Using Audio Lingual Method in Listening Class to Improve Pronunciation Ability of Darul Mahdiah Private School Students
(A Classroom Action Research in Songkhla-Thailand in the 2014/2015 Academic Year)

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Abstract — This study aims at finding out how the use Audio Lingual Method through Repetition Drill Technique improves Thai students’ pronunciation ability. This is a Classroom Action Research (CAR) conducted in Darul Mahdiah private school Songkhla-Thailand. The subjects of the study are 16 Thai students of class 6/2 at the school. The data were collected from pronunciation tests and analyzed by using percentages analysis. The result of the students’ pronunciation improvement was as follows; in the pre-pronunciation test the students’ pronunciation score was 0% (excellent), 0% (very good), 31.25% (good), 31.25% (low) and 37.5% (failed), in the cycle 1 post test the score was 0% (excellent), 14.29% (very good), 50% (good), 21.42% (low) and 14.29% (failed), and the score of the cycle 2 post test was 6.25% (excellent), 37.5% (very good), 43.75% (good), 12.5% (low) and 0% (failed). This leads to the conclusion that the students’ improved pronunciation was due to the two reasons; first, the students’ pronunciation ability improved through repetition drill since they got used to pronounce words intelligibly as what the teacher modeled, second, other Audio Lingual Method principles support the success as well.

Keywords: Audio Lingual Method, Repetition Drill, Pronunciation, Thai Students.

Abstrak — Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengetahui bagaimana penggunaan Metode Audio Lingual dapat meningkatkan kemampuan pengucapan siswa Thailand. Penelitian ini adalah sebuah Penelitian Tindakan Kelas (PTK) yang dilakukan di sekolah Darul Mahdiah di Songkhla-Thailand. Subjek penelitian ini adalah 16 siswa dari kelas 6/2 di sekolah tersebut. Data penelitian didapatkan melalui tes pengucapan dan dianalisis dengan menggunakan analisis persentase. Hasil peningkatan kemampuan pengucapan siswa adalah sebagai berikut; dalam pre tes ada 0% siswa (excellent), 0% (very good), 31.25% (good), 31.25% (low) dan 37.5% (failed), dalam tes di siklus pertama ada 0% siswa (excellent), 14.29% (very good), 50% (good), 21.42% (low) dan 14.29% (failed), dan hasil tes pada siklus kedua menunjukkan 6.25% (excellent), 37.5% (very good), 43.75% (good), 12.5% (low) dan 0% (failed). Ada dua alasan yang menjadi kesimpulan untuk hal ini; pertama, kemampuan pengucapan siswa meningkat melalui latihan pengulangan karena mereka terbiasa mengucapkan kata yang benar sesuai dengan yang guru contohkan, kedua, beberapa prinsip Metode Audio Lingual memberikan dampak positif pula terhadap peningkatan kemampuan mereka.

Kata Kunci: Metode Audio Lingual, Latihan Pengulangan, Pengucapan, Siswa Thailand.
I. Introduction

A. Background of the Study

Pronunciation is undeniably important in a communication. Learners with good pronunciation in English are more likely to be understood even if they make errors in other areas, whereas learners whose pronunciation is difficult to understand will not be understood, even if their grammar is perfect (Yates, 2002). Being in line with the statement, Yates and Zielinski (2009:11) state, “It does not matter how good a learner’s vocabulary or grammar is if no one can understand them when they speak”. However, taking into account what has been stated, this does not mean to say that vocabulary and grammar are not important at all, but good communication will still exist with only simple vocabulary and grammar.

Unlike vocabulary and grammar, however, pronunciation does not offer the word “simple” in good communication, but should be intelligible instead. Intelligible pronunciation, moreover, means one’s pronunciation is clear enough to be understood (Hornby, 2010). It helps us understand others’ English and, therefore, enables us to communicate with English natives and non-natives (Wei and Zhou, 2002). One, consequently, does not need to sound like a native speaker of English in order to build good communication but to be intelligible (Lynch and Anderson, 2012). Thus, intelligible pronunciation is a need and, therefore, this criterion of intelligible, then, becomes the aim of this study to improve students’ pronunciation.

The need for intelligible pronunciation seems to be always a problem, however. Even though it is true that intelligible pronunciation does not mean to sound perfectly like a native speaker of English, but pronunciation is considered difficult, indeed. Lynch and Anderson (2012) believe, “anyone who speaks another language will know it can be difficult to produce certain sounds that we do not use in our first language”. In addition, Haycraft (1991) in Wei and Zhou (2002) reports that there was a survey of 500 adult students from Cordoba, Barcelona, Paris, Turin and Rome conducted in 1973, one of the questions asked was ‘What do you find most difficult in English: "Grammar", "Speaking", "Understanding", "Pronunciation", "Idiom", "Writing"?’ Among these alternatives ‘Pronunciation’ was in a substantial majority.

This also happens in Thailand where English is a foreign language. Mostly Thai students have problems in pronunciation (Wei and Zhou, 2002; Yangklang, 2006; Kanokpermpoon, 2007; and Khamkhien, 2010). Wei and Zhou (2002) further mentioned that Thai students as well as Thai people mostly use borrowed English words, but pronounced in Thai ways, for example, Top land (without /d/), supermarket (without /t/), Lotus (without /s/ and /t/ as /d/), etc. Moreover, Yanglang (2006) found that the final consonant sounds in most Thai words are dropped by the students. For example, the words “fine”, “find” and “file” are all pronounced similarly. This is also due to the fact that there is no final -l consonant in Thai language, Thai people tend to sound final -l with nasal -n or even omit it, such as ball - /bɛːɬ/ pronounced as /bɛn/ and call - /kɛːɬ/ pronounced as /kɛːn/ (Ronakiat, 2002, in Kanokpermpoon 2007:64).

The problems reported by the previous studies, moreover, were faced by the students of Darul Mahdiah School as well, where this study had been conducted. They were the students of class 6/2 in particular. This was obviously found by the researcher who had been teaching the class for more than three months in her assignment of practice teaching. She, for instance, had found that most of the students pronounced the word “noodle” as /ˈnuː.d 혹은 instead of /ˈnuː.dəl/ and that the word “go” was pronounced as /ˈkoʊ/ instead of /ˈgoʊ/, etc.. This had made the researcher hardly understood their pronunciation at first.

Moreover, in order to ensure that the students’ pronunciation problems really need settling down, the researcher conducted a short interview with the English teacher, who was also her collaborator in this study, to know her observation of the students’ pronunciation
during her teaching in that particular class. Not surprisingly, the teacher felt the need of students’ pronunciation problems to be settled down. Consequently, she supported the researcher’s study to settle the students’ pronunciation problems down and agreed to be her collaborator. Afterwards, supporting her interview, the researcher also conducted a pronunciation pre test in order to find out the students’ pronunciation problems in detail. This is be pertained to the forthcoming chapter.

The researcher, however, found that there have been some studies focused on Thai students’ English pronunciation as the result of taking into account the existence of the pronunciation problems. Wei and Zhou (2002) has found that English pronunciation is a problem for Thai students to some extent. This, moreover, is in line with Kanokpermpoon (2007) who investigated Thai and English consonants and found that Thai consonants that differ from that of English are challenging for Thai people in certain pronunciation. Another study on pronunciation, meanwhile, has been conducted towards Thai students of Science field related to their pronunciation ability through word stress assignment (Khamkhien, 2010).

However, the current study should be taken into account since pronunciation of Thai students has been investigated by the previous researchers to be still a problem and needed solving. The result of this study is, then, expected to ensure how this method must be considered to solve pronunciation problems in the future. Besides, this study is accounted to be significant, since there had not been any studies investigating and solving students’ pronunciation problems in the selected school. In addition, the researcher conducted researcher’s own teaching and observation in order to ensure the success of this study.

The last but not least, it is believed that Audio Lingual Method will be best applied to solve the students’ pronunciation problems in the class, since one of the technique used in the method is “Repetition Drill” technique which makes the students get familiar and used to pronounce the correct English words. This way is accounted suitable for them as the most factor affects students’ pronunciation is their native language compared to other factors such as age, motivation, exposure, etc.. This has been mentioned by Kenworthy (1987) that the native language is the most influential factor in accounting for students’ pronunciation especially foreign accents (Khamkhien, 2010). It is, then, expected that by repeating the correct words the teacher models, the students will realize the correct pronunciation as well as get used to pronounce it for later. In addition to that, during the class sessions, the teacher will have the dominant role which means she does not only model the students pronouncing correct words but also “control” them by correcting their mistakes directly, asking to repeat individually as well as in group, and provide any ways to keep them focus. This means to say that Audio Lingual Method is the proper method to solve the 6/2 students’ pronunciation problems.

B. Problem of the Study

The question this study aimed to answer is:
How can the use of Audio Lingual Method in listening class improve pronunciation ability of Darul Mahdiah private school students in the 2014/2015 academic year?

C. Objective of the Study

The present study seeks to find out how Audio Lingual Method can improve pronunciation ability of Darul Mahdiah private school students in the 2014/2015 academic year.

D. Operational Definition

1. Pronunciation

Pronunciation is how words(s) are spoken. It includes features such as stress, intonation etc. Nevertheless, this study does not focus on those features. This study, however, focuses on improving students’ pronunciation ability in order to get the students used to
pronounce word(s) intelligibly. In other words, intelligible pronunciation is as the focus of this study.

2. Audio Lingual Method
   Audio Lingual Method is an oral-based approach aiming at forming new habits in the target language. In this study, the habit formation refers to the correct pronunciation habit formation by repetition. Repetition Drill technique is used, therefore. The teacher is the one who models the students and the students are imitators of the teacher’s model.

E. Significance of the Study
   Thai students’ pronunciation problems have been stated by some researchers to be very significant to solve and this study is, then, significant, therefore. The significance of this study is, however, considered more on the improvement of practice rather than the theory development. Consequently, this study is practically significance for improving student’s pronunciation ability by using Audio Lingual Method.

F. Scope of the Study
   The scope of this study comprises with two variables, pronunciation and Audio Lingual Method, while its limitation is students’ pronunciation ability related to their native language influence. The subject chosen were the sixth grade students (Pratt hom) of Darul Mahdiiyah Private School Thachamuang Rattaphum Songkhla, Thailand.

II. Method of the Study

A. Kind of the Study
   Taking into account what the researcher had got in the preliminary study, the researcher decided that Audio Lingual Method would be the most suitable method to solve the students’ pronunciation problems. Classroom Action Research, therefore, was chosen. Further, the researcher used the collaborative one in which the researcher worked with the English teacher of the subjects as her collaborator.

B. Subject of the Study
   In the 2014/2015 academic year, there were two classes of grade six in Darul Mahdiah Private School where the study had been conducted, namely 6/1 and 6/2. However, the researcher finally chose 6/2 as the subject of the study based on the agreement of the researcher along with the English teacher as well as the class advisor of the class. They were 16 students which consist of seven male students and nine females.

C. Area of the Study
   This study had been conducted in Darul Mahdiah Private School located in Thachamuang Rattaphum Songkhla, Thailand. Conducting the study in the school, the researcher had the following reasons:
   First, the school was where the researcher had been assigned to have her practice teaching for five months. Second, the researcher was very interested in solving Thai students’ pronunciation problems, 6/2 in particular, since the problems were actually obvious, but never been noticed so far.

D. Procedure of the Study
   The procedures of this research were cycle I and cycle II. Each cycle consists of planning, acting, observing and reflecting.

E. Data analyses procedure
   The researcher collected individual score at the end of the cycles by giving test to the students. And then, the researcher analyzed the students score into percentages based on some intervals; ≥80 was considered excellent, 70-79 was very good, 60-69 was good, 51-59 was low and ≤50 was failed qualification.
III. Result of the Study

A. Cycle 1

*Post Test of Cycle 1*

![Pie chart showing the result of Cycle 1 Post Test]

*Figure 1*
*The Result of Cycle 1 Post Test*

From the figure above, the students’ scores in detail can be seen in the following table:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interval</th>
<th>Qualification</th>
<th>Number of Students</th>
<th>Percentages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>≥80</td>
<td>Excellent</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70-79</td>
<td>Very Good</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>14.29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60-69</td>
<td>Good</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51-59</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>21.42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>≤50</td>
<td>Failed</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>14.29%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1 above describes the 64.29% of the 14 students who had achieved the target score of ≥ 60 and another 35.71% of them who had not achieved it yet in detail. This suggests that the cycle 1 was considered failed.

B. Cycle 2

*Final Score of Post Test of Cycle 2*

![Pie chart showing the result of Cycle 2 Post Test]

*Figure 2*
*The Result of Cycle 2 Post Test*
Table 2
The Pronunciation Test of Cycle 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interval</th>
<th>Qualification</th>
<th>Post Test of Cycle 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Number of Students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Percentages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>≥80</td>
<td>Excellent</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70-79</td>
<td>Very Good</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60-69</td>
<td>Good</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51-59</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>≤50</td>
<td>Failed</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2 describes the 6.25% (excellent), 37.5% (very good), 43.75% (good), 12.5% (low) and 0% (failed) of the 16 students joining the pronunciation test. This confirms the success of the cycle 2 since there had been 87.5% or 14 students who had achieved the target score that were qualified as good (43.75%), very good (37.5%), and excellent (6.25%). In addition, there was none of the students qualified as failed, and only 12.5% or 2 students qualified as low. Cycle 2 was, then, successful.

IV. Discussion and Recommendation

A. The Improvement of Students’ Pronunciation Ability

Pronunciation ability in the study refers to the ability of 16 Thai students to pronounce English words. Since the students’ pronunciation ability was mostly found unintelligible, Audio Lingual Method was expected to improve their pronunciation ability to be intelligible. The overall result, then, has proven that Audio Lingual Method through repetition drill technique helped the students get used to pronounce words intelligibly. This is like Lynch and Anderson (2012:11) state that pronouncing words several times make us familiar with the words and therefore get used to pronounce them as what we often practice. This was proven from the result of the post test in cycle 1 and 2 that in cycle 2 post test the students get improved more than in cycle 1, and in cycle 1 post test they get improved more than in the pre-pronunciation test. This means that the more they practice the words, the better they can pronounce them.

In addition, there are several Audio Lingual Method principles explaining how Audio Lingual Method improved the students’ pronunciation ability, as follows;

a. Audio Lingual Method is a teacher-centered learning

Teacher-centered learning refers to the role of the teacher of conducting, guiding, and controlling the students’ behavior in the target language. In the case of the students’ pronunciation who are Thais supported the objective of the study to improve it. This is because the teacher-centered learning meaning that the students were “forced” to get everything from the teacher only; the teacher modeled to pronounce words, guided and controlled any activities in class to ensure that the students imitate what the teacher modeled. The teacher-centered learning, indeed, was appropriate with the subjects of the study due to the need of the subjects as beginners (Brown, 2000:99).

However, about the teacher-centered learning, Richard and Rodgers (2001) state that Audio Lingual Method was considered boring by the students and therefore lost its prestige in the second half of 1960s. The researcher, therefore, prevented this to happen by providing variations in teaching. Providing variations, indeed, keeps the students interested in the learning (Nation, 1974:21). The variations were the variation of the class management, the teacher’s voice while modeling the students to pronounce words and giving such rewards to them. By this way, the boredom that the students might feel was solved. For instance, as the teacher gave variations to her voice while modeling the students to pronounce words, which
was intended to give the sense of **humour** and make the students not shy, the students indeed laughed and enjoyed the learning, and this affected to their confidence while practicing afterwards.

Moreover, not only that they were more confident in practicing that the researcher has found out, but also that they were more independent in learning as one of positive impacts after the teaching of Audio Lingual Method. Thus, the teacher centered learning is indeed suitable for them as beginners; they might need the teacher a lot in the class learning, but after the class the researcher found out that they tried to practice themselves as what they had practiced of pronunciation in class. They, for instance, told their friends on the way home by telling them, “I can pronounce the word **ball** well now, can you do that too?” or that they told the researcher the next day after the teaching that they practiced in front of mirror and let the researcher knew how well they did by practicing in front of her. Besides, this was also proven from the result of the observation list as well that they were enthusiastic more and more during the teaching.

**b. Audio Lingual Method is a behaviorist model of learning**

Behaviorism believes that learning is a habit formation. Therefore, the teacher corrected the students immediately after they made mistakes in teaching pronunciation by using ALM. Making mistakes would only make the students form bad habit, in this case is the habit of pronouncing words incorrectly. By correcting the students as they made mistakes indeed supported this study’s success as well. This was due to the nature of pronunciation ability. As the students were let to make mistakes in pronouncing words, they would record it in mind and heart and would always pronounce the words that way. Therefore, by correcting them, they would get used to pronounce the correct pronunciation of words ever.

**c. Audio Lingual Method keeps apart the use of the native language**

Thai is the students’ native language and, therefore, was really avoided from using in the teaching of English pronunciation in this study. This actually “forced” the students to get used to listening to English words and motivated as well. As they practiced pronouncing words, later, they would be confident repeating after the teacher since the teacher hooked them to speak up with English. The students, moreover, also loved the way the teacher gave them feedback when they did the activities well such as by praising them saying “How good you are” in English rather than saying it in Thai.

**B. The Students’ Challenging Words**

**a. Plosives**

Some plosives are challenging for the students while others are not; Voiceless plosives such as “pen”, “key” and “tin” were found as not difficult at all to pronounce by the students. However, the /p/, /t/ and /k/ in the final position were found to be quite a problem to pronounce, but still intelligible enough, such as the word “shop”. Another problem also occurred as the students pronounced voiced plosives of /g/ which mostly replaced by the sound of /k/ since the sound /g/ does not exist in Thai (Kanokpermpoon, 27:59) e.g. “good” was pronounced as [kʰut] instead of [gudder], “ago” was pronounced as [ə ko:] instead of [ə'gau].

**b. Nasals**

Nasals /m/ and /n/ are actually not a problem for the students, but /ŋ/ is a problem when it exists in the middle of a word (Kanokpermpoon, 27). This study, moreover, found out the same thing that /ŋ/ is a problem in a word such as “singer” and “hanger”. However, they were mostly still pronounced intelligibly unless the students who omitted the sound /t/ at all that made the researcher hardly understood.

**c. Fricatives**

From the result of both post tests in cycle 1 and 2 of this study, fricatives were found the most challenging for the students;
1. Voiceless fricatives /θ/ and /ʃ/, for instance, are problems such in the words “thin” “thanks” and “shoe”.
2. Voiceless fricatives at final position /θ/, /ʃ/, /s/ and /f/ are also problems e.g. “puff” “breath” and “kiss” etc.
3. Voiced fricatives at initial, medial and final positions are problems as well, e.g. “van” “then” “zoo” and “genre” (initial position), “breathing” (medial), “please” (final)
   These were found the most challenging for them among all manners of articulation tested.

d. Affricatives
Affricatives /tʃ/ and /dʒ/ such as the word “church” and “George” were quite a problem for the students. Meanwhile in the words “teacher”, “child” and “jam”, they found less difficult to pronounce. They, however, tend to replace the sound /ch/ in the words with the sound /s/.
e. Lateral
In lateral, the sound /l/ was not a problem at all such as in “ball” and “call” for some students, but they were a problem for the rests. This was due to their unawareness of Thai and English which are different in facing the /l/ sound. In Thai, the sound /l/ in the final position does not exist and was replaced by the sound /n/ or even omit it (Yanglang, 2006), while in English it does exists. Therefore, they pronounced “ball” as [bÇn] and call as [kÇC]. However, after the students realized that there exists such sound in English and were drilled again and again, they could pronounce the /l/ intelligibly, especially in the final position of words.
f. Approximants
The approximants /r/ such as in “read” and “lead” were a problem to pronounce by Thais (Kanokpermpoon, 2007). However, the study found out that this was not a problem for the students to pronounce and could be differentiated as they pronounced it together. This was proven by the result of the pre-pronunciation and the cycle 1 post test.

V. Conclusion and Recommendation

A. Conclusion
This thesis was concerned with the improvement of pronunciation of 16 Thai students of elementary school at Darul Mahdiah private school taught by using Audio Lingual Method through repetition drill technique. The students were drilled in pronouncing correct pronunciation of words during two cycles with two meetings of teaching for each. The success of the study was achieved in the cycle 2 with 87.5% of the total number of the students achieved score ≥ 60 which only 64.29% of those achieving the score in cycle 1. This was after refining the way to have the students practiced in cycle 1 that the students were found out to be more confident practicing in group based on gender, female and male group, and that the use of variations were effective as well, such as the use of the teacher’s voice variations while modeling them to give the sense of humour made the students practiced more bravely and confidently. This resulted the success of the study by concluding that drilling the students pronunciation this way resulted the students’ independence to practice by themselves after class and bravery to try practicing something hard.

B. Recommendation
Considering the result of this study, the researcher fully recommended teachers or other researchers to apply Audio Lingual Method in teaching pronunciation to students. However, due to the imperfection of the study, the researcher suggested the following points to be considered:
1. Audio Lingual Method was considered boring. This needs teachers’ creativity whether to provide variations, media, etc. in the teaching. The researcher did not use any media in the teaching of the study, but rather on the variations instead. Teachers or other researchers are better try to use media by still considering the principles of the method such as
recalling that this method is an oral based approach which spoken comes first before written, so the media might be such a tape, or other audio media.

2. There are some students as the subjects of the study found difficult still in pronouncing some words of fricatives especially the voiced one, such as van, then, etc. after joining the four sessions of teaching in the two cycles. This can be considerations of Thai teachers or researchers to solve, therefore.

3. In the pronunciation test, the subjects of the study were tested by repeating after the researcher pronouncing each word instead of pronouncing the words by themselves. This was due to there were more than a half of the class could not read English (writing). Other researchers, however, are recommended to conduct pronunciation test in different ways considering the ability of subjects.

4. Considering the focus of the study which seemed to be more on the students’ consonantal sound pronunciation ability, other researchers might continue such study focusing on both consonant and vowel if students face them, indeed.

References


