students

Students' lack of confidence to use the language because they're afraid and ashamed when they make mistakes. Fear of mistake becomes one of the main factors of students' reluctance to speak in English in the classroom. This is also much influenced by the students' fear of being laughed at by other students or being criticized by the teacher.

As a result, students commonly stop participating in the speaking activity .Therefore, it is important for teachers to convince their students that making mistakes is not a wrong or bad thing because students can learn from their mistakes. English pronunciation is the cause of much confusion among those trying to speak English. Some words are very low on vowels, such as the word "strengths", which is hard to say when you're not accustomed to English pronunciation and also the students have a limitation of vocabulary proficiency as well as English reading materials are not always available or not interested in reading English books.

Some PWC 3 students have poor comprehension of the words. They don't understand the meaning of each word in a sentence. There's a lot going on in reading, from letter and word recognition to understanding meaning at the phrase, sentence and paragraph level. When the reader encounters vocabulary they do not know or do not recognize due to inaccurate decoding, they are likely to skip ahead. The more blanks in a line of text, the harder it is to make meaning and the more cognitively challenging and frustrating the reading task becomes. That's why poor comprehension can result when a student struggles with decoding, has a limited vocabulary or attempts to read a text that is at too high of a level. From the perspective of students themselves, their laziness, language ability, motivation and health status and so on may affect their desire to read and pronunciation is a huge problem.

Factors causing the problems in phonetics learning of students

When we corrected our students, we found many of them could not produce some pronunciations such as the following;

1. **Pronunciation /l/ vs. /r/**

Red lorry and yellow lorry

2. Consonant Clusters

Thai does not contain as many consecutive consonants (consonant clusters) as English. Because of this some students separate clusters with extra vowels. Instead of saying the clusters 'dr', 'sm' and 'kr' as the sentence below, a Thai speaker of English is likely to say *'da rive', 'sa-moke' and 'ca-rime'*

3. Dropped Consonants

Since Thai does not contain clusters at the ends of words, consonants are sometimes dropped entirely:

What a nice bag you have.

4. /tʃ /

Words beginning with /tʃ / such as 'church' are particularly problematic for students learning English pronunciation. The sound is often replaced with either /ʃ / as in 'shoe' or /s/ as in 'see'. To pronounce /tʃ / place the tongue on the alveolar ridge and whilst releasing a 't' sound glide your tongue backwards to make the /ʃ / sound. Listen the recording and try to mimic this sound:

The church bells chime at Christmas.

5. 'th'

The sounds /ð/ as in 'the' and /θ/ as in 'three' do not exist in Thai. As a result, some speakers replace with /θ/ with /s/ and /t/ and /ð/ with /z/ or /d/:

The three others.

Tea-tree utters.

6. /əʊ / The double vowel (diphthong) sound /əʊ / as in 'show', is sometimes replaced with the single vowel (monophthong) /ɔ /, which can sound closer to the English /ɔ :/ or /ɒ /:

show /ʃ əʊ /, short /ʃ ɔ :t/, shot /ʃ ɒ t/

coat /kəʊ t/, caught /kɔ :t/, cot /kɒ t/

note /nəʊ t/, nought /nɔ :t/, not /nɒ t/

7. Final Syllable Word Stress

The most common error made by students is to stress the final syllable of every word. Word stress varies in English. Notice the different stress patterns in these words:

pronunciˈation, ˈsyllable, intoˈnation, ˈnasal, ˈconsonants, reˈview

8. Weak Forms

Students learning English pronunciation tend to put too much stress on words that should be pronounced as weak. In English, many function words are unstressed in natural speech. Notice how 'we', 'are' 'with' and 'her' are unstressed in the recording:

We are very happy with her behaviour.

Identify the solutions to the problems.

9. Nasalised vowels

Some students sound quite nasal when they speak English. This is because Thai vowels are typically produced as nasal, unlike English vowels which are typically oral (the air is realized through the mouth). The 12 English monophthongs are pronounced as follows:

*Kee*p   *th*i*s*   *re*d   *ba*g   (front   vowels: /i:,   /ɪ /,   /e/,   /æ/)
The b*ir*d   *ru*ns   *fa*st   (centre   vowels: /ə/,   /ɜ :/,   /ʌ /,   /ɑ :/)
*Wh*o *too*k *Pau*l's *Wa*tch? (back vowels: /u:/, /ʊ /, /ɔ :/, /ɒ /)

10. Intonation

In English, some words are more stressed than others. Notice how 'what' is the most stressed word in this sentence:

What are you doing?

To identify the solutions to the problem.

 As a teacher, ask them how they feel about speaking. Is it important to them? What are their difficulties? This will let them know that you are aware that you are asking them to do something that is not necessarily easy. Maybe the class can share some ideas on how to deal with this. Mention to them that actors study their lines before they perform in a film or a play. Emphasize that they have to do a scene many times until they get it right. This should re-enforce the need to practice before speaking in good pronunciation in class. This conversation will usually relax them and give them the confidence to try.
Students must understand that they must try to speak and pronounce the English words correctly as much as they can, even if it is for simple greetings, requests or statements.
Students should be motivated to acquire a confidence whenever they make mistakes in language classrooms.
 Students should be encouraged to practice English language with their English teachers
Be motivated and well discipline. For example, use any online dictionary to translate the unfamiliar words and use in a sentence so, the students could able to remember it and pronounce the word correctly.
 Developing strong reading skills in students is one of the key goals of every early education program. It is through reading that students expand their vocabulary and learn about the world. Reading is also the key to success in spelling and writing.

Chapter 2

References and Theory

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Chapter 3

Research Methodology

The study was conducted at Attawit Commercial Technology College. It is located at 280 Sunpawoot Road, Bangna, Bangkok 1026. It is included as one of the qualified private Thai Vocational College in Thailand. The Schedule of Research included:

1) The importance and the background of the problem

2) The objectives of the research

3) Research Framework

4) Hypothesis

5) References and Theory

6) Analysis Result

7) Conclusion Content and Recommendation

1. Population

 The subjects involved in this research were as follows;

 1.1) Participants, the action class consisted of 36 students who signed to join this program. The students were section PWC 3/4 .

1.2) Position of researcher, the researcher was their instructor program.

1.3) Collaborators, the research had other classroom teachers, her colleagues as the collaborators who examined carefully the research process**.**

2. Sampling Group

        For the study, the researcher has chosen 36 Thai students from PWC 3/4 classroom as a sample unit to collect data. The age range was from 15-18 years old. There were 20 female students and 16 were male. The survey of this research was done in the classroom. The researcher also observed the class environment and the participants during the class time and tried to evaluate the problem from the interaction between students and teacher. Most them were really helpful and cooperative.

Table 1: Detailed Sampling Data

Institution	Researcher	No. of students	Class level
ATC	1	36	PWC 3/4

Research Implement

The researcher has collected the data from PWC 3/4 students at Attawit Commercial Technology College. Their adviser was present in the class during the students' evaluation and were monitoring and helping the students to understand the questionnaire. Since their adviser was present in class during the survey, the setting was formal; and she's been very helpful explaining the questionnaires. The time was not enough. The survey was done in the office during break time.

Data Collection and Research Statistics

The data were collected from the students of PWC 3/4 section. For collecting data, the researcher had to contact with the headmasters/ headmistress of those schools and tell them the purpose of the research to get permission. The researcher also had to take permission from the teacher, whose class she observed for conducting teachers' and students' survey.

The researcher organized the questions in a way so that the participants feel easy and comfortable to answer and express their opinions. the respondents had to choose and tick an appropriate option from five options for each item statement

Strongly Agree

 Agree

Neutral

Disagree

Strongly Disagree

After collecting data they were analyzed and organized very carefully. The collected data from the students . The researcher compiled the students' responses and arranges those numbers according to each statement in first table. Later on, total number of students' responses for each item were counted with percentage and listed in another table. Then these were analyzed according to the central research question.

The assessment was done to find out the reasons behind the English pronunciation difficulties of students in PWC 3/4 class. By questionnaires we got to know about the reasons from different point views.

Sample Questionnaire

Table 2

Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1. Teacher does not put emphasis on pronunciation while taking English classes.					
2. Teacher does not correct pronunciation error in class.					
3. Teacher uses local accent, while teaching English.					
4. Learning proper pronunciation is necessary					
5. Students do not get enough opportunity to practice speaking inside the classroom.					
6. /tʃ //l/ vs. /r/ is difficult to pronounce					
7 . /s/ sound is often pronounced like /tʃ/ or /ch/,					
8. Being shy when speaking English.					
9. Students do not get enough opportunity to practice speaking inside or outside the classroom.					
10. Students' lack of confidence to use the language because they're afraid and ashamed when they make mistakes.					

Chapter 4

Analysis Result

Table 3

The results of students' responses are presented below through two separate tables. First table will show the actual number of responses given to each statement. Then the second table will show the average numbers after converting the responses into percentage.

Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1st statement	0	0	1	3	32
2nd statement	0	0	0	0	36
3rd statement	0	0	0	0	36
4th statement	30	3	3	0	0
5th statement	21	4	5	3	3
6th statement	36	0	0	0	0
7th statement	30	2	4	0	0
8th statement	15	6	4	5	6
9th statement	10	4	4	8	10
10th statement	16	5	6	3	6

Table 4

Now all these responses are converted into percentage. Total percentage is 100%

Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1st statement	0	0	0.69%	2.08%	22.22%
2nd statement	0	0	0	0	25%
3rd statement	0	0	0	0	25%
4th statement	21%	2.08%	2.08%	0	0
5th statement	15%	2.77%	3.47%	2.08%	2.08%
6th statement	25%	0	0	0	0
7th statement	20.83%	1.38%	2.77%	0	0
8th statement	10.41%	4.16%	2.77%	2.77%	4.16%
9th statement	6.94%	2.77%	2.77%	5.55%	6.94%
10th statement	11.11%	3.47%	4.16%	2.08%	4.16%

Chapter 5

Conclusion and Recommendation

Conclusion

Teaching pronunciation should still be a part of a teacher's approach. The benefits of learning pronunciation are often achieve through various styles of teaching. As such, teachers need to develop strategies to support his/ her students because pronunciation isn't difficult as long as the students are willing to learn and have discipline on themselves. It is necessary for the students like PWC 3 to develop their pronunciation skills for their future job. It is very important when communicating to others especially for those English speakers. Having a good pronunciation skill is one of the best rewards for themselves. Pronunciation should be viewed as more than correct production of individual sounds or words. It should be viewed as an important part of communication that is incorporated into classroom activities. Teachers can urge their learners to monitor their own pronunciation and practice their speaking skills as much as possible in and outside the classroom. Understandable pronunciation is an essential component of communicative competence. With this in mind, teachers should set obtainable goals that are applicable and suitable for the communication needs of learners. Pronunciation instruction has to aim at intelligible pronunciation and teachers can actively encourage their learners' actual production, build pronunciation awareness and practice. Pronunciation instruction is very important because it is the main source of understanding. If learners cannot utter the correct version of a word then they are not able to communicate correctly. Pronunciation instruction helps learners to have a better understanding of English speakers and improves their ability to communicate easily and effectively.

Recommendation

From this research study some important facts can be brought to the light and these can be used as solutions. The finding has shown that class time is not enough to develop on pronunciation, so the school authority might work on it. Some classrooms need effective devices such as computer, projector, and other tools for teaching. Furthermore, teachers should learn some different and effective approaches to teach pronunciation, so that the students could find it interesting.