

Thesis Title A Survey Study of the Status of and
Practice in English Pronunciation
Teaching at the Lower Secondary
Level in Government Schools in
Thailand

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed at investigating the status of and practice in pronunciation teaching in M.1-3 English programs of government schools. The subjects of the study were 317 heads of the English/Foreign Languages Division of government schools throughout the country. The instrument employed was a mailed questionnaire which was assumed to have content validity after being criticized by authorities and revised according to their comments and suggestions coupled with the implications of the pilot study. The reliability of the study was

confirmed by means of the t-test, Chi-square and Spearman Rank Order Correlation.

The findings of the present study can be summarized as follows:

1. Pronunciation was taught in the M.1-3 English programs in 96.70% of the schools in this study.

2. Most schools taught pronunciation primarily because the students had problems in pronunciation or in listening due to pronunciation weaknesses. Moreover, the teachers considered pronunciation important and beneficial to the students in their future. The teachers therefore taught pronunciation whenever situations demanded it. Otherwise, they taught it in every English class or whenever the English textbooks dealt with pronunciation. On the average, pronunciation teaching took 11-30% the English class time and 21-40% of the laboratory hour.

3. The teachers taught both segmentals (individual sounds) and suprasegmentals (sequences of sounds, stress and intonation, and voice quality setting). However, they seemed to put more emphasis on the suprasegmentals.

4. The teachers employed different criteria in selecting pronunciation content for teaching. The

greatest number of subjects based their selection on the differences between English and Thai and the students' previous mistakes.

5. Most schools in this study taught pronunciation by means of reading aloud either by the teacher or by the students, individually or altogether. In addition, they gave pronunciation models by having the students listen to the tape in class. They also related pronunciation to spelling and gave practice by training the students to perceive sounds before asking them to produce the sounds. The sequence of pronunciation lessons, in most schools in this study, followed the sequence of the English textbooks in use. With regard to correcting pronunciation errors, most teachers preferred traditional techniques rather than communicative ones. This corresponded to the self-ranked importance of the teachers which was found to be high.

6. Almost 97% of the subject schools tested pronunciation and divided 11-20%, on the average, of the English score to pronunciation. Over 50% of them tested it by having the students read aloud to or converse with the teacher.

7. Nine schools in this study did not incorporate pronunciation in their M.1-3 English

programs mostly due to the lack of audio equipment necessary for pronunciation teaching.

The implications of the present study concerning English pronunciation at the lower secondary level included the following :

1. Pronunciation seemed to have a stable status in English teaching at this particular level in Thailand, considering the number of schools which taught it, the teachers' reasons for teaching it, time devoted to pronunciation teaching and practice, and the extent to which it was included in the testing procedures of English courses.

2. The content of pronunciation lessons seemed to reflect the teachers' understanding on potential difficulties of Thai students due to the interference of the Thai language. However, the considerations on the functional load of the sounds seemed to account for the selection of what to teach, as well.

3. The teachers seemed to prefer traditional methods of teaching such as minimal pairs and drills rather than more communication ones like games and songs. This may partly be derived from the excessive density of the curriculum, the lack of audio-visual equipment due to budget constraint, the teachers' lack of expertise in teaching pronunciation by means of the

communicative approach, and the inappropriateness of class room environment and size.

4. English textbooks seemed to be a factor governing the content of pronunciation lessons and approach to teaching pronunciation.