

Enhancing English Consonant Pronunciation Through Experiential Learning Among Thai In-Service Student Teachers

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Abstract

This study aimed to 1) develop and implement an Experiential Learning Theory (ELT)-based pronunciation training program for Thai in-service student teachers, 2) evaluate its effectiveness in improving English consonant pronunciation proficiency, and 3) investigate students' satisfaction with the program in terms of content and delivery, learning activities, instructional design, and learning outcomes. The study focused on problematic English consonants frequently encountered by Thai EFL learners, particularly initial consonants, final consonants, and consonant clusters. The participants consisted of 40 third-year English Education major students from a Rajabhat University in the South-Northeast region of Thailand. A quasi-experimental one-group pre-test and post-test design was employed. The pronunciation training program was developed based on the four stages of ELT: Concrete Experience (CE), Reflective Observation (RO), Abstract Conceptualization (AC), and Active Experimentation (AE). The 30-hour intervention consisted of articulatory training, guided pronunciation practice, peer feedback, self-recording activities, IPA-based exercises, and communicative pronunciation tasks. Data were collected through pronunciation pre-test and post-test assessments and a student satisfaction questionnaire. The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, paired-samples t-tests, and effect size analysis. The findings indicated that the ELT-based pronunciation training program was successfully developed and implemented. The program was effective in improving participants' English consonant pronunciation proficiency, as evidenced by significantly higher post-test scores than pre-test scores ($p < .001$), with large to extremely large effect sizes at both the word and sentence levels. Regarding students' satisfaction, participants reported high to very high levels of satisfaction across all four evaluated aspects of the training program. These findings suggest that ELT provides an effective pedagogical framework for enhancing English consonant pronunciation among Thai in-service student teachers by promoting active engagement, reflective learning, articulatory awareness, and communicative pronunciation practice.

Keywords: Experiential learning theory (ELT), English pronunciation, student teachers

Introduction

English pronunciation is a crucial component of effective oral communication because intelligible speech enables listeners to comprehend spoken messages accurately and efficiently. In English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts, pronunciation competence is particularly important for student teachers, who are expected not only to develop their own English proficiency but also to function as pronunciation models for their future learners. Inaccurate pronunciation among teachers may negatively influence learners' pronunciation development and contribute to the fossilization of incorrect speech patterns in classroom settings (Derwing & Munro, 2015; Celce-Murcia et al., 2010). Developing effective pronunciation instruction for student teachers is therefore essential, as pronunciation competence affects both their communicative ability and the quality of pronunciation input provided to future learners.

Among Thai EFL learners, English consonant pronunciation remains a persistent challenge due to substantial phonological differences between Thai and English. Thai learners frequently experience difficulty producing English final consonants, consonant clusters, and



unfamiliar consonant sounds such as /θ/, /ð/, /v/, and /z/, which do not exist in the Thai phonological system (Kanokpermpoon, 2007; Khamkhien, 2010). Consequently, consonant omission, sound substitution, and vowel insertion are commonly observed in spoken English. Final consonants are frequently omitted, while consonant clusters are often simplified through vowel insertion. These pronunciation difficulties may reduce speech intelligibility and negatively affect learners’ confidence in oral communication.

The issue is particularly concerning among Thai in-service student teachers because they are preparing to enter professional teaching contexts in which clear and intelligible pronunciation is essential. Previous studies have reported that many Thai pre-service and in-service English teachers continue to experience difficulties with pronunciation accuracy and oral communication (Kanoksilapatham, 2010). Such limitations may reduce teachers’ confidence in teaching speaking and pronunciation and may hinder their ability to provide accurate pronunciation models for learners in EFL classrooms.

Despite the importance of pronunciation competence, pronunciation instruction in many Thai teacher education programs continues to receive limited emphasis compared with grammar, reading, and writing skills. In many EFL classrooms, pronunciation instruction still relies heavily on imitation and repetition without providing learners with sufficient opportunities for articulatory awareness, reflective learning, and active pronunciation practice. These traditional approaches may not adequately support sustainable pronunciation improvement, particularly for problematic English consonant sounds (Gilakjani & Sabouri, 2016). Recent studies have therefore emphasized the importance of learner-centered and practice-oriented pronunciation instruction that promotes active engagement and meaningful learning experiences (Saito & Lyster, 2012).

One instructional framework that has considerable potential to support pronunciation development is Kolb’s ELT (1984). ELT conceptualizes learning as a cyclical process consisting of four stages: Concrete Experience (CE), Reflective Observation (RO), Abstract Conceptualization (AC), and Active Experimentation (AE). Through these stages, learners actively engage in learning activities, reflect on their performance, develop conceptual understanding, and apply newly acquired knowledge in practical contexts. In pronunciation pedagogy, experiential learning may help learners improve articulatory awareness and pronunciation accuracy through hands-on pronunciation activities, guided reflection, and repeated communicative pronunciation practice.

Although experiential learning has been widely applied in language education, relatively few studies have investigated its application in pronunciation training, particularly in the context of Thai student teachers. Furthermore, limited research has examined how ELT-based pronunciation activities can improve English consonant pronunciation proficiency among Thai in-service student teachers preparing for professional teaching practice. This gap highlights the need for instructional approaches that integrate experiential learning processes with pronunciation pedagogy in teacher education contexts.

To address this gap, the present study developed and implemented an ELT-based pronunciation training program designed to improve English consonant pronunciation among Thai in-service student teachers. The training program incorporated pronunciation activities targeting problematic consonants in initial, final, and consonant cluster positions. The study further examined the effectiveness of the program by comparing participants’ pronunciation performance before and after the intervention and investigating students’ satisfaction with the training program.



Research Objectives

1. To develop and implement an ELT-based pronunciation training program for Thai in-service student teachers.
2. To evaluate the effectiveness of the ELT-based pronunciation training program in improving English consonant pronunciation proficiency.
3. To investigate students' satisfaction with the ELT-based pronunciation training program in terms of 1) content and delivery, 2) learning activities, 3) instructional design, and 4) learning outcomes.

Scope of the Research

1. Population Scope

The participants consisted of 40 third-year English Education major students from one of the four Rajabhat Universities in the South-Northeast Group of Thailand (Buriram Rajabhat University, Chaiyaphum Rajabhat University, Nakhon Ratchasima Rajabhat University and Surindra Rajabhat University). These students had completed their teaching practicum during the previous semester and were therefore regarded as in-service student teachers preparing for professional teaching practice. One university was randomly selected from the four, using a lottery method. Since the selected university had only one third-year English Education class, all 40 students in that class participated in the study.

2. Variable Scope

The independent variable was the ELT-based pronunciation training program developed according to Kolb's ELT (1984), incorporating the four learning stages: CE, RO, AC and AE.

The dependent variables were: 1) English consonant pronunciation proficiency, particularly initial consonants, final consonants, and consonant clusters, and 2) students' satisfaction with the pronunciation training program in four aspects; content and delivery, learning activities, instructional design, and learning outcomes.

3. Time Scope

The study was conducted during the 2025 academic year. The ELT-based pronunciation training program consisted of ten instructional sessions, conducted once a week over 10 weeks, totaling 30 hours. The pre-test was administered before the intervention and the post-test and student satisfaction questionnaire were administered after the intervention, with the complete data collection period spanning 12 weeks.

Literature Review

Thai EFL learners frequently encounter difficulties in English consonant pronunciation due to substantial differences between Thai and English phonological systems. Previous studies have reported persistent problems with final consonants, consonant clusters, and unfamiliar consonant sounds that do not occur in Thai, such as /θ/, /ð/, /v/, and /z/ (Kanokpermpoon, 2007; Khamkhien, 2010). These pronunciation difficulties often result in consonant omission, sound substitution, and vowel insertion, which may negatively affect intelligibility in spoken communication.

Pronunciation competence is particularly important for student teachers because they are expected to function as pronunciation models in English classrooms. However, pronunciation instruction in many Thai EFL contexts has traditionally emphasized imitation and repetition rather than active and reflective learning processes (Gilakjani & Sabouri, 2016). Consequently, learners may have limited opportunities to develop articulatory awareness,



pronunciation confidence, and communicative pronunciation skills through meaningful practice.

Kolb’s ELT (1984) provides a learner-centered framework that emphasizes learning through experience, reflection, conceptual understanding, and active experimentation. The four stages of ELT promote active learner engagement and practical skill development. In pronunciation pedagogy, experiential learning activities may support pronunciation awareness and articulatory control through hands-on practice, guided reflection, and communicative application. Previous studies have suggested that active and practice-oriented pronunciation instruction can contribute positively to pronunciation development and learner confidence (Saito & Lyster, 2012). Therefore, ELT was adopted in this study as the theoretical foundation for developing the ELT-based pronunciation training program.

Research Methodology

This study employed a quasi-experimental research design using a one-group pre-test and post-test approach to examine the effectiveness of an ELT-based pronunciation training program.

Population and Sampling

The participants consisted of 40 third-year English Education major students from one of the four Rajabhat Universities in the South-Northeast Group of Thailand. They had completed their teaching practicum during the previous semester and were therefore regarded as in-service student teachers preparing for professional teaching practice. One university was randomly selected from the four Rajabhat Universities in the South-Northeast Group using a lottery method. Because the selected university had only one third-year English Education class, all 40 students in that class were included in the study.

The pronunciation training program focused on improving English consonant pronunciation, particularly initial consonants, final consonants, and consonant clusters that commonly present difficulties for Thai EFL learners. The instructional activities were developed according to the four stages of ELT.

Instruments

The Hands-on Pronunciation Practice Activities served as the core instructional instrument in this study. The intervention was designed to promote experiential and communicative pronunciation learning through active engagement, guided reflection, conceptual understanding, and repeated pronunciation practice.

The Hands-on Pronunciation Practice Activities were systematically developed based on ELT principles and designed to improve English consonant pronunciation among Thai EFL student teachers. The activities focused on pronunciation features that commonly present difficulties for Thai learners, particularly initial consonants, final consonants, and consonant clusters. The instructional sequence integrated articulatory awareness activities, guided reflection, communicative pronunciation practice, peer feedback, and self-monitoring to strengthen pronunciation awareness and articulatory control.

During the CE stage, participants engaged in hands-on pronunciation practice activities and communicative tasks designed to expose them to problematic English consonant sounds. In the RO stage, learners reflected on their pronunciation performance through peer discussion, guided feedback, and self-recording activities. The AC stage emphasized explicit pronunciation instruction through articulatory explanations, phonetic diagrams, and IPA-based pronunciation practice. Finally, during the AE stage, participants applied their pronunciation knowledge through communicative speaking activities and repeated pronunciation practice in new situations.



The intervention was conducted over 10 instructional sessions across 12 weeks, totaling 30 hours, with the pre-test and post-test administered before and after the instructional intervention, respectively. Instructional materials included pronunciation worksheets, articulation diagrams, mirrors, mobile voice-recording applications, audiovisual materials, and guided pronunciation exercises.

Table1: ELT stages and Pronunciation Practice Activities

ELT Stage	Learning Activities	Purpose
CE	Pronunciation games, listening tasks, articulatory awareness activities	Expose learners to problematic consonants
RO	Peer feedback, self-recording, guided reflection	Reflect on pronunciation performance
AC	IPA instruction, articulatory explanation, phonetic diagrams	Develop conceptual pronunciation knowledge
AE	Role-play, communicative speaking tasks, repeated pronunciation practice	Apply pronunciation skills communicatively

The research instruments consisted of 1) pronunciation pre-test and post-test assessments and 2) a student satisfaction questionnaire. The pronunciation assessment was developed by the researcher based on the learning objectives and instructional content of the ELT-based pronunciation training program and was administered as both the pre-test and post-test. The assessment measured participants' English consonant pronunciation proficiency at both the word and sentence levels, focusing on initial consonants, final consonants, and consonant clusters. Participants' pronunciation performances were audio-recorded and evaluated independently by three expert raters using a pronunciation evaluation rubric.

The student satisfaction questionnaire was also developed by the researcher to evaluate participants' perceptions of the ELT-based pronunciation training program. It employed a five-point Likert scale and examined four aspects: 1) content and delivery, 2) learning activities, 3) instructional design, and 4) learning outcomes.

The instructional activities, pronunciation assessments, and satisfaction questionnaire were evaluated for content validity using the Item–Objective Congruence (IOC) index by three experts in English language teaching and applied linguistics. The IOC values were calculated based on the formula proposed by Rovinelli and Hambleton (1977) using a ready-made computer program developed by Sukamolson and Sonthi (2024). The obtained IOC values ranged from .80 to 1.00, indicating strong content validity (Turner & Carlson, 2003).

Data Collection

The data collection process was conducted over 12 weeks, including 10 instructional sessions totaling 30 hours. Participants completed a pronunciation pre-test before participating in the ELT-based pronunciation training program and a pronunciation post-test upon completion of the intervention. Participants' pronunciation performances in both assessments were audio-recorded and evaluated by three qualified raters using a pronunciation evaluation rubric. Following the post-test assessment, participants completed a student satisfaction questionnaire to evaluate their perceptions of the training program.



Data Analysis and Statistical Treatment

The collected data was analyzed using descriptive statistics, paired-samples t-tests, and effect size analysis. Mean scores and standard deviations were calculated to summarize pronunciation performance and participants' satisfaction with the training program. Paired-samples t-tests were conducted to compare pre-test and post-test pronunciation scores, while Cohen's d was calculated to determine the magnitude of improvement resulting from the instructional intervention.

Research Results

1. Development and Implementation of the ELT-Based Pronunciation Training Program

The ELT-based pronunciation training program was successfully developed and implemented in accordance with the study objectives. Based on Kolb's ELT (Kolb, 1984), the program consisted of 10 instructional sessions totaling 30 hours and incorporated the four stages of ELT: CE, RO, AC, and AE, to improve English consonant pronunciation. The program was implemented as planned with all 40 participants completing the intervention.

2. Effectiveness of the ELT-Based Pronunciation Training Program

The effectiveness of the ELT-based pronunciation training program was evaluated by comparing participants' pronunciation performance before and after the intervention. The results showed that the program significantly improved participants' English consonant pronunciation proficiency. As shown in Table 2, the post-test scores were significantly higher than the pre-test scores across all evaluated consonant categories ($p < .001$).

Table 2: Comparison of Pre-test and Post-test Pronunciation Scores at the Sentence Level

Consonant Category	Pre-test Mean	Post-test Mean	t	p	Effect Size (d)	Interpretation
Initial Consonants	15.19	21.91	-24.81	< .001	3.92	Very Large
Final Consonants	22.77	34.53	-41.45	< .001	6.56	Extremely Large
Consonant Clusters	15.02	22.63	-36.93	< .001	5.84	Extremely Large

The results indicated substantial improvement in participants' pronunciation proficiency at the sentence level following participation in the ELT-based pronunciation training program. Final consonants demonstrated the greatest improvement, followed by consonant clusters and initial consonants. The effect sizes ranged from very large to extremely large, indicating a substantial positive effect of the instructional intervention on participants' pronunciation development. These findings demonstrate the effectiveness of the ELT-based pronunciation training program in improving English consonant pronunciation among Thai EFL student teachers.

3. Students' Satisfaction with the ELT-Based Pronunciation Training Program

Students' satisfaction with the ELT-based pronunciation training program was evaluated using the student satisfaction questionnaire. Overall, participants reported high to very high levels of satisfaction across all evaluated aspects.



The improvement in pronunciation proficiency may also have resulted from the explicit focus on Thai-English phonological differences integrated throughout the instructional intervention. Thai learners frequently experience persistent difficulties with English final consonants, consonant clusters, voicing distinctions, and aspiration contrasts because these phonological structures differ substantially between Thai and English (Kanokpermpoon, 2007; Khamkhien, 2010). By emphasizing articulatory explanation, contrastive phonology instruction, guided pronunciation drills, and communicative pronunciation activities, learners may have developed stronger phonological awareness and greater articulatory control during pronunciation production.

In addition, the integration of articulatory awareness activities and technology-enhanced pronunciation learning tools may have contributed substantially to learners' pronunciation improvement. Activities involving mirrors, articulatory diagrams, voice-recording applications, and guided self-monitoring enabled learners to observe tongue placement, airflow, voicing, and consonant release more carefully during pronunciation practice. These activities may have strengthened learners' phonetic sensitivity and supported more effective self-correction during communicative pronunciation practice. Previous studies have suggested that technology-assisted pronunciation learning can enhance learner autonomy, pronunciation awareness, and repeated feedback opportunities in pronunciation instruction (Golonka et al., 2014; Liakin et al., 2017).

The findings also revealed high levels of learner satisfaction toward the ELT-based pronunciation training program, particularly regarding learning activities and instructional delivery. One possible explanation for these positive perceptions is that the instructional activities emphasized active participation and meaningful communication rather than passive imitation and isolated pronunciation drills. This finding is consistent with previous Thai educational research highlighting the value of active learning activities in promoting learner engagement, participation, and positive learning experiences in English language classrooms (Yordchim et al., 2025). Activities such as role-playing, pronunciation recording, storytelling, peer feedback, and communicative speaking tasks may have enhanced learner engagement and strengthened learners' confidence in pronunciation learning. These findings support previous studies emphasizing the importance of learner-centered and communicative pronunciation instruction in EFL contexts (Gilakjani & Sabouri, 2016; Saito & Lyster, 2012).

Overall, the findings suggest that ELT can serve as an effective pedagogical framework for pronunciation instruction in Thai teacher education contexts. The study highlights the importance of integrating experiential learning processes, articulatory awareness activities, reflective learning, and communicative pronunciation practice into teacher education programs before student teachers enter professional teaching environments. The findings may therefore provide useful pedagogical implications for English teacher education programs seeking to strengthen pronunciation instruction and communicative competence among Thai EFL student teachers.

In conclusion, the ELT-based pronunciation training program effectively improved English consonant pronunciation among Thai in-service student teachers and was associated with high levels of learner satisfaction. The findings indicate that integrating experiential learning, articulatory awareness, reflective learning, and communicative pronunciation practice can enhance pronunciation instruction in Thai EFL teacher education. Future research should investigate the long-term effects of the training program by extending the duration of the intervention beyond 30 hours and incorporating delayed post-test assessments to examine the retention of pronunciation gains over time.



Recommendations

Teacher education programs should provide greater emphasis on pronunciation instruction, particularly English consonant pronunciation that commonly presents difficulties for Thai EFL learners. ELT-based pronunciation activities may be integrated into English teacher education courses to promote articulatory awareness, reflective learning, and communicative pronunciation practice.

Educational institutions may also encourage the use of technology-enhanced pronunciation learning tools, such as mobile voice-recording applications and articulatory visual supports, to strengthen learners’ opportunities for self-monitoring and independent pronunciation practice.

Future studies may extend the investigation to other aspects of English pronunciation, such as vowels, word stress, rhythm, and intonation. Further research may also examine the long-term effectiveness of ELT-based pronunciation instruction and compare its effectiveness with other pronunciation teaching approaches in EFL contexts.

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