



**THE EFFECTS OF TEACHING VOWEL PHONOGRAMS TO
IMPROVE ORAL READING SKILLS OF FOURTH-YEAR
STUDENTS AT A PRIVATE UNIVERSITY**

**BY
CATHERINE DE GUZMAN-LADDAWAN**



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Abstract

The purposes of the study are to investigate the effects of teaching vowel phonograms; and to find out whether the vowel phonogram awareness has helped improve the oral reading skills of the fourth-year students at a private university in Pathum Thani, Thailand. The research was carried out using a qualitative observation methodology. There were 41 English major students divided into two groups that were selected using random sampling. One (experimental) group of 20 students was taught 20-minute vowel phonograms for five weeks including class lecture, while one (control) group of 21 students undergone the usual class lecture. Five students from the experimental group were also selected to answer the interview questions. The study instruments were teacher's observation journal and a 15-item semi-structured open-ended interview questions. The researcher also conducted spelling and dictation quizzes for both groups using teaching tools; lesson plan, vocabulary list, and vowel phonogram chart. The data were collected in line with de Groot's five-stage empirical evidence model. The data analyses used were basic and descriptive analyses. The findings of the study show significant effects of teaching vowel phonograms on students' oral reading skills, an increase level of vowel phonogram awareness among students' pronunciation were also noticed, and invaluable effects on spelling and motivation in reading were also confirmed in the study. Furthermore, to make students be fond of reading and be interested in learning the English language with ease, educators must constantly look for innovative ways that will not just assess students' progress, but be able to detect untimely regression.

(Total 119 pages)

Keywords: Teaching Technique, Vowel Phonograms, Oral Reading Skills, Private University.

Student's Signature Thesis Advisor's Signature

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Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 Background and Significance of the Problem

In this era of technology, people are connected by just a click away. Research is continually being conducted in-line with the educational trends of the 21st century, (Bacon & Lertlit, 2016) leaving us more questions on how learners should cope to various hi-tech information and sometimes unpredictable situations. A vast majority of people still lacks literacy, or falls behind the benchmark of education (Herman, Osmundson, & Dietel, 2010), due to many different reasons.

In order to learn the English language, students need to have a level of mastery of the four skills in language learning; listening, speaking, reading and writing. Among these four skills, reading is determined by experts to be the best predictor for academic success (Ritchie & Bates, 2013), but still a lot of people are struggling with it. Most of the students in an EFL environment are becoming frustrated and have come to conclusions that the English language is difficult and boring (Kruk & Zawodniak, 2018).

The researcher recognized that the ability of the students to read correctly brings them confidence to speak, reading properly helps them to easily learn the content, and learning the content helps them bring ideas into writing. As a teacher, and what most teachers aimed to do in class is to be able to impart lifelong learning (Bryce, Frigo, McKenzie, & Withers, 2000). This can only be achieved when both students and teachers have a clear understanding of how important knowledge is (Wiriyachitra, 2004), as well as finding ways of improving oneself.

How can educators make students be fond of reading and be interested in learning the English language with ease? Scientific research findings on reading proficiency among Thai university EFL learners are still in its low position (EF, 2018). Not to mention other disciplines that students barely excel. We may question the teaching of the English language in Thailand (Punthumasen, 2007), as well as the different pedagogical approaches used by educators in the field. Thai Education ministry's project in alleviating education problems (Thadphoothon, 2016) has encouraged the researcher to find ways to look through the problem and come up with an understanding on how educators can be of help in plotting the future learning of the next generation.

There are significant oral reading problems (Chawwang, 2008) among Thai EFL students in the university, specifically for students' who do not have the basic knowledge of decoding correct vowel sounds and its association with the letter names. One major problem is the incorrect articulation of words due to lack of foundational skills in reading and understanding the English language. The inability to decode single vowel sounds and the knowledge of sound-letter relationships (Bialystok, 1997) are giving the struggling students a hard time of improving in all areas of their reading proficiency (Rauth & Stuart, 2008). In a study done by Rasinski and Young (2017), to be able to produce an oral representation from its written representation, word identification is essential.

According to a research done by Scanlon & Vellutino (1996), there is a high relationship between letter identification skills and success in beginning reading (Adams, 1990), which the researcher believed would help language learners improve their reading skills. Another research on early phonological awareness by Stuart (1999), acclaiming that the early concentration on teaching phoneme awareness and phonics can radically improve reading and spelling standards on second language learners. In addition, studies in the United States have proven that phonemic awareness and extensiveness of the vocabulary that a kindergartner brings to school are two of the strongest predictors of future reading achievement. (Stanovich, 1986; Wagner, Torgesen, & Rashotte, 1994).

The researcher's experience as an educator triggers to direct this study in understanding the problem and in finding solutions to cultivate English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners' thought processes even at the 'not-so' early stage of instruction. The study focuses in presenting theories behind teaching basic reading skills to EFL learners down to its lowest level to determine ways of alleviating what needs restructuring when it comes to their oral reading. A more detailed study using empirical evidence on the impacts of teaching vowel phonogram awareness and its spelling rules in the classroom, in nurturing second language acquisition will be given more importance in order to determine its efficiency through observations.

There is no turning back, technology has invaded the generation with promises, but illiteracy is succeeding swiftly in the global education arena. Thailand is not off the hook. Low reading proficiency of Thai students has climbed up the charts of different international surveys (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development [OCED], 2015). The Thai Ministry of Education is also doing its best to find the best solution to wane away illiteracy rate among Thai future leaders.

The problem is looking for a solution that will bridge the gap (Beaudoin, Casale-Daigneault, & Zbikowski, 1997) on young adult EFL learners' oral reading skills (Rasinski, & Hoffman, 2003), by means of cultivating the foundational understanding of learners that will bring encouragement to pursue future knowledge independently. The researcher found that teaching basic reading skills such as identifying vowel phonograms will open doors on how letters and sounds relate with each other. As some students who do not have the basic phonological awareness, it is a probable reason why most of them are having a difficulty in deciphering and decoding words (Johnson & Baumann, 1984), as much as reading it correctly (Moats, 1998). Moreover, some EFL students are still not able to grasp the sounds and are writing "karaoke translation" in Thai (transliteration) on how to pronounce the words orally. This is the reason why the researcher advocates a teaching technique on phonological skills—particularly vowel phonograms as proposed by Wylie & Durell (1970)—as a tool in filling the gaps, as it is considered to be the best predictor of later reading success.

The question of time should be highly considered especially for struggling EFL learners, as some may have missed the opportunity to study the foundational skills needed in studying the English language in their early education. As long as the basic problems in reading are not addressed, unsuccessful readers are inevitable. Various studies have shown that it is more efficient and beneficial if phonological awareness teaching started during the early years of education. For this reason, the researcher is in a mission to find solutions on how to alleviate historical instruction patterns (Beck, 1981) and utilize new approach on teaching basic reading skills in education for young adult EFL learners, particularly examining the efficiency of teaching vowel phonogram approach in helping students read orally.

In summary, this study is promoting to take a closer look at the benefits that would bring about advancement and development in teaching basic foundational knowledge particularly for the English language learners. The researcher's goal is to present a vital study on language teaching technique for educators that would improve basic instructions targeting the students' oral reading skills. This study also aims to show that there were still areas in EFL that need basic foundational skills instructions; and to provide policy makers an overview of language learning problems that needs to be addressed.

1.2 Research Objectives

The objectives of the research are as follows:

1.2.1 To investigate the effects of teaching vowel phonograms to improve the oral reading skills of fourth year EFL learners in a private university.

1.2.2 To find out whether learners' vowel phonograms awareness helped improve oral reading skills of fourth year EFL learners in a private university.

1.3 Research Questions

The effects of teaching vowel phonograms are expected to create an awareness of the single letter and multi-letter vowel phonogram sounds to improve the oral reading skills of fourth-year EFL students in a private university. The teaching of vowel phonograms is also considered to give a level of vowel phonogram (sound) awareness that would help EFL learners improved reading orally and confidently.

The findings of the study were to answer the following questions:

1.3.1 Does teaching vowel phonograms help improve the oral reading skills of the fourth year EFL learners in a private university?

1.3.2 Does the learners' vowel phonograms awareness help improve the oral reading skills of fourth-year EFL learners in a private university?

1.4 Significance of the Study

The immediate intervention among Thai university students' oral reading skills are badly needed to address. The study has prompted the researcher in looking for the opportunity to understand the educational problems that is arising in the 21st century learning. The use of technology in learning is considered a tool in the 21st century classrooms according to Thieman (2008), but the building blocks of learning begins in its foundational level of acknowledging the need for basic principles in learning to accommodate higher level of knowledge and the use of advance technology in education.

This study attempts to understand the following:

- 1) The problems of young EFL learners' oral reading skills.
- 2) The basic foundational skills for reading.
- 3) The teaching approaches in helping young adult EFL learners.
- 4) The importance of teaching foundational vowel phonograms and its rules to improve their oral reading skills.

5) The explicit teaching and understanding of phonemic blending, segmentation, isolation, and identity— using vowel phonograms—are causal in helping EFL learners understand the logic of its sound which is made up of individual phoneme.

1.5 Scope of the Research

1.5.1 Location

A multicultural private university in Pathum Thani, Thailand

1.5.2 Population

The student population in this study comprised of 100 fourth-year English major university students aged 20-23; consisted of 4 groups of (20-25) students currently studying Business Reading, in the first semester of the Academic Year 2019.

1.5.3 Sample

The researcher had two groups of Business Reading course in the first semester of the academic year 2019. Using a random sampling, participants of 20 students composed of 3 male and 17 females were chosen for the experimental group; while the control group of 21, attended the regular lecture class time of 3 hours a week for 6 weeks and a purposive selection of 5 students from the experimental group was also arranged for the interview sessions.

1.5.4 Research Methodology and Research Design

To answer whether teaching of the vowel phonograms to young adult EFL learners and whether their vowel phonogram awareness helped in improving their oral reading skills, two focus groups were purposively and conveniently selected in the study. The experimental group of 20 students went through a five-week lessons on

vowel phonogram instruction, while the control group participated in the usual class instructions. After undergoing an intensive explicit teaching of vowel phonogram for the experimental class, five volunteer students were chosen to answer a 15-item semi-structured open-ended interview questions.

1.5.5 Length of Study

The research was conducted during the first semester of the 2019 academic year and the duration time was for 6 weeks (August-October), with 3-hour classes being held once a week at a university in Pathum Thani, Thailand.

1.6 Definition of Terms

Effects of Teaching Vowel Phonogram refers to the concrete results or evidence of the learner's awareness of the pedagogical approach from the instruction of vowel phonograms and its sounds that helps to improve the oral reading skills of EFL students in a private university.

Teaching Vowel Phonogram refers to the pedagogical approach of the instruction of vowel phonograms and its sounds that has its sole purpose of targeting to improve the oral reading skills of EFL students in a private university in Pathum Thani

Vowel Phonogram in this study denotes the individual sound of a single letter or multi-letter phonogram from the vowels: a, e, i, o, u, and y.

Oral Reading Skills in the research are language skills that pertains to the ability to utter, speak, and express through reading written words or passages in a near-nativelike verbal way.

Fourth-year students are English major EFL/ESL students at a private university in Pathum Thani.

Private University in this study refers to a multicultural independent institute in Pathum Thani province.

1.7 Limitations of the Study

There were certain limitations in undertaking the research, but these limitations have been overshadowed by the benefits of the study.

1.7.1 The correct sounding of the words was the only area that was investigated, and not the prosodic or expressions in reading was not focused.

1.7.2 Some of the questions have to be explained to some students and in this context their answers may be misunderstood.

1.7.3 The responses from the open-ended interview questions may not be considered as comprehensive as only 5 volunteer students were able to complete the interview process, nevertheless, their responses give light to the research questions presented in the study.



Chapter 2

Literature Review

This review will help give light to the problems of Thai EFL/ESL learners of their basic or foundational knowledge in reading. An overview of English literacy in Thailand is presented with regards to the traditional language learning and the challenges in the learners' reading ability. Next on the list is problems in oral reading, most common approaches in teaching reading, studies on phonological awareness, vowel phonogram instructions, plus classroom research and description of teacher's role will also be presented. Lastly, related studies will add clarity to the research objectives presented in the study.

2.1 Overview of English Literacy in Thailand

2.1.1 Traditional Language Learning

2.1.2 Reading Challenges

2.2 Oral Skill Problems

2.2.1 Motivation in Speaking

2.2.2 Motivation in Pronunciation

2.2.3 Motivation to Practice

2.2.4 Motivation to Commit

2.3 Common Methods in Teaching Reading

2.3.1 Rote-Memorization

2.3.2 Whole-word Approach vs. Phonics

2.4 Language Teaching Techniques

2.4.1 Phonological Awareness Instruction

2.4.2 Vowel Phonogram Instruction

2.5 Classroom Research and Teacher's Role

2.5.1 Classroom-based Research

2.5.2 Teacher's Role in the classroom

2.6 Related Research

2.7 Conclusion

2.1 Overview of English Literacy in Thailand

According to the Education First English Proficiency Index (2018), Thailand ranked in its lowest position since 2011. Garnering score index of 48.52, the kingdom of Thailand is now ranked 64th among the 88 listed countries and territories conducted by Switzerland-based Education First for non-native English-speaking countries. The results were based on test data from 1.3 million adults who took the EF Standard English Test (EF SET) in 2017.

English language has been one of the main agendas in the kingdom of Thailand. Being one of the founders of the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN), and its strategic location makes Thailand a gateway for its neighboring countries like: Cambodia, Lao, and Myanmar in the Northeast, not to mention Malaysia, Indonesia and Singapore in the south.

Among the ASEAN member countries, Thailand ranked 5th surpassing Myanmar and Cambodia. This leaves a question on one of the main objectives of the ASEAN educational strategic plan of the Ministry of Education—becoming proficient in languages (Ministry of Education, 2015). English is considered a language of international communication, the media and the internet use English as its medium of transmission. Poor reading literacy is a national problem. The Thai Ministry of Education are continually launching programs that will enhance and promote English language proficiency. The government must realize that for Thailand to be more globally-ready, its citizens educational qualities should be addressed, (Kaur, et. al., 2016). Reading problems among Thai young adult learners of the English language are still on its height (Piamsai, 2017).

The history speaks for itself. The evolution of English language teaching in Thailand has gone through a lot of transitions just to meet the high demands of the global era. In an article presented by Hilado-Deita (2015), English Language Teaching (ELT) in Thailand has employed a communicative approach which focuses on teaching the English language that is focused on communication, which has its promises, rather than just knowledge about the language.

Learning a language is vital for communication, and communication is vital in a country's economic development. Thailand's ambition to compete globally when it comes to English language is still in its developing stage. Therefore, reaching its full potential would require balanced instruction (Pressley, Roehrig, Bogner, Raphael, & Dolezal, 2002) that could target the improvement of all language skills needed to compete worldwide.

2.1.1 Traditional Language Learning

A historical background of English language education in Thailand started from the reign of King Rama IV, where the royal children were taught by missionaries and traders who visited Thailand way back in the 18th century (Darasawang, 2007). The next King Rama V had a very clear instruction to Thais of learning English, it was to learn how to communicate. In 1921, an announcement of the Compulsory Education Act of 1921, under the King Rama VI, declaring English as a mandatory subject in the national curriculum.

English language teaching was advocated by King Rama VI who was educated in Europe himself. Known to have founded the first university, Chulalongkorn University, in the Kingdom, the compulsory education act that required grades 1-4 to study the English language. During this period, English was given the highest priority (Thadphoothon, 2010), it was then treated as an academic language and not just for communication (Methitham, 2014).

Darasawang (2007) stated that Grammar Translation Method (GTM) which focused on rote-memorization of grammar structures was replaced by Audio-Lingual

Method (ALM) in 1960 due to the demand of international communication. As most people know, ALM's focused was on reading-aloud targeting correct pronunciation, and comprehension to the text. Which the researcher finds its very important and very timely form of instruction for the present generation of EFL learners.

After the World War II, Thailand considered English as the most useful language of communication. Some schools started teaching English at the first grade. The 1977 Scheme of Education according to Hilado-Deita (2015), was in for a change from "bookish, academic, teacher-centered approach, into a practical communication, and life-long learning, and student-centered approach. Hilado-Deita also added that in 1980, the Communicative Approach (CA) ELT was introduced and later in 1996 a mandatory decree for English was taught in primary levels.

The most recent education reform is the Educational Act of 1999 and the National Curriculum of 2000, that promotes teaching methods on independent word, autonomous-learning, and self-access, with emphasis on communication, culture, connection, and community. The shift made was to change English as an academic subject to English as a medium of instruction (Hilado-Deita, 2015).

The Ministry of Education's goal in achieving ASEAN Educational Strategic Plan is still in its developing stages. As surveys and researches on the challenges of teaching and learning

2.1.2 Reading Challenges

The researcher has been teaching in Thailand for a decade now and has observed the changes in the Thai society from the first time she came to this nation. In a span of twenty-two years, the researcher has seen a vast change of growth and infrastructure and economic development. Not to mention the use of the English language in the country is believed to have improved, it is evident as convenience stores popped-up all around the place. And although Thailand is thriving in business, English language proficiency still lags behind other nations (Pitsuwan, 2014).

Teaching reading was introduced at the very beginning when English was introduced in Thailand. There are evidences that English language programs were successful as there was an increase of Thai seeking further studies in Europe and America between the periods of 1893-1931 (Hilado-Deita, 2015). It is clear that reading is not an impossible language skill to be improved, rather it can be the nation's challenge to look through the traditional approaches and methods used in the past that was proven effective for a time being, and create a balance approach that will cover the gaps in learning language and alleviate literacy levels.

According to Program for International Assessment [PISA] (2015), it recorded that in Thailand, the average performance in reading of 15-year-olds is 409 points, as compared to an average of 493 points in other OECD countries. It also shows that girls outperformed boys with a statistically significant difference of 31 points (OECD average: 27 points higher for girls). Therefore, it is important to really determine the timely need of changing not just educational policies but implementing policies that has long been stagnant.

A study conducted by Kodae and Laohawiriyanon (2011) stated that traditional teaching approaches of memorizing alphabets and words without learning the written scripts are still very common in most Thai schools; Chandawimol (1998) also noted that there were activities and exercises in class, but with little interaction between readers and texts; this explains why many learners were not finding reading interesting and have concluded that learning English as a whole is difficult.

2.2 Oral Skill Problems

There are many factors to consider why Thai university EFL students have a minimal improvement when it comes to their oral skills. The following are some common problems that most researchers are still looking for answers on how to improve oral skills among Thai EFL learners:

2.2.1 Motivation in Speaking

Speaking is basically conveying message through spoken words. According to Lazaraton (2001) oral skill, “for most people, is the ability to speak a language is synonymous with knowing that language since speech is the most basic means of human communication.” As Bailey & Savage (1994), viewed speaking in a second or foreign language as the most demanding skills among the four skills—reading, writing, listening, and speaking. Lazaraton (2001) also noted that, although speaking skill is considered the most important among EFL/ESL learners; this is also the most perceived aspect to be difficult to master. Most Thai EFL students were, still hesitant to begin a conversation, or even ask questions, which inhibits their speaking practice (Sasum & Weeks, 2018). Some researchers were saying it is because of their culture—Thainess or just plain “Thai shyness.”

In a study done by Akkakoson (2016), anxiety can also be a factor for Thai learners to not exercise their speaking skills. Akkakoson itemized the different anxiety factors; test anxiety, fear or negative evaluation, and communication apprehension. Although most students showed positive attitudes in most studies with regards to speaking—speaking anxiety still remains on top of the list among Thai EFL students. Speaking anxiety due to a limited vocabulary was also found to be the most problematic area for learners (Akkakoson, 2016). In addition to limited vocabulary knowledge among learners, mastery of grammar structures was also a crucial factor in that gives speaking concern for most Thai EFL environment. Not to mention the teacher and the teaching methodologies that can add to the students’ classroom anxiety.

2.2.2 Motivation in Pronunciation

Most Thai EFL learner wants to have a good English pronunciation. We cannot deny the fact that Thai learners are having difficulties in pronouncing more than three syllable words (Kanoksilapatham, 1992). Word stress is also a major problem for most Thai EFL students. But more than that, Thai EFL learners are struggling with their attitude in improving their pronunciation.

Brown (1992), stated that students with a more positive attitude towards speaking the target language, and having the confidence of speaking to people of target language were likely to learn good pronunciation more effectively. The ability of the students to get out from their shells and be able to adapt new things that enhance their character.

2.2.3 Motivation to Practice

In many researches done showing limited time of practice given to the students in a Thai EFL environment, and the lack of opportunity to practice and use English language skills, were valid reasons on why Thai EFL learners still have weak oral reading skills. Nevertheless, if the students were willing to push themselves and take control of their study habits and practice English skills as best as they can, and make use of all the materials that are available for them, as the saying, “Practice makes perfect!”, surely progress is on its way.

2.2.4 Motivation to Commit

Commitment is as defined by Cambridge (2019) as a promise or a firm decision to make. Most Thai EFL students envisioned themselves of having English as their second or third language. Learners who have enrolled in studying English have their goals of using the language in their future endeavors. Thus, the need for learners in bettering their knowledge of the English language is based on their commitment to improve.

In summary, motivation is known to have been the mostly researched topic in education. Kitjaroonchai, N. & Kitjaroonchai, T. (2012) stated that acquiring a foreign or second language demands a high level of motivation. Most Thai EFL learners still lack motivation due to so many factors that needs to be considered. Speaking anxiety and good pronunciation can be challenge for the oral reading skills among the students.

According to Williams (1994), that “the learning of a foreign language involves far more than simply learning skills, or a system of rules, or a grammar; it

involves an alteration in self-image, the adoption of new social and cultural behaviors and ways of being.” In order for Thai EFL learners to improve their oral reading skills as a whole, they must understand its importance and have a good grip of what motivation in learning is all about.

2.3 Common Methods in Teaching Reading

2.3.1 Rote-Memorization

Rote-learning or rote-memorization is an approach that is based mainly on repetition. Rote-learning has been used for the mastery of foundational knowledge, but most experts are debunking this kind of technique and replacing it with mostly process-based or activity-based learning. However, rote-memorization is still advocated by educators in disciplines like mathematics and science. Advocators of rote-learning put an emphasis on learning memorization of formulas, scientific names, and technical terms.

Rote-learning is still very much preferred among other Asian countries. One of this is Pakistan. In an article presented by Ahmed & Ahmad (2017), he stated that rote-learning approach is still “well-practiced” in all three education categories in his country. Ahmed also added the importance of using this approach as education and evaluation in Pakistan are still more or less into the memorization of content and not emphasizing on comprehension and application. This also is backed up by other researchers in China, where China is known to be aiming for test results and mostly mastery of knowledge. This might be part of the Confucian philosophy of learning: memorization and teacher-centered approach of teaching (Geng, 2007).

Catalano, G. & Catalano, R. (2013) found that the attitudes of students in changing teacher-centered approach to student-centered one might not be possible. Students being resistant to the change also makes it very difficult for educators in general. This kind of resistance in learning attitudes among students are widely seen among Thai EFL learners in the university. The researcher aimed of flipping-the-class

were sometimes unsuccessful, because some students are very passive and not participating.

Rote-memorization is considered outdated, as educators are pushing more on meaningful learning approaches, however, rote-memorization is still vital, especially in integrating 21st century skills; one example is information skill. In a web blog, the University of Portland students have defined that “rote-learning” is memorization of information based on repetition, such as numbers and alphabets. The blog has added that we may not realize it, but most of us are using rote approach in our daily lives, which the researcher believed that it is essential for everyone to practice.

In a research made by Roberts and Kreuz (2015), they pointed out that rote-memorization among adults is an antiquated teaching method which they perceived as a “counterproductive approach” as memory ability among adults declines with age. The more the researcher advocates the practice and application of such approach, as rote-learning, with a balance teaching and integration of new research-based approaches. Additionally, all the more adults should be more practicing memorization, or learning another language (structures and patterns) that would exercise the brain in reaching its ultimate capacity. Research on bilingualism or multilingualism proved an increase of brain capacity or “cognitive flexibility.”

In the World Economic Forum website, Gray (2017) wrote an article about a neuroscientist—Dr. Mariano Sigman—author of the book “The Secret Life of the Mind” was interviewed on bilingualism. Sigman attested that “babies who grow up bilingual have brain functions that are superior to those of monolingual children, because they have better cognitive control.” He explains that this ability—ability to pay attention, to plan, and to even switch between tasks easily. In the interview he also noted that most research about bilingualism talked about the ability of bilingual children to switch tasks consistently outperforming monolingual children.

Sigman also emphasized that this “task-switching ability” was also true with adults, and experiments have been proven according to the measured brain activity

among adult participants. He also said that, “When their brain activity was measured, it showed that they were using the “language network” in their brain.” (Gray, 2017). That is the reason why the researcher promotes of learning new language among adults, through rote-memorization is also vital approach.

In summary, rote-learning may not be advocated by most researchers, but we cannot deny that there are still places in this globalized world where rote-learning are still very much alive and accepted. Most countries that study EFL/ESL are still effectively using this method of memorizing structures and patterns needed in reading (literacy), integrating knowledge, comprehension, and using the English language in real life events. Moreover, the present research does not promote rote-learning approach, but is encouraging educators and other researchers to look at it as a fundamental approach in teaching, and a foundational skill (memorization of sound patterns, alphabets, and spellings) in learning English.

2.3.2 Whole-word Approach vs. Phonics instructions

The whole-language approach strives to teach children to read words as whole pieces of language. Influenced by the Constructivist Theory, proponents of the whole-language methodology believed that children draw from their perspective and prior experiences to form the framework for new knowledge. This form of instruction is taught using a holistic approach, meaning that children do not learn to break down sounds individually but to take words at face value and associate them with prior knowledge.

The idea behind this approach was that children could learn to recognize words through repeated exposure without direct attention to sub-word parts. The whole-word concept is a whole to part method of teaching children to read. The whole language movement gained popularity in the 1980s. This grass-roots movement among teachers is based on research on the reading and writing processes and on reader response to literature. This research base is unified with the strong humanistic traditions of holistic movements in education by psychological researchers such as Piaget, Vygotsky, and other schema theorists.

Phonics is a phonetic-based reading attempts to break written language down into small and simple components. It is taught by having children use letter sounds and letter symbols (Adams, 1990). Using this technique, children identify letters with certain sounds and piece them back together – a process is called decoding. This allows children to see a new word, take what they previously knew about the sounds that each letter makes, and put it together to sound out the new word.

The National Reading Panel (2000) states phonics as a way of teaching reading, the acquisition of letter-sound correspondences is stressed both in reading and spelling. The NRP also added that students who were taught phonics, based on their conducted meta-analysis research, were better in decoding and spelling. The study concluded a significant improvement of the student' ability to comprehend text. The NRP study also described that 70% of children will be able to learn reading regardless of the teaching approach used in the classroom, but they also attested that the children will read more quickly if they are taught phonics. As Collins & Gwynne (1997) noted that the rest of the children (30%) may have reading problems in the future.

Chall (1996) who worked mostly on children, had a goal of making these children successful on their reading acquisition, that she addressed the needs of failing readers. Chall also emphasized on teaching reading, particularly to at-risk children, and research-validated explicit instruction. She advocated teaching phonics together with reading stories, and she made it clear that this should not be separated in teaching phonics, the use of authentic appropriate texts to help students learn better.

Historically, in the 1970s, proponents of phonics had emerge defining phonics as a basic skill for struggling readers. Phonics is also known a vital intervention for low-level readers (Block, 1992). The phonics program focuses on extensive phonics instructions and not focusing on the meaning of the words. Children must be able to be instructed to read and decode printed texts that they may encounter on a daily basis.

As most teacher agree that phonics --the relationship between letters and their corresponding sounds, is very much part of learning how to read. The researcher believed and similarly to most educators of teaching phonics and vowel phonograms awareness, is that the first goal of literacy instruction must be to quickly provide children with the skills they will need to read the texts that surround them and to develop the ability to decode printed words at an early stage of learning.

2.4 Language Teaching Techniques

Oxford (2019) defined technique as a particular way of doing something that involves using a special skill or process. Most language learners prefer a particular technique that would help them in their learning. Teachers must also find ways to improve their teaching strategies by using techniques particularly in language teaching. In order for language teachers to effectively impart lifelong learning experiences in language teaching, they must be able to assess their students' learning through a variety of teaching techniques that they are using in the classroom, as well as evaluate the effectiveness of the techniques that they have used based on the activities, approaches, and methods covered.

Teaching techniques were defined by Anthony (1963) as “specific activities manifested in the classroom that were consistent with a method and therefore were in harmony with an approach.” Anthony (1965) also differentiated teaching techniques from approach and method, as the levels at which classroom procedures are described. In order for educators to distinguish the difference between teaching approach, method, or technique that they are planning to use in a classroom research, a clear understanding of the challenges and problems arising in the classroom as a whole.

There are so many different techniques used in language teaching. Some educators and teachers alike prefer techniques or tools that were popularly used, were recommended by education experts, or sometimes based on their individual preferences. The following are two very significant teaching techniques that correlates

with each other, and the researcher has advocated in the study: the phonological awareness and the focused instructions on vowel phonogram.

2.4.1 Phonological Awareness Instructions

Phonological awareness has been identified as a major key component of early literacy skill that and precursor to reading. It is an ability to detect or manipulate the sounds in words independent of meaning. Phonemic awareness and/or word analysis instruction may lead to increased achievement in other aspects of reading for adult beginning readers (Kruidenier, 2002). This is true for English language learners, as English is based on Alphabetic principle— that these letters and combinations of letters are the symbols used to represent the speech sounds of a language based on systematic and predictable relationships between written letters, symbols, and spoken words.

According to Brown (1992), phonetic ability is sometimes called phonetic coding ability. It is a common view that some people have a better listening skill for a foreign language than others. Therefore, they are able to discriminate between the two sounds more accurately than the others and are able to imitate sounds better. Although students may have had exposure to a foreign language as children and attuned to phonetic discrimination, as studies conducted by Kanoksilapatham (1992) have proposed that some elements of learning are a matter of awareness of the different sounds. Also, learners' pronunciation ability can be improved by putting efforts and concentration on those sounds.

2.4.2 Vowel Phonogram Instruction

Teaching vowel phonograms are being advocated by educators who have a clear understanding that most English language learners lack basic foundational skills, especially in reading, and why students' perception of learning the English language as boring and difficult. Vowel phonogram instruction is a teaching technique that emphasizes on teaching individual vowel phonograms in order for learners recognize single or multi vowel sounds. The teaching of vowel phonograms as a teaching technique may not be a very popular approach for most adult EFL learning

environments, nevertheless, the researcher believed that there is a high need of integrating teaching vowel phonogram even to not-so-young adult EFL learners in the university. For learners may have missed the foundational skill instructions of the basic skills—phonemic awareness (includes vowel phonograms)—needed in fluency in reading and obtaining higher literacy.

National Reading Panel & National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, (2000) findings were enumerated on when Phonemic Awareness instruction is most effective: a) instruction is focused on one or two PA skills rather than multi-skilled approach (blending and segmenting are considered to be the most powerful PA skills); b) children are taught in small groups (but may be done in whole class); c) instruction is based on students' needs assessments (i.e. levels of difficulty and specific skills proficiency); d) children are taught to manipulate phonemes with letters; e) single sessions last no more than 30mins (15-20 mins may be more realistic); and f) instruction makes explicit how children are to apply PA skills in reading.

The importance of producing an oral representation from its written representation, is what Rasinski & Young (2017) called word identification. In obtaining word identification skills, the researcher proposed using a teaching technique such as vowel phonogram instructions that would help language learners acquire basic foundational oral reading skills. As Bialystok (1997) also confirmed that the inability to decode single vowel sounds and the inappropriate knowledge of sound-letter relationships are giving the struggling students a hard time of improving in all areas of their reading proficiency, which Rauth & Stuart (2008) also have established.

In summary, the learners' ability to learn and master the sounds of the letters of the English alphabet is a basic skill that promotes their competence in obtaining their fluency of the target language. Educators should be able to assess its urgency and give more importance to immediate intervention needed in any EFL environment. Certain language teaching techniques such as phonological skills and vowel

phonograms instructions must be given importance to enable educators help alleviate problems arising in EFL learning environment.

2.5 Classroom Research and Teacher's Role

2.5.1 Classroom-based Research

Classroom-based research are also called action research wherein the instructor/teacher research their own classroom in order to know what seems to be needing improvement in the classroom as a whole. In a foreign language classroom, teachers would conduct research studies to help them improve their teaching practice and understand students' challenges in learning the language.

Hensen (1996) detailed action research as follows: (a) helps teachers develop new knowledge directly related to their classrooms, (b) promotes reflective teaching and thinking, (c) expands teachers' pedagogical repertoire, (d) puts teachers in charge of their craft, (e) reinforces the link between practice and student achievement, (f) fosters an openness toward new ideas and learning new things, and (g) gives teachers ownership of effective practices. Thus, it is not just a research that tries to present new arising classroom problems, but be able to magnify these problems with regards to the present situations. The researcher believed that no two classroom problems are the same.

According to the definition of Barone, Berliner, Blanchard, Casanova, & McGown, (1996), action research as workshops that can be used to replace traditional, ineffective teacher in-service training or a means for professional development activities. For teachers to be more effective on their craft, they should be willing to plan classroom or action research from time to time to help other educators and most of all the stakeholders, particularly the learners.

2.5.2 Teacher's Role in the classroom

The main job of teachers is be able to counsel students, help them learn how to use their knowledge and integrate it into their lives so they will become valuable

members of society. Teachers are also encouraged to adapt learning methods to each individual student's learning, to challenge and inspire them to learn. It is always promoted that the skills needed for effective teaching involve more than just expertise in an academic field. They should be prepared, with a set clear and fair class expectations, having a positive attitude, are patient with students, and most of all be able to assess their teaching on a regular basis. Teacher efficacy is also gained when a teacher believes in their own ability to guide their students to success.

2.6 Related Research

Many studies have been carried out to investigate the pedagogical approaches in EFL classrooms, but a few were able to extract a factual solution to the many problems of Thai EFL learners with regards to their oral reading skills. The study conducted by Lekwilai (2016) on “Using Reader’s Theater to Develop Reading Fluency among Thai EFL Students” suggested its potential instructional approach to improve the reading fluency of Thai EFL learners. The study also found “phrasing” as the most prominent feature of RT, which would be very helpful for most learners if they will be able to master punctuations and pauses, as most oral conversations need pauses at times.

Lekwilai (2016) also found that the area where the least improvement was the “Expression and Volume.” This also shows that Thai EFL learners still transmits the long-been inculcated Thai shyness in EFL classrooms. Lekwilai added improvement in terms of volume, but expression (prosody) has not improve at all. It is one of the many questions of the researcher on why students were not willing to show expressions in English reading-aloud activities, but Thais being known to have a love for watching “Lakorn” or Thai drama series or even other Asian series, and known for artistry in words were unwilling to try and imitate or express needed reaction in some class performances.

In addition, Lekwilai (2016) also reported that the effort of integrating RT instructions to improve oral reading fluency among Thai university EFL students have

resulted a positive effect on the students; participants self-reflection outcomes in the study revealed that the RT activities created a “joy of reading” among students, and a reflection of enjoyment in working together in groups. Lekwilai also added of the effects on the students when they were able to read in front of people (most of all be understand) adds the excitement and confidence to read even more. This should be the case for most repeated reading activities, but not every student is confident to read in front of an audience.

Sahatsathatsana (2017) studied “Pronunciation problems of Thai students learning English phonetics” and found that phonetic ability of Thai students and the sound system difference between English and Thai were two factors why learners continue to have pronunciation problems. Although he also mentioned problems on the students’ segmental and suprasegmental pronunciations, but the main factors which negatively affect the ability of the students in pronouncing English sounds effectively according to Sahatsathatsana are problems which include the difference of the mother language and target one, different learning abilities, and past learning experiences. These problems in pronunciation skills are very crucial, as oral skill is important in most communication process.

According to Rauth & Stuart (2008) study on “Sound Instruction: Phonemic Awareness in Kindergarten and to First Grade” promotes Phonemic Awareness instruction as effective not only to young learners but to adult learners who might have missed the early sound instructions. Rauth & Stuart (2008) presented a short and fast-faced phonemic awareness that aimed to be teach at least 1 to 2 skills a day, must be fun, and with variety of activities that is connected with Phonics approach.

Rauth & Stuart (2008) advocated an explicit instruction of phonemic awareness to learners. The study presented what explicit instruction is all about, wherein the teacher should be able to have a good grasp of the phonemic sounds for modeling—several times, or what they call “Getting Started” and the teacher should be able to explain to the learners what sounds they are supposed to hear. Another important part of the instruction is “Together”—the Guided activity and Corrective

feedback part, where the teachers should be able to guide learners of the correct sounding of the phonemes and correct them when needed. The last part is what they call “On your own”—wherein the learners should be able to practice on their own, doing the tasks independently.

Rauth & Stuart (2008) also included the importance of having phonemic awareness lessons planned according to the following: task (isolation, identification, categorization, blending, segmentation, deletion, addition, substitution); purpose (introduction, practice, assessment); group (whole class, small group, intervention); useful words (from core reading program), intensity adjustment (range of examples, task difficulty, task length, type responses), evidence of success (end target, designing backwards), and anything else? (games, hand movements, props, etc.).

Moreover, adjusting instructional intensity were expounded in the Ruath and Stuart (2008) study by providing the “what’s and how’s” to adjust the intensity of the phonemic instructions; for range of examples—it should provide more examples and a broader range of examples (modeling and explaining); for task difficulty—it should conduct a task analysis by breaking the task down into smaller steps (e.g. number of sounds per practice word and vowel patterns); task length—extending the length of the task and provide students for more responses and repetitions; and type of response—from low, to medium, to high intensity of response.

Rasinski (2004) stated that there are three important dimensions of reading fluency. First, is *accuracy in word recognition*, wherein Rasinski referred this to readers who were able to sound out the words correctly with minimal error, having skills on phonics and other word decoding strategies. Another dimension Rasinski also noted was the *automatic processing* skills that readers may have if there is “little mental effort as possible in the decoding aspect of reading” so that they can use their cognitive skills in comprehension. The third dimension is *prosodic reading*, as most linguistics refer to as expressions in reading. This prosodic ability among readers is said to be present if they are able to breakdown words syntactically and systematically in appropriate units (Rasinski, 2004). Most EFL learners who read fast and accurate,

but without any expressions or even pausing on the encountered punctuations are said to be not understanding the reading at all.

According to Rasinski (2004), teachers should be able to assess students' reading fluency. In terms of accuracy in word recognition, most EFL environment still has its fair-share of pitfalls. It has been proven in many studies that Thai EFL learners even in the university still lacks accuracy in word recognition. It is a crucial fundamental knowledge of decoding words that hinders reading fluency among Thai learners. Stanovich (1986) found that most children who started slowly in acquiring decoding skills rarely become strong readers throughout their academic careers. Stanovich is also known proponent of "mastering reading" at an early stage of children's learning. Stanovich (1992) also strongly proposed students to learn the basics of reading, because if they will not have the proficient skills in reading, learners might end up to be poor readers, and a failure on their higher education.

Moreover, Juel (1988) found that early acquisition of decoding skills leads to wider reading in and out of school, which in turns provide opportunities for growth in vocabulary concepts and general knowledge. Adam (1990) claimed that all readers are required to develop decoding or sounding-out skills to be proficient in reading, regardless of their age. The study also promoted phonemic awareness teaching, as poorly developed awareness of the individual phonemes hinders the learners' decoding skills.

In a study done by Rasinski (2004), he used assisted reading repeated readings in reading aloud activities to help the struggling readers to hear what fluent readers sounds like and be able to hear their voices. This is a very important strategy in teaching oral reading skills among learners, teaching them how to train their brains in hearing how they sounded when they read.

Stuart (1999) study is an extension of his previous studies on phoneme awareness training, particularly when combined with letter-sound teaching, results in improved reading and spelling development. His experimental programmed

accelerated children's acquisition of phoneme awareness and phonics knowledge, and their ability to apply this knowledge in reading and writing. In this study the experimental group were significantly ahead in phoneme awareness and phonics knowledge. In summary, early concentration on teaching phoneme awareness and phonics can radically improve reading and spelling standards. Which the researcher intends to bridge the gap of missing foundational skills among university EFL learners.

According to Sasum & Weeks (2018), found that most students do not speak English because they do not understand what others say; the students also do not have the chance in speaking English even in an international environment; their lack of vocabulary knowledge, and some still do not know how to make a complete sentence in English. Although the study suggested of putting more activities such as joining English camps, watching videos, and even let students write journals to let them have the courage to use and speak English. Sasum & Weeks also suggested of not letting the Thai instructors teach English, which the researcher think is very controversial, or maybe oblige the Thai instructors to use English more in the classroom. In addition, Sasum & Weeks also pointed out that instructors have the most influence in the classroom and that preparation is a must with engaging activities that the learners will become more interested to use their oral speaking skills.

In a study conducted by Ibrahim (2016) on The Effectiveness of Logic of English Approach on the Improvement of Reading skills of Saudi EFL Learners, Ibrahim used a population of 28 English instructors from Deanship of Preparatory Year Program and English Lecturers from the College of Arts and Science at Ula Branch, in Taibah University. Activities were taken from the Logic of English Approach and questions on Phonemic awareness, phonograms, spelling rules, and English word roots were drawn from the said activities. The study revealed that most learners has their preference on how they would want to learn something, as Ibrahim stated as an important factor in developing reading skills. Multi-modality teaching as the Logic of English is advocating also helps the students learn faster and deeper. In

summary, the study concluded the effectiveness of the Logic of English Approach on the development of reading fluency and comprehension of Saudi EFL learners.

Yen (2004) study on 56 Taiwanese pupils who attended an intensive phonics instruction presented a positive result that showed the ability of these pupils to read independently, in addition, an increase on their confidence and learning interest. But one thing that most teacher noticed and obvious variable for future research is the minimal time for EFL learners to practice. Education researchers are continually promoting practice as key of language learning proficiency, as what most EFL environments need.

2.7 Conclusion

In summary, learning a language has its pros and cons, but the bottom line is how to acquire one. Oral reading skill is still a challenge to Thai EFL learners in general, even though English has been taught for almost a century old. There are challenges to face, but also, there are answers to uncover in improving oral reading skills of Thai EFL learners. Traditional pedagogical approaches need not to be discarded, however, these approaches must be reexamined of their former usefulness. However, basic foundational knowledge—phonological awareness and vowel phonogram awareness—needed by EFL learners, must require careful investigations of their benefits in language learning in order to look through, review, and revise educational policies according to its relevance in language instructions. In addition, the roles of the teachers in the classroom as educators and researchers are also given importance, in order to understand teaching techniques needed in the classroom.

Chapter 3

Research Methodology

A qualitative research method was conducted to scrutinize the effectiveness of teaching vowel phonogram to improve the oral reading skills of the fourth-year students at a private university. An empirical research method was used to emphasize the need to uncover evidences that would demand for the verdict or rebuttal to the theories or approaches common to education research. This study discusses the efficacy of the instruction with regards to the learners' awareness of the variations of vowel sounds used in basic oral reading.

3.1 Population and Samples

The population used in this research consists of 100 fourth-year English major students in a private university who enrolled in an elective Business Reading at the time of data collection. The students' age range is between 20-23 years old. The participants consisted of 4 classes of 20-25 students registered in the first semester of the academic year 2019. The students who were sampled in the study were purposively and randomly selected as they were from the researcher's two groups of Business Reading course where the researcher was the instructor. The students' sample are composed of a mixed-level skill from low, average to semi-high levels of English language abilities.

The elective Business Reading course required a three-hour meeting hours per week, for 15 weeks. It also requires covering the chapters of the textbook and an outside reading book prepared for the said course every semester. The course also requires the students two oral presentations in class. These presentations cover twenty percent of the class scores.

The researcher used a convenience sampling in order to determine the sample needed in the study. Etikan, Musa, & Alkassim (2016) not just defined convenience sampling as affordable, easy and that the subjects are readily available, but refers to a non-random sampling where participants of the study met a certain practical criterion. Having two groups of Business Reading course in the first semester of 2019, the researcher was able to prepare two focus groups: 1) experimental group—students from the Business Reading morning class, a set of 20 students with 3 males and 17 females; and 2) control group of 21 students from the afternoon class, with 2 males and 19 females.

The two focus groups selected conveniently in the study both underwent a regular 3-hour class lecture according to the course syllabus requirements. However, the experimental group has embarked to an intensive explicit teaching of vowel phonograms for 5 weeks. A 20-minute vowel phonogram instruction was given to the experimental group before the lecture class. See appendix B for sample activities and planned lessons done in class.

A purposive selection method—a type of non-probability sampling according to Palys (2008), who advocated as more effective in choosing samples with regards to cultural studies and its fundamental to the quality in data being gathered, hence, ensuring reliability and competence of the informant—5 volunteer students in the experimental group were used to further inquiry in obtaining answers to the research questions presented in the research. Furthermore, these 5 students' availability and willingness to be part of the interview were highly considered because they were the researcher's former students in other English courses such as Critical Reading 2, Listening and Speaking 1 and 3, and Integrated Language Skills 1. Etikan, et. al. (2016) confirmed that purposive sampling, also known as judgment method of sample denotes the deliberate choice of subjects due to the qualities that they possesses, and enables the researcher to decide what needs to be known and sets out to find people who can and are willing to provide the information needed by virtue of knowledge or experience. Thus, this focus groups of 5 mixed-level skill students undertook a 15-semi-structured questions to diagnose the problem that language learners encounter.

The sample selection was crucial for the clarity of the study. The researcher selected students who shows integrity when it comes to attending classes. The students were also selected for their eagerness to contribute in finding answers for the said common challenges and problems arising for English Language Learners (ELL) of the twenty-first century.

3.2 Research Instruments

The research instruments used in this study consisted of the following: 1) a 15-item semi-structured open-ended interview questions; and 2) a teacher's journal (class observation record). Teaching tools were also used; a) a six-week lesson plan on teaching vowel phonograms (sound); b) a list of 75 out of 150 vocabulary words for dictation/spelling practice; and c) Vowel Phonogram list and sample words from "Uncovering The Logic of English—A common-sense approach to reading, spelling and literacy" (Eide, 2012).

3.2.1 Open-ended interview questions

The interview queries were originally designed by the researcher. A 15-item open ended form of questions was preferred; this enables interviewer to form open-ended questions that will allow discussions with the participants to expand upon some things that will bring new insights to the query. Applying this type of method will help classroom researchers develop a sense of freedom to ask the questions in different ways as well as adapt their questions related to the interviewees' responses without constraints to both parties. The freedom to broaden questions and answers in a semi-structured interview will open more topics to explore, but then a structured guide to queries will enable the interview to focus on the study being conducted.

There are two sections in the semi-structured, open-ended interview questions form (categorization was made accordingly by the researcher to divide the questions—before and after vowel phonogram instructions). The first part, nos. 1-6, are questions about the students' semi-background of their English language learning, their knowledge of vowel phonograms (sound), and their oral reading skills before the

teaching sessions of vowel phonograms. The second part, nos. 7-15, are questions after the vowel phonogram instructions, that points to answer whether teaching vowel phonograms helped in improving the oral reading skills of the fourth-year students in a private university. The 5 students selected to answer the open-ended questions were interviewed in groups of two and three. (see Appendix A)

3.2.2 Teacher's observation journal

The teacher's journal used as an instrument in this study can be considered to be chronicles of personal texts about the instructor/researcher's daily in-class activities. This allows the researcher to look back on the events that happened during a class lecture and enable to reflect on the things or situations needed to retain or change. A reflective teacher's journal is a powerful tool that can help describe situations that are difficult to remember. The ideas written in the teacher's journal were based on a personal observation of the researcher's classroom conditions.

3.2.3 Study teaching tools

The study teaching tools consist of a five-week lesson plans, a 75-word list of vocabulary words from the business reading textbook, and charts of single-letter and multi-letter vowel phonograms lists and sample words from the book "The Logic of English."

3.2.3.1 Five-week lesson plan

The study is provided with a weekly lesson plan of a 20-minute teaching vowel phonograms (sound) to improve oral reading skills of the fourth-year English major students at a private university for six weeks. The planned instruction of vowel phonograms aimed to: a) to teach students the vowel phonograms (sounds); b) to help learners distinguish and determine the relationship between single or multi letters phonograms and its sounds; c) to sound-out the vowel phonograms in a near native sound-like pronunciation; and d) to practice students to use these relationships to decode and improve oral reading skills. (See Appendix E)

3.2.3.2 Vocabulary list

A list of 75 out of 150 vocabulary words were chosen for the daily dictation/spelling assessment. This form of assessment was given by the instructor/researcher at the very beginning of the semester as a practice, and to make sure that the students will do an advance reading on the chapter to be covered in the lecture. These vocabulary words were prepared by the Business Reading course coordinator. (See Appendix F)

3.2.3.3 Vowel Phonograms list

The vowel phonogram list used in this study came from the book by Eide (2012) “Uncovering the Logic of English—A Common-Sense Approach to Reading, Spelling, and Literacy.” The phonogram list can be found on Chapter 6: Foundational Vowel Rules. Single vowel and multi-letter vowel tables were adapted in determining the phonogram, the sound, and the example words. Using the Logic of English approach list of vowel phonograms in this study helped the researcher to have a concrete illustration/samples that has been proven and published.

3.3 Validity and Reliability

In this section, there are two key points needed to be done in measuring the quality of the instruments used in the research; validity and reliability. The steps in measuring validity and reliability are as follows:

3.3.1 Validity

The validity of the instrument was measured by using the Indexed-Objective Congruence (IOC) method. The IOC was used to look at the appropriateness of the language used, the coverage of the content, as well as the instrument's content relevancy. The instruments in this study were validated by three experts in the field,

with a point average of 0.84. Any needed modifications were made after the trial data collection process. (See Appendix D)

3.3.2 Reliability

The reliability of the instrument procedure was conducted by the researcher through a trial interview. Prior to the study, a trial group of 7 teachers in the researcher's work department were randomly asked with the 15-item semi-structured interview questions to gain insights of any misconceptions before using the interview questions as instrument for the study. The procedure for the reliability of instruments were tried among 5 English lecturers comprised of 5 Native Thai lecturers of English. The researcher asked the teacher interviewees individually and recorded the answers to each question carefully. After the interview was conducted, the results were carefully transcribed and analyzed.

A trial interview was also done to 3 fourth-year students who were former students of the researcher in other classes to test the reliability of the interview questions. This was done to demonstrate whether the students have enough knowledge about the topic in the said study, and whether the questions were reliable enough and understandable enough to get concrete response from the participants in the investigation. After the trial interview testing, some final revisions were made in the questions. Adjustments were also made to ensure its reliability.

3.4 Data Collection

In order to gather information needed, the following comprise the procedures done in collecting data for the study: 1) approval from concerned authority, 2) anonymity of the participants and confidentiality of their views, and 3) data collection process.

3.4.1 Approval from Concerned Authority

Before conducting the study, the researcher has requested and obtained a letter of permission to conduct the study from the Dean of the Faculty of Education Dr. Ruja Pholsward and submitted the letter to the English Department, of the Faculty of Liberal Arts, Rangsit University. The head of the English Department, Dr. Nakonthep Tipayasuparat allowed the researcher to gather from the study sample using interview questionnaires.

3.4.2 Anonymity of the Participants and Confidentiality of their Views

From the beginning of the study, the researcher confirmed the participants that all information being gathered for the research will be highly treated as confidential and anonymous for all concerned participants, this includes the 2 groups of enquiry samples and the 5 volunteer students that underwent a 15-item semi-structured open-ended interview questions.

3.4.3 Data Collection Process

The data collection process was administered in the first semester of the academic year 2019. The Business Reading course schedule was from August-December 2019. The data collection was executed for 6 weeks from August-October before the Midterm break. After the five-week vowel phonogram instruction, the semi-structured interview question data were collected on the sixth week, open-ended questions were completed via face to face interview that lasted for 30 minutes to an hour and a half for students who has a lot to contribute to. The interviews were carefully transcribed and any questions or concerns with regards to the students' answers were confidentially shared between the researchers as the interviews developed and progressed. Translations were specified during the interview, for some students who need clarifications on the questions. The data from the teacher's observation journal was also collected and interpreted.

In this study, a qualitative empirical research method was conducted in order to look through all the essential factors that will bring out answers to the research questions presented in the investigation. A qualitative research that obliges a careful examination of data in the participants interview responses and observation journal texts. Empirical research refers to the process of gaining knowledge through a direct or an indirect observation or experience. The diagram below refers to de Groot's 1946 model of empirical cycle with 5 stages: 1. Observations; 2. Induction, 3. Deduction, 4. Testing, and 5. Evaluation. (Heitink, 1999) This model was used in the study's data collection process.

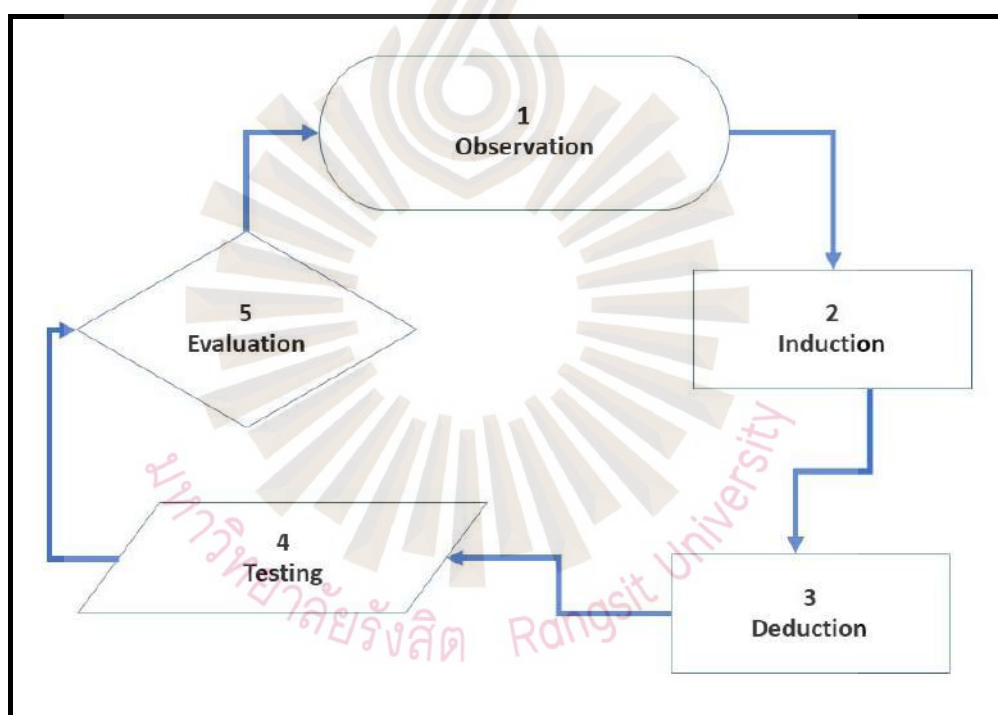


Figure 3.1 de Groot's Empirical Research Cycle

Figure 3.1 shows the empirical flow of the data collection process. There were 5 stages used in the research procedure adapted from de Groot's empirical cycle of 1946 (Heitink, 1999). The following steps detail the processes:

Stage 1 Observation (Orientation Phase)

This process includes class observation, wherein the instructor/researcher carefully observed phenomenon arising in the class. This phase allows the researcher to study related documents, concepts, and theories to inquire concerning the causes of

oral reading skill problems, challenges, and current situations of fourth-year EFL learners were experiencing.

In this phase, the instructor/researcher was able to observe that most fourth-year students still lack mastery of the vowel phonograms. Some students were still mispronouncing even the most commonly used English words in reading passages and they were also having difficulty in spelling words. Thru this observation stage, the instructor/researcher also confirmed what most English teachers were commenting on the oral reading skills of most students. Due to this observed phenomenon, the instructor/researcher planned of an intervention that would answer her long-standing research questions about Thai EFL learners oral reading skills.

Stage 2 Induction (Planning)

In this process, formulation of hypothesis and finding explanations for the phenomenon are vital. Noticeable outcomes from the observed phenomenon were given consideration that leads to the occasion of designing open-ended interview questions for data collection. Preparation of lessons and activities needed for the intervention.

In this stage, the instructor/researcher was concerned of the low spelling/dictation scores of the students in class. Especially for the students who were former students of the instructor/researcher in other English courses. An obvious transliteration on how English words are read were written in most of their books, although transliteration is considered to be a strategy in helping students read, but the instructor/researcher believed that these students might have lacked the most fundamental skill in learning English—phonological awareness skill and vowel phonogram awareness skill.

Stage 3 Deduction (Experimentation)

This part involves the integration of the pedagogical approach of teaching vowel phonograms as a teaching technique for 20 minutes for a span of 5 weeks to the 20 participants in the experimental group. The instructor/researcher prepared a five-

week lesson plan that covered vowel phonogram sounds from the Logic of English Approach book.

Stage 4 Testing (Oral Reading Assessment)

This process includes some testing tools such as: spelling/dictation from vocabulary words used in the course were administered; reading-aloud exercises from vocabulary words and reading passage from the students' textbooks; and project—oral presentations (course requirement).

Stage 5 Evaluation (Formulation of theory)

This step presents an explanation of the theory framed upon the assessment of the teaching of vowel phonograms in class through the data gathered from open-ended interview questions and observation notes.

Test scores, spelling quizzes, and oral presentations were used to assess both experimental and control groups language skills. The semi-structured open-ended interview has given the 5 volunteer participants freedom to speak their minds regarding the posted questions in the interview form. As the interview progressed, the participants became more comfortable to share their insights whether the study was helpful to them (English Major students), or to other English Language Learners (ELL) in general, and those who are still struggling to get used to the English language.

3.5 Data Analysis

The interviews were recorded and transcribed carefully before categorizing for data analysis. The researcher coded the data collected in a qualitative method from the interviews gathered from the two focus groups who participated in the study. A total of 2 males and 8 females have diligently participated in answering the interview questions to shed light to the anticipated research questions.

The data recorded from the interviews and teacher's observation journal were analyzed using a Descriptive Analysis method—enables to detect and identify data and its association with other variables—to fully extract substantially the information being presented in this investigation.



Chapter 4

Data Analysis

In order to seek empirical evidence to explain the effects of teaching vowel phonograms to improve the oral reading skills of the fourth-year students in a private university (Objective 1), and whether students' awareness of vowel phonograms helped improve their oral reading skills (Objective 2), an explicit instruction on vowel phonograms were implemented in the experimental focus groups using a planned 20-minute lessons of vowel sounds (single letter and multi-letter) instruction. Oral reading (individual or choral) practice were also directed during the teaching. This helped the researcher observe certain oral reading problems made by students as well as the classroom conditions during the instruction.

Descriptive analysis was implemented to describe the data. This enabled the researcher to describe characteristics of the ELLs oral reading problems as well as other educational challenges that might be given a closer look for future studies.

The following information puts in detail the analysis of the result in order to answer the study objectives. The first section 4.1 presents the analysis of the effects of teaching vowel phonograms and the second section 4.2 presents the analysis of the vowel phonogram awareness.

4.1 The Effects of teaching vowel phonograms

The study was conducted in a private university using a population size of 100 registered English major students in Business Reading class of the second semester of the academic year 2019. Student sample of 41 students were conveniently selected by the instructor/researcher, who happened to be teaching Business Reading course of the same semester. A focus group of 5 students were purposively chosen as

sample focus groups to answer the 15-item open-ended interview questions required in this investigation.

There were two common answers of students with regards to the effectiveness of teaching vowel phonograms to improve oral reading skills of the fourth-year students at a private university. First, yes, it seems to be very helpful to most of the students who experienced an intensive 20-minute instruction. They said that having taught the vowel phonograms (sounds) in class had enable them to have the strategies to read orally, and some students think about words that they have just encountered for the first time (including nonwords). Secondly, the learners also concluded that if these strategies were instructed in the early years or early stages of their English language learning, they will be able to pronounce the words better and would understand what the teachers are reading from the reading passages.

A good point to ponder of how teaching vowel phonograms can make a difference in the oral reading fluency of English Language Learners (ELL) in general. The following data analysis dissects and examines the teacher's observation journal and the students' answers to the semi-structured open-ended interview questions. A descriptive analysis, as known to be widely and frequently used in research studies, was conducted to create a view of the challenges that are needed to be addressed. This type of research helps the researcher describe, show, and summarize data in a more profound way that readers will get the picture of how oral reading skills are still a problem for most English language learners.

4.1.1 The results of teacher's observation journal

The teacher's observation journal serves as a record of personal accounts of the instructor/researcher ideas, insights, challenges, and even problems in the classroom as a whole. In the study, the instructor/researcher has recorded vignettes of daily encountered situations that would shed light to the questions/problems needed to be addressed.

Both experimental and control groups were observed carefully from the early stages of the study. The instructor/researcher noted that these focus groups were mixed-level of English skills, and both groups have the same level of vowel phonogram awareness. During the class lecture, the instructor/researcher targeted the oral reading and pronunciation patterns of the students in preparation to their two oral presentations for midterm and final term respectively.

Before the 20-minute teaching of vowel phonograms was administered, both experimental and control focus groups have the same level of vowel phonograms awareness. Upon administering the teaching of vowel phonograms, the experimental class were observed to find out whether awareness of the vowel phonogram sounds have effects to their oral reading skills, as gradual changes on the pronunciation of words using the vowel phonograms taught in class. The control group shows no difference on the vowel phonogram awareness, as they were selected to just attend a regular lecture class.

The following is the breakdown of the analysis from the journal inputs made by the instructor/researcher regarding the teaching of vowel phonograms to the experimental group for 6 weeks.

Week 1, teaching vowel phonograms “a” and “e” and teaching vowel phonograms “i” and “y”

Analysis: The vowel phonograms “a” and “e” seemed to be the easiest for the fourth-year students. The instructor/researcher presented the sound with example words from the Logic of English single letter vowel phonogram table. After teaching the sounds, the students were expected to sound out the vowel phonograms in a near-native sound like pronunciation. (This means that accent is not the basis of the pronunciation but the correct reading of the words based on the sounds of the vowel phonogram is the only thing to be considered.

The students were able to sound out the distinct vowel phonograms “a” and “e”, and after sounding the phonograms, the students were required to find words that

sounded like the vowel phonograms “a” and “e” and have them write the words in the activity sheets provided.

The vowel phonograms “i” and “y” were not that difficult for the students to remember. Although, some students have asked the instructor/researcher, why the “y” was considered to have a vowel phonogram sound? The instructor/researcher based the teaching from the Logic of English Approach, which the instructor/researcher believed that would help EFL learners to realize that these two vowel phonograms have common sounds. The instructor/researcher have given the experimental group an extra spelling rules from the Logic of English Approach, that awaken their thought processes such as; “English words does not end in letter “T”, if this will be so; it’s a borrowed or loan word.”

The students were able to sound out the distinct sound of the vowel phonograms “i” and “y” and distinguish the difference in its usage. After the sounding practice, the students were required to write words that sounds like the vowel phonograms “i” and “y”.

Week 2, teaching vowel phonograms “o” and “u”

Analysis: The vowel phonograms “o” and “u” were somewhat difficult for the students, probably because the of the number of distinct sounds they need to remember. The vowel “o” may have 3 different sounds, but this was easier for the students to sound out. Three different sound examples were taken from the Logic of English single letter vowel table; “on, go, and do.” After the students practice the sounds, they were required to find sample words with the same sound. Some of the students’ examples were “off, lost, and to.”

When it comes to the “u” word examples that were taken from the Logic of English “up, pupil, flute, and put”, most of the students struggled in the pronouncing “u” /ū/ in “pupil” as /'pyūpəl/. This is due of not having /ū/ in the Thai phonetic system, but some students were able to grasp the sound especially for those who had phonics background, and the researcher believed that with ample practice and sound

familiarization, the students will master the vowel sound in no time. In finding sample words, most students asked the teacher/instructor for words that have /ū/; cube and pure, and after a few samples, the students were able to find some words that sounded the /ū/.

Week 3, vowel phonograms “ai, au, aw, ay, and augh”

Analysis: The vowel phonograms “ai, au, aw, ay, and augh” were a little bit complicated for the students. Some of them were sounding the vowels individually and blending them together. But the instructor/researcher reminded them that each multi-letter vowel phonogram has individual sounds too, and this lesson is about the multi-letter vowel phonograms. Some students were eager to find sample words right away. After the instructor/researcher presented and pronounced all the sounds, she noticed that some students are interchanging the sounds for “au” /ā/ in “*author*” /'ôTHər/ and “aw” /ā/ in “*saw*” /sô/. The instructor/researcher gave the students enough time to determine the distinction of the phonograms by trying to find sample words that sound alike and try to silently listen to the words (training the brain) being pronounced. Some of the students have confirmed that they were able to distinguished the sound through silently sounding them, but some students still struggled sounding out the difference, this maybe they did not have these kinds of activities in their early English learning.

Another tricky phonogram that the instructor/researcher has to explained is the phonogram “augh” /ā/ as in “*taught*” (the only example given from the multi-letter vowel table from the Logic of English). The instructor/researcher added the other sound of phonogram “augh” /af/ as in “*laughter*.” This may help the students when they encounter new words spelled with “augh” phonogram. The other phonograms “ai” and “ay” are the easiest among the group of phonograms in the multi-letter vowel phonogram lesson.

Week 4, vowel phonograms “ea, ee, ei, ew, ey, and eigh” and “ie, and igh”

Analysis: The vowel phonograms “ee” is found to be the easiest among the phonogram groups for lesson 5, “ew” and “ey” are not really that difficult for the

students too, as they were able to sound out the vowels and found sample words easily. The phonogram “ea” and “ei” are challenging for some; learners tend to mispronounced the words, but the instructor/researcher reminded them of the sample words given from the multi-letter vowel table of the Logic of English, for other students, this vowel phonogram seems to be an easy as some have commented that its very common in words. The phonogram “ei” is found to be the most challenging for the experimental group. Some students who had heard English accents in pronouncing the words were a bit confused, but the instructor/researcher have anticipated this and reminded the students of the correct-sounding of the words in a near-native sound-like pronunciation. Even for the phonogram “eigh” same condition was promoted.

The “ie” phonogram seemed interesting for the students, in this lesson the instructor/researcher also anticipated the questions that might arise as the students are blending all the vowel sounds with almost everything that they are encountering. (The instructor/researcher also presented the spelling rules from the “Uncovering the Logic of English” that would help learners to understand how to understand the origin of words. While the igh” phonogram was found to be the easiest of all the phonogram lessons, because only few words used the “igh” phonogram.

Week 5, vowel phonograms “oa, oe, oi, oo, ou, ow, oy, and ough” and “ui”

Analysis: The vowel phonograms “oa, oe, oi” were found to be the easiest among the group of multi-letter vowel phonograms in the lesson. According to the Logic of English multi-letter vowel table, “oa, oe, oi, oy, and ow” example words were easy for the students to find. For “oo, ou, and ough” were a bit tricky for some students, as they have to memorized the sounds, which the instructor/researcher advocates the learners to give more time in sounding out the phonograms and try to memorize the distinct sounds of “oo, ou, and ough.”

The phonogram “ui” was also a bit tricky for the students. They were using their background knowledge from their L1 as some students were pronouncing them as “ui” = /ooy/. The instructor/researcher explained to the students to just sound “ui” as /oo/ in “fruit” /fr̄oot/.

There are two factors that the instructor/researcher considered in analyzing the input of the teacher's observation journal: 1) Vowel phonogram awareness and 2) Oral presentations.

After the five-week teaching of vowel phonograms in the experimental focus group, a perceptible improvement was seen to most students when it comes to their pronunciation—the correct sounding of vocabulary words in a near-native sound like pronunciation, or in a comprehensible way—especially during the oral presentation, wherein some students were showing some consciousness (of the vowel phonograms) on how they were to pronounce the words written on their notes. Improvement on their spelling scores also demonstrated. While the control group has shown a little to none improvement when it comes to their oral reading skills, and their spelling scores were also in a low position.

4.1.2 The results of the open-ended interview questions

There are two sections in the semi-structured, open-ended interview questions form (categorization was made accordingly by the researcher to divide the questions—before and after vowel phonogram instructions). The first part, nos. 1-6, are questions about the students' semi-background of their English language learning, their knowledge of vowel phonograms (sound), and their oral reading skills before the teaching sessions of vowel phonograms. The second part, nos. 7-15, are questions after the vowel phonogram instructions, that points to answer whether teaching vowel phonograms helped in improving the oral reading skills of the fourth-year students in a private university. The 5 students selected to answer the open-ended questions were interviewed in groups of twos and of threes.

Part 1: Question Before Teaching Vowel Phonograms

Question 1: How did you decide to study English as a major?

Answers:

Experimental Group students

ES1: I like learning English. I studied in an English program when I was young... it's very important in my career.

ES2: I really like to learn English... It's ASEAN! We need to become competitive.

ES3: I studied Math and Science in high school... it's difficult and I can't have the grades to study... "this globalization" is very important!

ES4: Me too. I like to watch movies and listen to music in English.

ES5: Before I don't know what to study... a friend from the province recommended RSU. I studied French major first, then I moved to English majors. It's for the job.

Analysis:

Three students answered that they like to learn English, it's a step for their future careers. One student shared that he was in the Science and Math major when he was in high school, but his grades did not meet up to the requirements so, he decided to go for the English major course. One answered that she moved from French major to English major. On the other hand, all students think that English language is very important, especially "this globalization" as one student put it, and Thailand joined in ASEAN merging in 2015. This shows that they have the knowledge of what's going on around the world.

We can see from the response that they have different reasons in studying the English language, or studying in the English major, but this shows that the students are seeing the language as an advantage in their future endeavors.

Question 2: What do you think of (our) Reading class?

Answers:

Experimental Group students

ES1: A lot of vocabularies to memorize.

ES2: Some words were used differently in business.

ES3: Spelling dictation is exciting even though I can't really spell the words correctly, but all in all it's fun.

ES4: At the beginning, I don't really understand the business words in Business Reading because I don't like reading.

ES5: Many words I don't know.

Analysis:

In this question, a unanimous answer on the number of vocabulary words that they (think) should memorize. There's a negative perception on memorization and even for spelling or dictation quizzes in-class, which the instructor/researcher used to check for attendance and class preparedness. Another thing is their perception on words used in the business field. While ES4's honest answer of "...I don't like reading!" is a common answer for students nowadays.

Question 3: Describe the students' oral reading problems, in class, and/or in general.

Answers:

Experimental Group students

ES1: It's a big problem for most English majors. Especially to students who don't practice. Even for fourth-year students, they are still very weak.

ES2: I agree. Some students oral reading skills are still bad. They cannot pronounce the words. In class, there are students who are still struggling with reading the words.

ES3: I think most students in the English major still have the problems in reading the words correctly. Like me, I know that I have problems to pronounce many words.

ES4: Me too. I think student in general have weak oral reading skills.

ES5: Many words I don't know how to read. Some words I think I have heard already, but I don't know how to spell.

Analysis:

Most answers in this question confirmed that oral reading skills among fourth year students are still very weak. The need to pronounce the words correctly is what really matters to the English language learners; in plain terms, be able to be understood by speakers of English. The difficulty in reading the words (high and low frequency words) aloud or orally were also challenges to most of the English majors. The answer of ES5 caught the researcher's attention that some students may not be understanding the words that the teacher were saying in class, especially if they cannot really read (for themselves) the words written in their textbooks.

Question 4: How do you interpret the vowel phonogram awareness of students in class and/or in general? (This question has to be explained to the students in case they don't know what phonograms are; the instructor/researcher showed how some example vowel phonograms are sounded and teach them how to identify the sounds in a word.)

Answers:

Experimental Group students

ES1: It's like phonetics class. But there's no need to have the symbols to read the words. We just try to learn the sounds of the individual vowels. (*Teacher: How do you assess the vowel phonograms of the students in general? You can say, "high or low" or "ok or not ok" and why?*) I think for some it is still very low. In general, students still need to know the sounds of the vowels.

ES2: I agree. Some students mispronounced the vowels, that's why when they pronounce the words, it cannot be understood. Like I said, students still struggle to read words because they don't know the vowel sounds.

ES3: Vowel awareness is still a problem. Like for me, there are vowel sounds that I didn't know how to sound. Even we have studied phonetics class. I can't remember all the symbols and the sounds. It's very difficult. (The teacher encouraged the students about Phonetics—it's a very good basic knowledge for English language learners.)

ES4: Me too. I think student in general low vowel sound awareness. That's why we still cannot read the words correctly.

ES5: I think students need to learn the vowel phonograms that we had in class, because many words I don't know how to read aloud.

Analysis:

In this question, most students shared a bit of their experience in studying Phonetics. The memorization of Phonetic symbols seemed to be very difficult to most of the English major students. Some exhibited a good knowledge of vowel phonograms (sounds) awareness during the interview, by pronouncing or sounding the words correctly. The good point is that most students are aware of their needs to have a mastery of the vowel sounds in order to read aloud (orally), pronounced the

words correctly, and have that confidence to speak in front of the class and with other English-speaking people.

Question 5: What aspects of your oral reading skill do you struggle with?

Answers:

Experimental Group students

ES1: Some words I still don't know how to pronounce, and I think the accent— (*Teacher: Don't worry about the accent. Maybe the sounding-out of the words correctly.*) Yes, and maybe the pronunciation too, and the expressions too. I think it's important when you read orally. Like you said “not robotic” reading. (resounding laughter in the room)

ES2: I think for me, pronunciation of some words too and the intonation, and I want to practice good speaking voice (articulation of the words). I just want to read and sound the words correctly and confidently.

ES3: Pronouncing the words correctly. Read the words correctly too, especially during oral presentations. I'm very nervous when I stand in front of the class. Sometimes I forgot what I wanted to say. Like you said, “Do not eat your words, open your mouth and try pronouncing the words slowly, again and again.” and “Practice makes perfect.” That's why I think practicing the vowel sounds is good for oral reading skills. I think I need to read more orally... and practice more. Maybe I will review phonetics and vowel phonograms.

ES4: As for me, I know myself that I still struggle on how to read the words. My oral reading is very poor. (Answer very politely) And I know I need to practice and love reading. “Love your books, read it from cover to cover.”

ES5: Pronunciation. Reading aloud. I need to memorize and practice the vowel phonograms.

Analysis:

In this question, most students shared their common struggle of mispronouncing words. The fear of standing in front of the class and do a presentation are two of the common challenge for some of the fourth-year students. (Considering

the Thai shyness; or the fear of loosing face.) The students also stated that sounding the words correctly is still a problem for most learners, even they practiced so hard.

Student ES2 said that “I really want to practice good speaking voice and I just want to read the words and sound it correctly and confidently.” This is a good trait to consider enhancing among struggling language learners’ oral reading skills, where ES3 confirmed that oral reading should be given importance through practice; he also included of reviewing his phonetics and vowel phonograms.

6. In your opinion, what is/are the importance of oral reading skills. Explain your answer.

Answers:

Experimental Group students

ES1: I think oral reading skills are very important because you want people to understand you, right? If someone ask you to help him/her to read the words in English, then you can’t really read the words written, you will have a problem. Maybe you can give wrong information.

ES2: Yes, I agree with ES1. It’s important to read the words orally. For example, when we have the oral presentations, then we mispronounced the words, we can give a different message, maybe a wrong message, and people may not understand us. (Teacher: Can you give an example of words that were mispronounced during the oral presentations?) A lot, Ajarn!

ES3: For me, oral reading skill is very important. Like when you work to a place and you need to read files and information to people; even telephone numbers; or talking to phones and answering questions from customers. I think it is really very important for English language learners to have good oral reading skills. Also, students will not need to write “karaoke” translations if they can read the words. And maybe students will love reading more.

ES4: I think it’s important. Because when we talk, we want people to understand us. I don’t want to repeat myself again and again. Now I know I need to practice reading orally.

ES5: Very important for me, because like ES4, I don't want to repeat myself again and again too. Bu-ah! Mai yak Kuy! (I'm bored, don't talk to me. In Thai translation.)

Analysis:

A resounding “yes indeed” for oral reading skills’ importance to all our sample participants. All of the students have affirmatively confirmed that good oral reading skills can aid their oral presentations, and also in giving information to other people (e.g. information by telephone; and /or reading information for work purposes).

Participants ES1 and ES2 emphasized the giving of wrong information to people can be a result of a very poor oral reading skills. ES2 also added that mispronouncing words can convey a different message. Students’ ES4 and ES5 promoted oral reading skills importance, on their concerns of not being understood once, but the need to “repeat themselves again and again” that makes them not want to speak or read.

The participant students recognized the importance of oral reading skills on their pronunciation skills. They also specified personal reasons on having a good grip of oral reading skills: 1) the ability to pronounce the words; 2) not needing for Thai transliterations; 3) maybe a love for reading; 4) lessen the problem of misunderstanding the words when reading orally; and 5) the confidence to present in front of a lot people and be able to be understand what he/she has conveyed.

Part II: Questions After Teaching Vowel Phonograms

Question 7: What was helpful in studying vowel phonograms in class?

Answers:

Experimental Group students

ES1: I think it's good! Because some words I don't know how to say (pronounce) correctly. It's like a review of the phonetics class. But we don't need to study and

memorize the symbols. I thought it's boring, but it's okay, it helped me understand the vocabs more and I think my spelling is better too.

ES2: Same with me. It's okay, it's like phonetics class, but it helped me with reading and spelling.

ES3: It's good for me. It helped me read some words I don't know how to read. I think I can spell better too.

ES4: I think it's ok, I can spell and read better.

ES5: I think it helped me read the words correctly. Spelling too.

Analysis:

Students participants stated that it's good to study vowel phonograms again, although it reminded them of Phonetics class, which the researcher thought was actually a good thing. The researcher would like to encourage students to use the knowledge that they have learned from their Phonetics class and apply it to all their reading classes, and other English classes that teaches: listening and speaking, reading and writing, and even communication and spelling skills.

It is encouraging to know that it has helped them pronounce, read, and spell the words that some students were having problems to read. Although, some found it boring at the beginning of the session, but the class became interested as they were learning ways to read words upon the teaching of vowel phonograms (sounds). Some also commented, that they can read words and didn't need Phonetic symbols or Thai transliterations to read and memorize.

The researcher was curious of the two student who have answered, that they can read the words better. Was it about how they were able to sound the vowels correctly and that they were hearing the correct pronunciations of the words; or they simply thought that teaching vowel phonograms has improved their oral reading skills and/or any other reading skills that they have developed?

Another area to investigate in future studies was the participants acclamation of better spelling skills. All five students have recognized acquiring a better spelling

skill during the teaching of vowel phonogram sessions. As most of the researcher's English major students complaining about in-class dictation/spelling quizzes, these responses gave way to a positive outlook in education.

Question 8: Tell me about the 20-minute teaching vowel phonogram sessions in class. Describe the teaching sessions.

Answers:

Experimental Group students

ES1: For me, it's ok. Especially the last part of the Teaching of Vowel Phonograms. The multi-letter vowels are very useful. Now I know that some vowel sounds even they are multi-letter can sound only one. It's very informative. I also like the spelling rules that you said.

ES2: I think same with me. It is very informative. The chart shows all the different sounds a vowel phonogram has. It helps me think of words that sounds-like and it really helps me read words orally. I can imagine the words that you are saying in class. Spelling too.

ES3: I think 20-minute teaching is short for practice, especially for the multi-letter vowels. (*Teacher: Because all I want you to know are the sounds of the vowel phonograms, so that you can connect and associate the sounds to the words with the same vowel sound. Because it's the same principle for the task, to find words with the same vowel phonogram sound.*) It's very exciting. I couldn't think of the words right away. But I think the sessions of vowel phonogram teaching helps me with reading and spelling.

ES4: I think it's ok, some vowel phonograms I don't know how to sound. It's very informative.

ES5: It's very short. I think if we can have a longer teaching sessions, and more practice to write the words. (*Teacher: But you can also practice writing the words on your own. I hope you will continue to practice the vowel phonogram sounds.*) I think so. I think it's good for spelling. And I think I need more practice.

Analysis:

Three out of five students answered that vowel phonogram instruction was informative. Two students said that the 20-minute teaching was kind of short, especially for multi-letter vowels. The answer of ES1 confirmed that there is a need for an instruction of missing fundamental skills in learning the English language, as not everyone will get a good grasp of all the basic knowledge when they were not presented to them at an early stage of learning, especially the sounds needed to read the words. The added spelling rules given by the instructor/researcher was also noted by ES1, while ES2 claimed that she was able to understand or better say “imagine” the words that the instructor was saying in class, also with the help of a chart sounds that guided them in finding words that sound-alike.

Question 9: What can you say about your awareness of the vowel phonogram (sounds) after the teaching sessions of the Vowel Phonogram? Kindly give an/a example/s.

Answers:

Experimental Group students

ES1: I think it improved my awareness of the vowel sounds. Like in Phonetics class there are symbols to help us to sound certain words with the same spelling, but now I think I have other “tactics” (techniques) in reading the words without symbols. Because I don’t need to memorize the symbols. I think I’m able to read (decode the sounds) more. That helps me in spelling the words better. *Can you give some examples?*

The student (ES1) gave the word “study” as an example, which is still one of the common mispronounced words for struggling readers. Instead of pronouncing study /stədē/, some students are still pronouncing it as stoo^{dy} /stōōdē/.

Tongue = /təNG/ not /ton-gyue/

ES2: I think it helped me to think how I should sound the letters correctly and TVP has helped me with spelling. I also can understand the words better; your pronunciation of the words also Ajarn (how to read the words correctly, accent, and segmenting the words in syllables.) When you taught us how to pronounce or say the words in class, and you helped us repeat and do it orally, even in our spelling

(dictation) quizzes, I began to hear the sounds of the vowels. I think it's a good practice.

Follow up questions from the instructor/researcher:

Can you say, you can understand the pronunciation of the words well? or can you read the words better?

I think so!

Can you say, that you can hear the vowel sounds in your mind, even without speaking it orally—like silent reading?

Yes, I think so. I never thought of that.

Can you say, you can spell better? Understand vocabulary words better?

Yes! (confidently)

ES3: I can say I can really read better (orally) the words now. I hope we were taught like this before. I think students can have a better oral reading skills. (*Teacher: How about spelling?*) A little bit with my spelling. I need to practice more, but I think I can understand you more and the words too.

ES4: It helped me with spelling and reading too. I can also understand what you are saying in class. Some words I heard before but I don't know how to write it, or spell it.

ES5: I can say I get a little (bit) better. Now, I know how to read and sound the letters in my mind. I need to practice more. Susu! (in Thai = Fighting!)

Analysis:

The student participants affirmed that their vowel phonogram awareness has improved. Most of the students have noted that their spellings have improved too because of their awareness of the vowel sounds. Participant ES1 gave a common example of words still being mispronounced by some EFL/ESL learners, she also noted of decoding words better without needing of symbols or transliterations. Student ES2 also gave a reflective answer on hearing the sounds of the vowels, even when she read it silently or orally, as if she has found a way to really understand how

letters and words are sounded. The student ES3 answered of being able to read better, he also added that if these vowel phonograms sounds were taught earlier, most learners might have good oral reading skills.

Understanding the teacher in class is very important, ES2, ES3, and ES4 have commented that they were able to understand what the instructor/researcher was saying in class (pronunciation). This was actually one of the hypotheses of the researcher of whether students can really comprehend what is being said or imparted in class—for lectures or even just instructions in general.

Participants ES2 and ES5 said about hearing the words in their mind is one very important thing in learning reading—the processing of the sounds of the letters or the phonograms in one's mind helped read the words orally. This confirmed a viable affirmation of the effects of teaching vowel phonograms in improving oral reading skills.

Question 10.1 In a scale of 1-5 (5 as the highest), what is your vowel phonogram awareness level at the beginning of the reading course?

Question 10.2 In a scale of 1-5 (5 as the highest), what is your vowel phonogram awareness level now after the reading course?

Rubric Ranking system: 5 = very satisfied; 4 = satisfied; 3 = neither satisfied nor dissatisfied; 2 = dissatisfied, and 1 = very dissatisfied

Answers:

Experimental Group students

ES1: I think before I would say 3, but with TVP I would say 4 or 5, 4.5. (with a confident laughter)

ES2: I think it was 2, then now 4 maybe. (but the researcher thinks this student has improved a lot, basing from the dictation quizzes)

ES3: For me, I think it's just 2, but now a bit from 4. I know how to read some vocabulary words better. But studying TVP is very short. I need to practice more. But I like it for spelling. (very open to share his thoughts; eager to learn; excited with spelling quizzes; and had improved well in class)

ES4: At the beginning, I don't really understand the business words, so maybe 1, but now maybe just 3.

ES5: 1 or 0 (smiling humbly), but now 2 or 3.

The chart below gives information of the vowel phonogram awareness of student participants before and after the teaching of vowel phonograms in class. The vowel awareness Rubric Ranking system is from 1-5: (5 = very satisfied; 4 = satisfied; 3 = neither satisfied nor dissatisfied; 2 = dissatisfied, and 1 = very dissatisfied). The first column (blue) refers to the "before" vowel phonogram awareness; while the second column (purple) refers to the "after" vowel phonogram awareness.

Figure 4.1 shows the graphic representation of learners' vowel phonogram awareness (VPA) before and after the teaching of vowel phonograms (TVP).

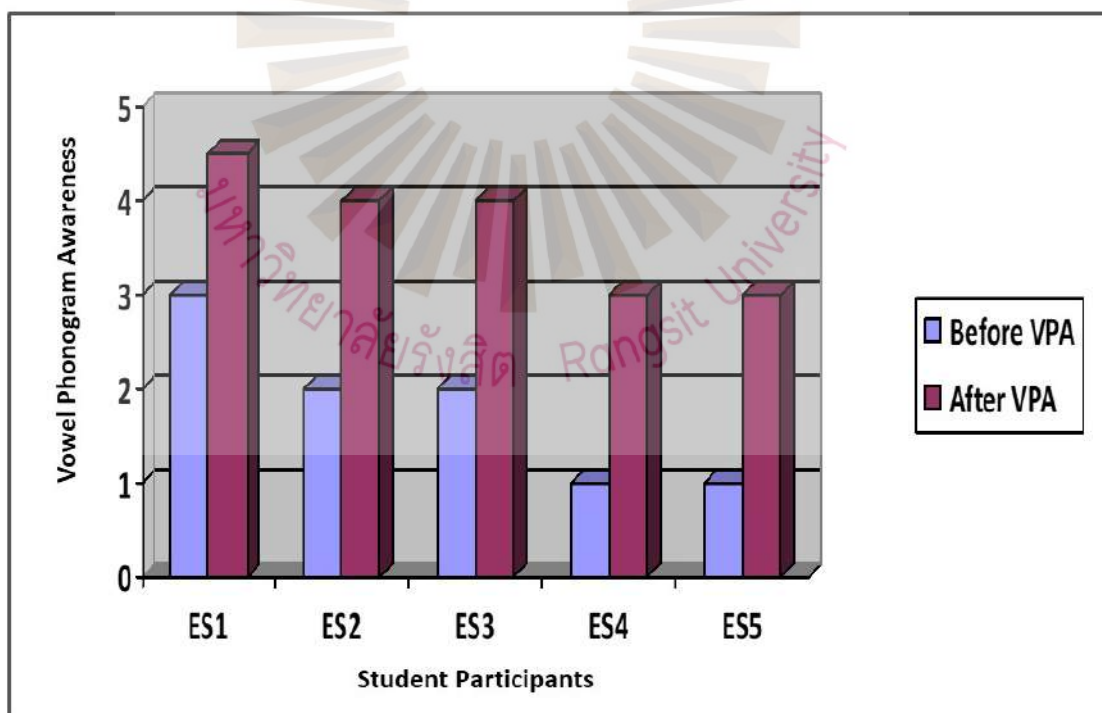


Figure 4.1 Vowel Phonogram Awareness of the Students

Analysis:

For questions 10.1 and 10.2, all students perceived an increase on their vowel phonogram awareness. Based on the students' personal assessment on their vowel phonogram awareness, ES1 has a 1.5 increase from 3-4.5, while both ES2 and ES3 had a 2-point increase on their vowel phonogram awareness from 2-4 points, and ES4 and ES5 showed a 2-point increase on their vowel phonogram awareness from 1-3 points.

Question 11. In your opinion, what benefits can Teaching Vowel Phonogram (TVP) give to the young-adult English Language Learners (ELLs) in the university?

Answers:

Experimental Group students

ES1: For me, I think that TVP can help weaker students to read. Especially for those who do not have the basics of language learning. I studied in an English program in pratom and mattayom levels (elementary and high school). That's why I thought it's going to be boring, but when you let us think of the words with the vowel sounds, it was also interesting. Aside from reviewing my knowledge, I also learn to read or say some of the words correctly. I think it can help other students to read better. Not like robot. ("robot-sounding" = emphasis to the teacher's reminder not to read or sound like a robot when reading-aloud or reading orally)

ES2: I can personally say that this TVP session has helped students with their spelling skills. Like me, I was able to look back on how I learned English in school. I remember singing English nursery rhymes and the teachers were emphasizing the sounds of the letters, but I didn't know that every vowel (single or multi-letter) has its corresponding sound, if this will be taught to the students in all levels, especially those who still can't read English (and those who don't want to practice) because they don't know how to sound it correctly, this teaching can benefit them, like it benefitted me. Some words I would say I can read better, or say it orally in a near-English-sounding words. The rules in spelling are quite interesting too. Like no English word ends in "i" unless it's a borrowed or loan word: Hawaii, Ferrari, Fuji, etc.

ES3: I think it's fun to know the sounds of the letters. The vowel phonograms are important for English language learners to know. The English majors, we cannot

memorize all the phonetic symbols, but if students can learn and know that the letters and specially the vowels (single or multi-letter) have unique and individual sounds even they are combined together (vowel clusters: ai, ea, ie, oo, ou, etc.), this can help them read and spell the words. Just like me, I don't major in English or language in high school. My major is Math and Science. I don't remember learning the sounds of vowel phonograms. TVP is a very short session, but I still can remember the sounds and the examples. I think oral reading is very important, so that "Farangs" (foreigners) can understand what we are saying. Also, the rules in spellings are very helpful too, because it will help learners know (decode) the words better, why certain words are spelled in different ways.

ES4: At the beginning, I don't really understand why we need to TVP in class. But the activity—writing sample words with the (corresponding) vowel sounds is quite difficult, because I don't know a lot of vocabs. But when I looked at the text book and try finding words, it felt like I can read the words as I was trying to find words with the same vowel sounds used. I think that TVP is very needed (beneficial) for students to practice reading the words. I think I can read the words aloud, and not be afraid. The teacher said, "Open your mouth." and "Do not eat the words."

ES5: For me, TVP is good. I think I can read the words better. It's good if TVP is taught before when we are in freshy, because I think it can help English majors to read better, and speak better too. Also, it can help listening to the words and vocabs. It can help in spelling too.

Analysis:

According to the students' responses on the question, TVP is beneficial in sounding the words correctly. ES1 pointed out that TVP would be of great help especially for weaker students who do not have the fundamental skills in learning the English language. Although ES1 found it boring at first, but admitted that TVP has helped her read some of the words correctly. ES1 also noted "robot-sounding" reading skills among students.

ES2 was recalling her background knowledge in learning English, but she can't remember being taught the corresponding sounds of the vowels. ES2 was also

confirming the benefits of TVP on her oral reading skills and the spelling rules that caught her attention during the intervention.

ES3 commented that teaching vowel sounds was fun, and stated that learners' do not need to memorize phonetic symbols to read the words. ES3 also noted that if students were taught that letters "have unique and individual sounds (even if they are clustered)", it will help learners to spell and read orally. ES2 also specified the importance of being understood by most foreigners when they are speaking. ES2 also found that spelling rules were very helpful in understanding why certain words were spelled in various ways.

ES4 was honest to say that she was not sure whether TVP in class would be needed. But it turned out that it was really helpful. ES4 honestly said that she did not know a lot of vocabulary words, but when asked to find words in their textbooks, she was recognizing the words with the same vowel sounds, and she confidently said, "I think I can read the words aloud, and not be afraid..."

ES5 also confirmed the benefits of TVP on her reading the words better. ES5 also proposed that TVP should be taught at the early stage of English learning, because she thinks that TVP can help English majors to read and speak better. ES5 also noted that this can help listening to the words and a great help in spelling. ES5 has touched a very crucial aspect of listening that the instructor/researcher wanted to prove using vowel phonogram instruction in improving oral reading skills and listening skills.

Question 12: Should teachers include Teaching Vowel Phonogram (TVP) sessions in reading classes?

Answers:

Experimental Group students

ES1: We can't deny that it is boring. Maybe at the beginning, why not, for review I think it's beneficial. Maybe not all reading classes because it will be boring. But I know need it to communicate. If we know this probably, we can communicate and we

can understand English easily. We can understand the “Farangs” more. (We were talking about Tukky teaching on TV with good accent but wrong pronunciation.)

ES2: Yes, why not. Some English majors still need TVP sessions. Maybe a special class.

ES3: Yes, because it’s important to communicate. And be understood.

ES4: Ka. Yes.

ES5: Yes. For communication.

Analysis:

According to the responses, all student participants agreed on having vowel phonogram instruction sessions in reading classes and most of them think that these teaching of vowel phonograms sessions are good for their communication. One student (ES1) noted that these could be boring to some English majors, specially for those who have a higher level of vowel phonogram awareness and who has a higher lever of oral reading skills. ES1 also said that if they have the knowledge of vowel phonogram sounds, they will be able to communicate and understand English more, especially talking to foreign nationals. ES2 agreed by saying “Yes! Why not?... Maybe a special class.” for its class instruction because of some English majors who lacked vowel phonogram awareness.

Question 13: Explain the importance of mastery of vowel phonograms in oral reading skills.

Answers:

Experimental Group students

ES1: I think it’s good if students will master all the vowel phonograms— it will be good for their oral reading skills and I think it will help in all areas of our English skills.

ES2: If students can master the vowel phonogram sounds, we can read better. Especially the words we don’t know. It will be easier for spelling too.

ES3: I think students can read the words orally. Maybe they will love reading.

ES4: The students will be able to orally read the words better, and they will have the confidence to speak.

ES5: I think if we can remember all the vowel phonogram sounds, we can read all the words, because we can sound them correctly. If we can read orally and speak the words correctly, we can easily be understood by other people too.

Analysis:

In the above participants' responses, mastery of the vowel phonograms was unanimously important. All students believed that mastery of the vowel phonogram sounds will be good not just on their oral reading skills, but as ES1 stated that might help students in all areas of their English skills. ES2 added the spelling skills that she might have acquired during the TVP sessions. Students ES3, ES4, and ES5 have strongly agreed on its oral reading skill benefits. ES3 added that students might have changed their attitude from disliking reading to "loving reading." ES4 and ES5 have also said about the students' confidence in speaking, and be able to understand by other people, which the researcher really thinks of targeting the basic foundational skills needed in learning English—phonological awareness—to bridge the gap and alleviate learning patterns.

Question 14: Describe the role of the teacher in an oral reading class.

role is to know the sounds and be able to teach and guide

Help students practice and encourage to read

Correct the students: honest with students

Answers:

Experimental Group students

ES1: I think that the teacher needs to know the things that he/she teaches. It's good that you know the sounds. The teacher should correct the students, but help them practice.

ES2: He/She should know how to read the words correctly. I think the teacher should practice too before teaching. And maybe should let the student practice more oral reading.

ES3: The teacher should have the knowledge of how to teach oral reading. Especially all the sounds.

ES4: I think the teacher should have the knowledge of all the sounds before teaching. They should practice first. Not eat the words. (laugh)

ES5: I think the teacher should speak clearly. The teacher should also encourage the students to speak.

Analysis:

In this query, the students described the role of the teacher in an oral reading class as knowledgeable in teaching oral classes. They pointed out of sounds (phonograms) familiarity before teaching the students. ES1 described a teacher that should correct the students (giving feedbacks), helpful and allowing students to practice. ES2 said that the oral reading teacher must know how to read the words, to practice before teaching the students. A very important role for every teacher to practice before we teach. ES3 and ES4 also talked about the knowledge of all the sounds before teaching in class. As ES4 added of not eating the words (not opening mouth when speaking), which ES5 described that teachers should be able to speak clearly, and most importantly, an encourager to all learners.

Question 15: What would you advise other struggling English majors in learning English and the usefulness of vowel phonograms?

Answers:

Experimental Group students

ES1: I think, they should make up their minds. If they think that they cannot do it, or if it's not working for them... they can find other majors that they are good at. But if they want to continue, they have to practice. (Annoyed for some students in the class, but just being honest)

ES2: Yes, maybe they should decide what career they want to have in the future, but they should practice too. Especially when they are here in this major already. Because it's not our language, but if we try, we can do it. Susu! They can attend the TVP class.

ES3: Yes. Be attentive to learn. Students should have a clear goal of what then want to do. That's why they need to practice.

ES4: Just practice and try. (used to be French major student)

ES5: Susu!

Analysis:

For this last question, a definite yes to “practice” and “Susu!” were resonating to the responses of the participants. This means that the English language learners were still in search for improvement on their oral reading skills and/or their English language skills in general. Two students have expressed their (annoyance) or maybe it’s just an honest suggestion to consider, and a point to ponder on why students were not participating. Participant ES1 stated “I think, they (English major students) should make up their minds... if they want to continue, they need to practice.” Student ES2 also added that students should have a plan of what they will do in the future, she said “they should decide what career they want...” This simply means that their fellow students were concerned with their friends too. Moreover, ES3 also made an impression that having a goal is important for one’s success, he also added he likes to practice whenever he learns a new word. All in all, students’ responses showed that lack of practice among English language learners or English majors struggle to improve their English skills as a whole.

In summary, the effects of teaching vowel phonograms have clearly manifested in both the teacher’s observation journal and the answers given by the five students who underwent the 15-item semi-structured open-ended interview questions.

The teacher’s observation journal has presented the usefulness of the vowel phonogram instructions to most students, as observable improvement was seen to most students when it comes to their oral reading skills. Spelling skills were also noticeable for the experimental group. Although the control group has shown a little to none improvement on their oral reading skills, as well as their spelling scores, this research aims to exemplify the need of timely intervention to help struggling oral readers.

The honest interview responses of the volunteer participants have evidently demonstrated the effects of teaching vowel phonograms. Vowel phonogram instruction has helped not just the struggling or weaker students but it has also helped average to high level students on pronouncing words they have not encountered

before. Students have also noted that their pronunciation has improved and their oral reading skills were better than before the teaching of the vowel phonograms. Some of the students stated that their confidence was boosted too. This gave the research a valuable outlook in pursuing oral reading skills of the students to change not just their oral reading skills but their attitude towards learning—with confidence.

4.2 Vowel Phonogram Awareness

This section presents whether vowel phonogram awareness of the fourth-year EFL learner help improve their oral reading skills.

4.1 Teacher's observation journal

Data from teacher's observation journal are categorized according to the contents needed in the research. Journal inputs regarding the teaching of vowel phonograms and the oral reading skills of the participant were the only ones given importance. Other inputs and notes were considered only to build a picture of the learning situation in class. The instructor/researcher objectively focus on the information that would alleviate students' oral reading, their study habits and their motivation in improving in all areas learning.

In terms of the oral reading skills of the students, the experimental group has shown an increase on their vowel phonogram awareness, as noted from their midterm oral presentations, whereas, the focus group has shown a little to no difference with their oral reading skills, this is due to their limited vowel phonogram awareness.

4.2 Open-ended interview questions

In this study, an open-ended interview questions were conducted to five (5) students who were purposely selected, whom the instructor/researcher believed would give honest and profound answers that would help to understand the effects of teaching vowel phonograms, and to know the current state of the fourth-year EFL learners with regards to their oral reading skills. The interview questions were

designed to avail the students' answers to the queries where they were given freedom to express more of their knowledge about the topic; according to their understanding; and the researcher can extract more by probing questions that are related to the study. The researcher encouraged the students to talk about the teaching vowel phonogram experience in class. Data obtained from the interview questions were analyzed according to the content boundaries.

To answer the second objective of whether vowel phonogram awareness helped improve oral reading skills of fourth-year students in a private university. The following questions (7-14) after the teaching of vowel phonograms will be analyzed.

Part II: Questions After Teaching Vowel Phonograms

Question 7: What was helpful in studying vowel phonograms in class?

Answers:

Experimental Group students

ES1: I think it's good! Because some words I don't know how to say (pronounce) correctly. It's like a review of the phonetics class. But we don't need to study and memorize the symbols. I thought it's boring, but it's okay, it helped me understand the vocabs more and I think my spelling is better too.

ES2: Same with me. It's okay, it's like phonetics class, but it helped me with reading and spelling.

ES3: It's good for me. It helped me read some words I don't know how to read. I think I can spell better too.

ES4: I think it's ok, I can spell and read better.

ES5: I think it helped me read the words correctly. Spelling too.

Analysis:

In this question, the students clearly showed that their vowel phonogram awareness has helped improved their oral reading skills. Pronouncing the words correctly is a sign of improvement in oral reading skills, as acclaimed by ES1. ES2,

ES3, ES4, and ES5 stated on their ability to read and spell as well. This shows that the vowel phonogram awareness can help oral reading skills.

Question 8: Tell me about the 20-minute teaching vowel phonogram sessions in class. Describe the teaching sessions.

Answers:

Experimental Group students

ES1: For me, it's ok. Especially the last part of the Teaching of Vowel Phonograms. The multi-letter vowels are very useful. Now I know that some vowel sounds even they are multi-letter can sound only one. It's very informative. I also like the spelling rules that you said.

ES2: I think same with me. It is very informative. The chart shows all the different sounds a vowel phonogram has. It helps me think of words that sounds-like and it really helps me read words orally. I can imagine the words that you are saying in class. Spelling too.

ES3: I think 20-minute teaching is short for practice, especially for the multi-letter vowels. (*Teacher: Because all I want you to know are the sounds of the vowel phonograms, so that you can connect and associate the sounds to the words with the same vowel sound. Because it's the same principle for the task, to find words with the same vowel phonogram sound.*) It's very exciting. I couldn't think of the words right away. But I think the sessions of vowel phonogram teaching helps me with reading and spelling.

ES4: I think it's ok, some vowel phonograms I don't know how to sound. It's very informative.

ES5: It's very short. I think if we can have a longer teaching sessions, and more practice to write the words. (*Teacher: But you can also practice writing the words on your own. I hope you will continue to practice the vowel phonogram sounds.*) I think so. I think it's good for spelling. And I think I need more practice.

Analysis:

The participants responses presented that vowel phonogram awareness is needed to read the words. This awareness has helped them with their spelling, and

also has helped them in finding sample words that sounds-alike. ES2 claimed that this awareness has helped her understand or better say “imagine” the words that the instructor was saying in class.

Question 9: What can you say about your awareness of the vowel phonogram (sounds) after the teaching sessions of the Vowel Phonogram? Kindly give an/a example/s.

Answers:

Experimental Group students

ES1: I think it improved my awareness of the vowel sounds. Like in Phonetics class there are symbols to help us to sound certain words with the same spelling, but now I think I have other “tactics” (techniques) in reading the words without symbols. Because I don’t need to memorize the symbols. I think I’m able to read (decode the sounds) more. That helps me in spelling the words better. *Can you give some examples?*

The student (ES1) gave the word “study” as an example, which is still one of the common mispronounced words for struggling readers. Instead of pronouncing study /stədē/, some students are still pronouncing it as stooody /stōōdē/.

Tongue = /təNG/ not /ton-gyue/

ES2: I think it helped me to think how I should sound the letters correctly and TVP has helped me with spelling. I also can understand the words better; your pronunciation of the words also Ajarn (how to read the words correctly, accent, and segmenting the words in syllables.) When you taught us how to pronounce or say the words in class, and you helped us repeat and do it orally, even in our spelling (dictation) quizzes, I began to hear the sounds of the vowels. I think it’s a good practice.

Follow up questions from the instructor/researcher:

Can you say, you can understand the pronunciation of the words well? or can you read the words better?

I think so!

Can you say, that you can hear the vowel sounds in your mind, even without speaking it orally—like silent reading?

Yes, I think so. I never thought of that.

Can you say, you can spell better? Understand vocabulary words better?

Yes! (confidently)

ES3: I can say I can really read better (orally) the words now. I hope we were taught like this before. I think students can have a better oral reading skills. (*Teacher: How about spelling?*) A little bit with my spelling. I need to practice more, but I think I can understand you more and the words too.

ES4: It helped me with spelling and reading too. I can also understand what you are saying in class. Some words I hear(d) before but I don't know how to write it, or spell it.

ES5: I can say I get a little (bit) better. Now, I know how to read and sound the letters in my mind. I need to practice more. Susu! (in Thai = Fighting!)

Analysis:

In this query, the student participants affirmed that their vowel phonogram awareness has improved not just their spelling skills, but most of all pronunciation of most words. ES1 also noted of decoding words better without needing of symbols or transliterations is an obvious feature of their improved awareness of vowel phonograms. As ES2 also gave a reflective answer on hearing the sounds of the vowels, ES2, ES3, and ES4 added that they were able to understand what the instructor/researcher was saying in class (pronunciation). This was actually a viable affirmation of what teaching vowel phonograms can happen to struggling ELLs.

Question 10.1 In a scale of 1-5 (5 as the highest), what is your vowel phonogram awareness level at the beginning of the reading course?

Question 10.2 In a scale of 1-5 (5 as the highest), what is your vowel phonogram awareness level now after the reading course?

Rubric Ranking system: 5 = very satisfied; 4 = satisfied; 3 = neither satisfied nor dissatisfied; 2 = dissatisfied, and 1 = very dissatisfied

Answers:

Experimental Group students

ES1: I think before I would say 3, but with TVP I would say 4 or 5, 4.5. (with a confident laughter)

ES2: I think it was 2, then now 4 maybe. (but the researcher thinks this student has improved a lot, basing from the dictation quizzes)

ES3: For me, I think it's just 2, but now a bit from 4. I know how to read some vocabulary words better. But studying TVP is very short. I need to practice more. But I like it for spelling. (very open to share his thoughts; eager to learn; excited with spelling quizzes; and had improved well in class)

ES4: At the beginning, I don't really understand the business words, so maybe 1, but now maybe just 3.

ES5: 1 or 0 (smiling humbly), but now 2 or 3.

Analysis:

According to the answers given by the students, and the diagram is a representation of the learners' vowel awareness before and after the vowel phonogram teaching (see Figure 4.1), it is confirmed that most of the students have better vowel phonogram awareness. Student ES2 stated that he was able to read the words better, while student ES4 said that she did not understand most of the vocabulary in business until she was able to read them correctly. The instructor/research thinks that correct reading (articulating) of the words can help students understand the word families and the definitions that would help their reading comprehension.

Question 11. In your opinion, what benefits can Teaching Vowel Phonogram (TVP) give to the young-adult English Language Learners (ELLs) in the university?

Answers:

Experimental Group students

ES1: For me, I think that TVP can help weaker students to read. Especially for those who do not have the basics of language learning. I studied in an English program in pratom and mattayom levels (elementary and high school). That's why I thought it's going to be boring, but when you let us think of the words with the vowel sounds, it was also interesting. Aside from reviewing my knowledge, I also learn to read or say some of the words correctly. I think it can help other students to read better. Not like robot. ("robot-sounding" = emphasis to the teacher's reminder not to read or sound like a robot when reading-aloud or reading orally)

ES2: I can personally say that this TVP session has helped students with their spelling skills. Like me, I was able to look back on how I learned English in school. I remember singing English nursery rhymes and the teachers were emphasizing the sounds of the letters, but I didn't know that every vowel (single or multi-letter) has its corresponding sound, if this will be taught to the students in all levels, especially those who still can't read English (and those who don't want to practice) because they don't know how to sound it correctly, this teaching can benefit them, like it benefitted me. Some words I would say I can read better, or say it orally in a near-English-sounding words. The rules in spelling are quite interesting too. Like no English word ends in "i" unless it's a borrowed or loan word: Hawaii, Ferrari, Fuji, etc.

ES3: I think it's fun to know the sounds of the letters. The vowel phonograms are important for English language learners to know. The English majors, we cannot memorize all the phonetic symbols, but if students can learn and know that the letters and specially the vowels (single or multi-letter) have unique and individual sounds even they are combined together (vowel clusters: ai, ea, ie, oo, ou, etc.), this can help them read and spell the words. Just like me, I don't major in English or language in high school. My major is Math and Science. I don't remember learning the sounds of vowel phonograms. TVP is a very short session, but I still can remember the sounds and the examples. I think oral reading is very important, so that "Farangs" (foreigners) can understand what we are saying. Also, the rules in spellings are very helpful too, because it will help learners know (decode) the words better, why certain words are spelled in different ways.

ES4: At the beginning, I don't really understand why we need to TVP in class. But the activity—writing sample words with the (corresponding) vowel sounds is quite difficult, because I don't know a lot of vocabs. But when I looked at the text book and try finding words, it felt like I can read the words as I was trying to find words with the same vowel sounds used. I think that TVP is very needed (beneficial) for students to practice reading the words. I think I can read the words aloud, and not be afraid. The teacher said, "Open your mouth." and "Do not eat the words."

ES5: For me, TVP is good. I think I can read the words better. It's good if TVP is taught before when we are in freshy, because I think it can help English majors to read better, and speak better too. Also, it can help listening to the words and vocabs. It can help in spelling too.

Analysis:

This question allows the students' vowel awareness to manifest. All students confirmed of the benefits that they have gotten through the vowel phonogram instructions in class. ES1 pointed out that TVP has helped her read some of the words correctly, she also noted "robot-sounding" reading skills among other students. ES2 also confirmed the benefits of TVP on her oral reading skills. ES3 commented that vowel phonogram awareness will help learners to spell and read orally. ES2 also specified the importance of being understood by most foreigners when they are speaking, backed by ES5 that awareness can help English majors to read and speak better. ES4 added confidence to read also shows vowel phonogram awareness can help improve oral reading skills.

Question 12: Should teachers include Teaching Vowel Phonogram (TVP) sessions in reading classes?

Answers:

Experimental Group students

ES1: We can't deny that it is boring. Maybe at the beginning, why not, for review I think it's beneficial. Maybe not all reading classes because it will be boring. But I know need it to communicate. If we know this probably, we can communicate and we

can understand English easily. We can understand the “Farangs” more. (We were talking about Tukky teaching on TV with good accent but wrong pronunciation.)

ES2: Yes, why not. Some English majors still need TVP sessions. Maybe a special class.

ES3: Yes, because it’s important to communicate. And be understood.

ES4: Ka. Yes.

ES5: Yes. For communication.

Analysis:

According to the responses, vowel phonogram awareness will enable students to communicate and understand English more, especially talking to foreign nationals. All students affirmed that vowel phonogram awareness will help students’ communications skills.

Question 13: Explain the importance of mastery of vowel phonograms in oral reading skills.

Answers:

Experimental Group students

ES1: I think it’s good if students will master all the vowel phonograms— it will be good for their oral reading skills and I think it will help in all areas of our English skills.

ES2: If students can master the vowel phonogram sounds, we can read better. Especially the words we don’t know. It will be easier for spelling too.

ES3: I think students can read the words orally. Maybe they will love reading.

ES4: The students will be able to orally read the words better, and they will have the confidence to speak.

ES5: I think if we can remember all the vowel phonogram sounds, we can read all the words, because we can sound them correctly. If we can read orally and speak the words correctly, we can easily be understood by other people too.

Analysis:

In this question, the students’ awareness of the vowel phonograms has given them an outlook of the importance of having a mastery of the vowel phonograms on

their reading skills. All students have confirmed of its importance on the learners' oral reading skills but ES1 also stated that this mastery of vowel phonogram awareness can help improve all areas of their English skills.

Question 14: Describe the role of the teacher in an oral reading class.

Answers:

Experimental Group students

ES1: I think that the teacher needs to know the things that he/she teaches. It's good that you know the sounds. The teacher should correct the students, but help them practice.

ES2: He/She should know how to read the words correctly. I think the teacher should practice too before teaching. And maybe should let the student practice more oral reading.

ES3: The teacher should have the knowledge of how to teach oral reading. Especially all the sounds.

ES4: I think the teacher should have the knowledge of all the sounds before teaching. They should practice first. Not eat the words. (laugh)

ES5: I think the teacher should speak clearly. The teacher should also encourage the students to speak.

Analysis:

For this question, the students' answers confirmed that having the awareness of the vowel phonograms is very crucial specially for oral reading teachers. The students described the roles of the teachers in oral classes to have the knowledge and a good grasp of the vowel sounds before teaching. This shows that the students phonograms awareness has improved, they were concerned of the teachers sound knowledge of vowel phonograms.

In conclusion, vowel phonogram awareness is very much helpful in improving the oral reading skills of the fourth-year students in the private university. The students included three most important thing that showed their vowel awareness

has improvement on their pronunciation skills and spelling skills, the importance of the mastery vowel phonograms, its benefits for ELLs on their communication skills.

For the students' pronunciation skills, all participants attested that vowel phonogram awareness helped them sound the words and pronounce the words better. Where one student noted that she was able to "imagine" the words that the instructor was saying in class.

The student participants were also able to lay down the importance of having the mastery of all the vowel phonograms in ELLs oral reading skills. They point out that this skill enabled them to sound the letters correctly as well as read the words orally.

Lastly, the students in the experimental group have also confirmed of the benefits of vowel phonogram awareness on their communication skills that they have gotten through the vowel phonogram instructions in class. Vowel phonogram awareness skills has enabled the students to communicate and understand English more, especially talking to foreign nationals. The experimental group affirmed that vowel phonogram awareness has helped students' communications skills. This shows that the students phonograms awareness has improved, and that this awareness is a viable reason of ELLs oral reading skills.

Chapter 5

Conclusion and Recommendations

In this chapter, the major findings of the study are reviewed and the significant roles of vowel phonogram instructions to improve the oral reading skills of fourth year students and the awareness level of the vowel sounds whether it aided in improving the oral reading skills of the EFL learners at a private university. These are given emphasis in the following sections: conclusion, discussion and recommendations.

5.1 Conclusion

This study was conducted in a multi-cultural private university in Pathum Thani, Thailand. The objectives of the research were to investigate the effects of teaching vowel phonograms to improve the oral reading skills of fourth-year EFL students in a private university; and to find out whether the vowel phonogram awareness of the students helped improved their oral reading skills as well.

This study was done in a qualitative research approach. The research instruments used were: teacher's observation journal and a 15-item semi-structured, open ended interview questions. The teacher's observational journal focused on the 5-week vowel phonogram instructions. The interview questions were also divided into two parts: questions 1-6 are queries before the teaching of vowel phonograms; and questions 7-15 are queries after the teaching of vowel phonograms. These were analyzed using descriptive analysis. Participants were 41 English major students who were enrolled in Business Reading course, semester 1 of the academic year 2019. The research findings clearly showed the effects of teaching vowel phonogram is relatively significant to the experimental group who have received a 20-minute instruction for 5 weeks than the control group who attended a regular lecture class.

5.1.1 The Effects of Teaching Vowel Phonograms

The effects of teaching vowel phonograms have clearly demonstrated a visible evidence of alleviating oral reading skills Thai EFL learners in the university. Both the teacher's observation journal and the answers given by the five students who underwent the 15-item semi-structured open-ended interview questions detailed its benefits.

5.1.1.1 Teacher's observation journal

Based on the teacher's observation journal, the effectiveness of teaching vowel phonogram was evident during and after the experimentation. This could be due to a gradual awareness of vowel phonograms during the instruction sessions and their learning expectations of finding ways in improve their oral reading skills. The experimental focus group has shown a promising change in their oral reading skills, their pronunciations, as well as their spelling skills; while the control group has little to none, although the instructor/researcher was also trying to give pronunciation practices.

5.1.1.2 Open-ended Interview questions

Research results from the open-ended interview questions presented a vital evidence of the effectiveness of teaching vowel phonograms to improve oral reading skills of fourth-year EFL students in a private university. Aside from the importance of learning how to sound-out the vowel phonograms, the students found that this approach were able to help their oral reading skills improve. The participants also added that learning to sound-out words correctly in a manner where they would be understood is quite uplifting. The students also commented on having confidence with their spelling skills.

The truthful interview responses of the volunteer participants have evidently demonstrated the effects of teaching vowel phonograms. Vowel phonogram instruction has helped not just the struggling or weaker students but it has also helped average to high level students on pronouncing words they have not encountered

before. Students have also noted that their pronunciation has improved and their oral reading skills were better than before the teaching of the vowel phonograms. Some of the students stated that their confidence was boosted too. This gave the research a valuable outlook in pursuing oral reading skills of the students to change not just their oral reading skills but their attitude towards learning—with confidence.

The questions were objectively answered by the 5 student participants, showing a unanimous response of the effectiveness of teaching vowel phonograms especially for those who have missed the basic foundational knowledge of learning the English language.

5.1.2 Vowel Phonogram Awareness

To answer the second research question whether vowel phonogram awareness has improved oral reading skills of Thai EFL learners in the university. The following outlines the details:

5.1.2.1 Teacher's Observation journal

Based on the teacher's journal inputs regarding the students' vowel phonogram awareness, research results clearly showed that the teaching vowel phonograms to the experimental focus group has improved their oral reading skills, this is due to the increase of students' awareness on sounding-out the vowel phonograms correctly, this awareness was manifested through their midterm oral presentation project. The students were able to apply the vowel phonogram sounds in their presentations. Group interviews for teacher's observation journal can attest to the improvement on the learners oral reading skills. While the control group has shown a little to none in improving their oral reading skills.

5.1.2.2 Open-ended interview questions

Vowel phonogram awareness were perceived by 5 students as a tool in improving oral reading skills of EFL learners. The students have detailed three main

benefits that they have obtained when they acquired vowel phonogram awareness. First, they have attested that their pronunciation and spelling skills have improved. At the beginning most students were getting low spelling scores in class, but when they have learned of how vowel was sounded (single or multi-letter) they were able to get a firm understanding and put the letters into writing.

Another benefit of vowel phonogram awareness that the students acquired was the importance of mastering the vowel sounds. Results from all 5 students found that this skill will help EFL learners read words that they haven't encountered. The participants also said that without mastering all the vowel sounds, they won't be able to sound the words correctly and read the words orally.

Last but not the least, is one of the most important benefit of vowel phonogram awareness according to the students, communication skills. The student participants claimed that vowel phonogram awareness is a key for communication and understanding English more. Ability to communicate is what most learners aimed to fulfill.

In conclusion, the study reveals that teaching vowel phonogram can help EFL students in cultivating their oral reading skills. The study also shows that there were still areas in EFL learning that need basic foundational skills instructions. Although the results came from only a few numbers of participants, but the study may have covered a very significant area in EFL that needs to be carefully investigated. The research also covered the importance of having vowel phonogram awareness in EFL learning. As proposed by the results, vowel phonogram awareness skill is very important learning the English language or in learning any other language.

5.2 Discussions

The findings revealed that teaching vowel phonogram has its effects to the oral reading skills of the student participants in the experimental focus group, who

have experienced a 20-minute vowel phonogram instruction for 5 weeks. A probable change is evident during and after the experimentation. Although a gradual awareness of vowel phonograms during the instruction sessions and the students learning expectations have given them motivation in finding ways to improve their oral reading skills. As Piaget's (1936) theory of cognitive stages, where he proposed of enabling learners to do things with new objects, or new things, or with the new knowledge being acquired. The experimental focus group has also shown a prominent change in their oral reading skills, their pronunciations, as well as their spelling skills. The student from the control group has shown little to none when it comes to their oral reading skills, this due to a limited oral reading practice in a regular lecture-class, and they were not given a vowel phonogram instruction. This was also Piaget's (1936) way of letting the learner recognize new concepts from simple to complex patterns, experience learning and integration of these concepts to be used in a more sophisticated forms of knowledge.

The researcher knew that fourth-year EFL learners had their phonetics background, so, the study only aims to understand whether vowel phonograms instruction would help learners in improving their oral reading skills, by sound recognition instruction. Although the study conducted by Rauth & Stuart (2008) on teaching sound recognition or phonemic awareness was to kindergarten and first grade students, and not university students, the researcher found that this basic sound recognition—including teaching vowel phonograms in class—was needed for higher reading skills. This study also agreed on Rauth & Stuart (2008) that phonemic awareness can be taught to struggling adult learners, just making sure of adjusting instructional intensity of the range, task, length and the type of response according to the levels of the students. This study also confirmed that sound recognition, as student participants have recognized can also be trained for improving both listening and speaking skills.

In a study conducted by Stuart (1999), children who accelerated on their learning were because of their phonemic awareness and phonics skills, this has yielded significant results on the learners reading and writing skills. Although most

studies were done on young learners, the researcher thinks that the goal of putting learners into phonemic awareness instruction such as teaching vowel phonograms can radically improve learners reading, speaking and other missing foundational skills among university EFL learners. The objective is to train learners to sound out words and apply them into reading and other oral skills. This study was not limiting teaching approaches to just sound recognition, but placing what is best for the present need of the learners, as some might argue about its usefulness.

This study found that confidence and motivation to speak were also recognized by students upon teaching of vowel phonograms and gaining vowel phonogram awareness. As confidence and motivation to speak were triggered, learning would be at hand. Lekwilai (2016) study on using Reader's Theater to improve oral fluency of university students promoted positive effects on the students reading skills and collaboration skills. When students enjoyed performing and reading in front of other people, it is a sign of confidence. If basic oral reading such as good pronunciation, was attained whatever methods educators used, active participation follows. This study confirmed that student participants have gained confidence mostly on their oral skills. In which relates to the researcher's findings on improved pronunciation skills that were acquired by the 5 student participants who were interviewed, the ability to sound and read the words correctly and orally added confidence and motivation to EFL learners to strive more.

Based on Rasinski's (2004) three dimensions of reading fluency, this study also confirmed that students who have a grip of word recognition accuracy, will also have a grip on automaticity, and as the automatic processing increases through repeated readings and activities, prosodic reading follows. This what the 5 student participants who attended vowel phonogram instructions mentioned, that after teaching vowel phonograms, they have a good grip of the vowel sound which they stated has helped improved their oral reading skills. The researcher has continually advocated EFL learners to have a mastery of word recognition accuracy.

Research results from the open-ended interview questions presented a vital evidence of the effectiveness of teaching vowel phonograms to improve oral reading skills of fourth-year EFL students in a private university. Aside from the importance of learning how to sound-out the vowel phonograms, the students found that this approach were able to help their oral reading skills improve. The participants also added that learning to sound-out words correctly in a manner where they would be understood is quite uplifting. The students also commented on having confidence with their spelling skills.

The results presented above show strong, specific, and significant positive effects of teaching vowel phonograms to improve the oral reading skills of fourth-year EFL learners in a private university. The 20-minute intervention of vowel phonogram instruction had given students the opportunity to acquire missing bits and pieces on their reading fluency. Rauth & Stuart (2008) also proposed on having short daily instructions of 1-2 phoneme awareness skills, to make learners master the sounds that would help them in reading.

This study found that pronunciation was improved after acquiring vowel phonogram awareness. In a study conducted by Sahatsathatsana (2017) on the pronunciation problems of Thai students learning English phonetics, found that phonetic ability of Thai students and the sound system difference between English and Thai were two factors why learners continue to have pronunciation difficulties. This study confirms that learners lacking phonetic ability or phonological awareness which includes vowel sound awareness, may hinder their oral skills, specifically their pronunciation skills. In this study, the findings revealed an undeniable fact that teaching vowel phonograms and the awareness of the vowel phonograms not only improved oral reading skills of Thai EFL students in a private university, but also the learners' pronunciation and spelling skills, as well as their confidence in speaking and communication.

The study about speaking skills problems among Thai students were questioned by Sasum & Weeks (2018) on their study Why Thai students cannot speak English? Here, they have outlined the problems; 1) students do not speak English

because they do not understand what others say; 2) the students also do not have the chance in speaking English even in an international environment; 3) their lack of vocabulary knowledge, and 4) some still do not know how to make a complete sentence in English. With these factors affecting Thai students from speaking, the researcher is suggesting a timely assessment whether teaching vowel phonograms will bridge the gap of early literacy skills that Thai learners might have missed, in connection to their findings that some students still do not know how to create an English sentence. Sasum & Weeks commented that teachers have the most influence in the classroom and that means preparation is a must with engaging activities that the learners can practice, which the researcher totally agreed on, however, the ability for teachers to assess learner is also important, especially if learners need the fundamental knowledge such as phonemic awareness needed to learn the English language.

In addition, the effects of vowel phonogram teaching were so vital that students gained confidence on their oral reading skills. As Yen (2004) also confirmed that Taiwanese pupils who attended an intensive phonics instruction demonstrated a positive result that displayed the ability of these pupils to read independently and increase their confidence, learning interest were also exhibited. The researcher also backed Juel (1988) study with regards to the early acquisition of decoding skills that leads to wider reading skills, which in turns can provide opportunities for growth in vocabulary concepts and general knowledge for EFL learners in the university. It is a crucial for learners who have missed early language acquisition skills needed for higher learning.

In the research done by Ibrahim (2016), he mentioned using the Logic of English Approach to improve oral reading fluency among Saudi EFL students in the university. In this study, the researcher also used the Logic of English Approach, but limited to the teaching of vowel phonograms, in order to improve oral reading skills of fourth-year EFL students in the university. The researcher also created the lessons based on the Logic of English on single and multi-vowel sounds, because the researcher found the Logic of English as a practical tool in teaching vowel phonograms, aside from the spelling rules presented in the book that the researcher

found helpful. The researcher agreed on what Ibrahim (2016) found of its effectiveness in teaching oral reading fluency to EFL students, but he pointed out that the teacher should be able to assess the learners' need at an early stage of the students' learning, so that they may be able to prepare appropriate intervention program. Ibrahim added that the downside of The Logic of English Approach was that the approach entails to use its series of books and materials. That might be the goal of The Logic of English founder, as they try to scaffold learners from their own perspective, but the researcher thinks that educators and especially teachers should have a vision on what learners aims to be.

This study presented that most EFL learners can benefit from the concepts and knowledge taught using vowel phonograms, and the results show that this kind of intervention can do so without the necessity for a small group. It remains to be seen whether the understanding and knowledge of how the alphabet functions to represent spoken language gained by the students in 5-week intervention will be sufficient to enable them to develop self-teaching printed word-recognition systems.

In summary, teaching vowel phonogram in class even for a short period of time promotes vowel sound awareness needed to improve oral reading skills of EFL learners. As this research promotes sound judgment among teachers, this study backs what has been proven by research that acquiring basic fundamental knowledge in language learning is significant to its acquisition.

5.3 Recommendations

This study was conducted to investigate the effects of teaching vowel phonograms and whether vowel phonogram awareness have helped improve the oral reading skills of Thai EFL learners in the university. Having observed the effects of vowel phonograms instruction for a short period of time, and the positive outcome from the experimental group and the interview responses of the 5 volunteer student participants, the researcher suggests:

A further study of teaching vowel phonograms and its correlation between pronunciation and other language skills, as well as using more participants.

For the teachers and other educators, to evaluate their teaching styles and the teaching techniques that they are using in the classroom, in order to assess its appropriateness and relevance for the time being. Also, determine whether the students lack basic foundational skills in language learning—like vowel phonogram instruction—use this teaching technique especially for struggling students.

For students, to create their awareness of the basic foundational skills needed in leaning language.

Lastly, for policy makers and other educational institutions, to support and give emphasis to this advocacy of teaching basic foundational knowledge of phonological skills and vowel phonograms instructions to bridge the gap in EFL language learning.



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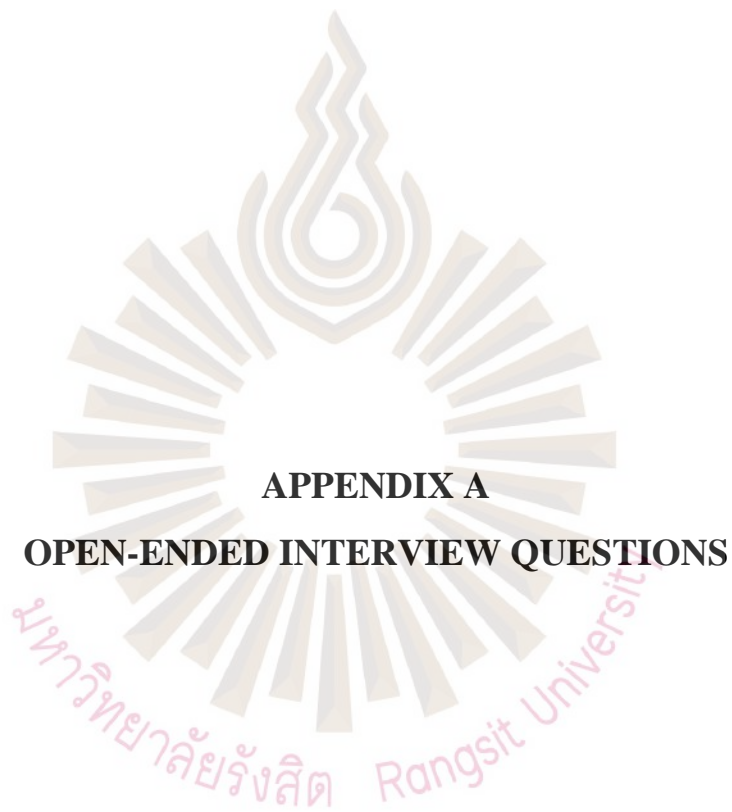
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APPENDIX A

OPEN-ENDED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

มหาวิทยาลัยรังสิต Rangsit University

15-item Interview Questions

No. 1-6 **Questions before Vowel Phonogram Teaching**

- 1 How did you decide to study English major?
- 2 What do you think of Business Reading class?
- 3 Describe the students' oral reading problems, in class, and/or in general.
- 4 How do you interpret the vowel phonogram awareness of students in class and/or in general?
- 5 What aspects of your oral reading skill do you struggle with?
- 6 In your opinion, what is/are the importance of oral reading skills. Explain your answer.

No.7-15 **Questions after the teaching of vowel phonograms**

- 7 What it is like studying vowel phonograms in class?
- 8 Tell me about the 20-minute teaching vowel phonogram sessions in class. Describe the teaching sessions.
- 9 What can you say about your awareness of the vowel phonogram (sounds) after the teaching sessions of the Vowel Phonogram? Please give some examples.
- 10.1 In a scale of 1-5 (5 as the highest), what is your vowel phonogram awareness level at the beginning of the reading course?
- 10.2 In a scale of 1-5 (5 as the highest), what is your vowel phonogram awareness level now after the reading course?
- 11 In your opinion, what benefits can Teaching Vowel Phonogram (TVP) give to the young-adult English Language Learners (ELLs) in the university?
- 12 Should teachers include Teaching Vowel Phonogram (TVP) sessions in reading classes?
- 13 Explain the importance of mastery of vowel phonograms in oral reading skills.
- 14 Describe the role of the teacher in an oral reading class.

- 15 What would you advise other struggling English majors in learning English?



The image features a large, faint watermark of the Rangsit University logo in the background. The logo consists of a central flame-like symbol above a circular emblem with radiating lines, and the university's name in Thai and English below it.

APPENDIX B

INDEX OF ITEM-OBJECTIVE CONGRUENCE (IOC) FORM

INDEX OF ITEM-OBJECTIVE CONGRUENCE (IOC) FORM

“A study of the effects of teaching vowel phonograms to improve oral reading skills of the fourth-year students at a private university”

by Catherine De Guzman-Laddawan

Objective: This 15-item open-ended interview question form is used: (1) to investigate the effects of teaching vowel phonograms to improve oral reading skills; and (2) to find out the vowel phonograms awareness of the fourth-year students in a private university. The interview was conducted among five students who were purposively selected in the study.

Interview Form					
The expert is requested to examine each item of the research instrument for its content validity.			Expert's Review		
Interview Questions			Agree	Not sure	Disagree
			+1	0	-1
No. 1-6	Questions before the teaching of vowel phonograms				
1	How did you decide to study English major?				
2	What do you think of Reading class?				
3	Describe the students' oral reading problems, in class, and/or in general.				
4	How do you interpret the vowel phonogram awareness of students in class and/or in general?				
5	What aspects of your oral reading skill do you struggle with?				
6	In your opinion, what is/are the importance of oral reading skills. Explain your answer.				
No.7-15	Questions after the teaching of vowel phonograms				
7	What has helpful in studying vowel phonograms in class?				
8	Tell me about the 20-minute teaching vowel phonogram sessions in class. Describe the teaching sessions.				
9	What can you say about your awareness of the vowel phonogram (sounds) after the teaching sessions of the Vowel Phonogram? Please give some examples.				
10.1	In a scale of 1-5 (5 as the highest), what is your vowel phonogram awareness level at the beginning of the reading course?				
10.2	In a scale of 1-5 (5 as the highest), what is your vowel phonogram awareness level now after the reading course?				

11	In your opinion, what benefits can Teaching Vowel Phonogram (TVP) give to the young-adult English Language Learners (ELLs) in the university?			
12	Should teachers include Teaching Vowel Phonogram (TVP) sessions in reading classes?			
13	Explain the importance of mastery of vowel phonograms in oral reading skills.			
14	Describe the role of the teacher in an oral reading class.			
15	What would you advise other struggling English majors in learning English?			



The image features a large, faint watermark of the Rangsit University logo in the background. The logo consists of a stylized flame or sunburst at the top, a circular emblem with radiating lines in the middle, and the university's name in Thai and English at the bottom.

APPENDIX C
IOC MARKS FOR INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

IOC MARKS FOR INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Question No.	Expert 1	Expert 2	Expert 3	Score
1	1	0	1	0.67
2	1	0	1	0.67
3	1	1	0	0.67
4	1	0	1	0.67
5	1	1	1	1
6	1	1	1	1
7	1	0	-1	0
8	1	1	1	1
9	1	1	1	1
10	1	1	1	1
11	1	1	1	1
12	1	1	1	1
13	1	1	1	1
14	1	1	1	1
15	1	1	1	1
IOC =				0.84

The image features a large, faint watermark of the Rangsit University logo in the background. The logo consists of a stylized flame or sunburst shape at the top, a circular emblem in the center, and a semi-circular arrangement of rays below. The text 'มหาวิทยาลัยรังสิต Rangsit University' is written in a semi-circle at the bottom of the logo.

APPENDIX D

INVITATION LETTER FOR IOC EXPERT



มหาวิทยาลัยรังสิต Rangsit University T. (66) 2997 2200-30
 เมืองเอก อ.พหลโยธิน Muang-Ake, Phaholyothin Rd. F. (66) 2791 5757
 จ.ปทุมธานี 12000 Pathumthani 12000, Thailand E. info@rsu.ac.th

STC 4800/852

1 August 2019

Ref: Invitation for you to be our IOC (Item Objective Congruence) expert

Dear Dr. Pannarat Wansavatkul

Lecturer

Suryadhep Teachers College, Rangsit University

Our student, Mrs. CATHERINE LADDAWAN , who is studying in the final year of Master of Education (Bilingual Education), has completed her Thesis Proposal Defense since May 2016. The research title is "A Study of the Effects of Teaching Vowel Phonograms to improve Oral Reading Skills of the Fourth-Year students in a Private University". Currently, she is in the middle of the instrument design phase.

Thus, I would like to invite you to be our IOC (Item Objective Congruence) expert in assessing the validity of the instruments. The package has been attached herewith.

I truly appreciate your kind support in this matter and hope that you will accept my invitation.

Sincerely yours,

(Assistant Professor Dr. Anchalee Chayanuvat)

Dean of Suryadhep Teachers College

Rangsit University



มหาวิทยาลัยรังสิต	Rangsit University	T. (66) 2997 2200-30
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จ.ปทุมธานี 12000	Pathumthani 12000, Thailand	E. info@rsu.ac.th

STC 4800/851

1 August 2019

Ref: Invitation for you to be our IOC (Item Objective Congruence) expert

Dear Dr. Dorota Domalewska
 Assistant Professor
 War Studies University, Warsaw Poland

Our student, Mrs. CATHERINE LADDAWAN , who is studying in the final year of Master of Education (Bilingual Education), has completed her Thesis Proposal Defense since May 2016. The research title is "A Study of the Effects of Teaching Vowel Phonograms to improve Oral Reading Skills of the Fourth-Year students in a Private University". Currently, she is in the middle of the instrument design phase.

Thus, I would like to invite you to be our IOC (Item Objective Congruence) expert in assessing the validity of the instruments. The package has been attached herewith.

I truly appreciate your kind support in this matter and hope that you will accept my invitation.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Anchalee Chayanuvat'. The signature is written in a cursive style.

(Assistant Professor Dr. Anchalee Chayanuvat)
 Dean of Suryadhep Teachers College
 Rangsit University



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STC 4800/849

1 August 2019

Ref: Invitation for you to be our IOC (Item Objective Congruence) expert

Dear Dr. Rebecca Webb

Instructor, English Department

Faculty of Liberal Arts, Rangsit University

Our student, Mrs. CATHERINE LADDAWAN , who is studying in the final year of Master of Education (Bilingual Education), has completed her Thesis Proposal Defense since May 2016. The research title is "A Study of the Effects of Teaching Vowel Phonograms to improve Oral Reading Skills of the Fourth-Year students in a Private University". Currently, she is in the middle of the instrument design phase.

Thus, I would like to invite you to be our IOC (Item Objective Congruence) expert in assessing the validity of the instruments. The package has been attached herewith.

I truly appreciate your kind support in this matter and hope that you will accept my invitation.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading 'Anchalee Chayanuvat'. The signature is written in a cursive style.

(Assistant Professor Dr. Anchalee Chayanuvat)

Dean of Suryadhep Teachers College

Rangsit University

APPENDIX E
LESSON PLAN



Lesson Plan: Teaching Vowel Phonograms to Improve Oral Reading Skills of Fourth-Year Students at a Private University

Vowel Phonogram

Aa Ee Ii Oo Uu Yy

Aims of the Lesson

- To teach students the vowel phonograms (sounds);
- to help learners distinguish and determine the relationship between single or multi-letter phonograms and its sounds;
- to sound-out the vowel phonograms in a near native sound-like pronunciation; and
- to practice students to use these relationships to decode and improve oral reading skills.

Duration: 20-minutes teaching per 3-hour class for 5 weeks

Definition of terms

vowel = is a sound that is produce when the mouth is open and the sound is not blocked, by the lips, teeth, or tongue; the sounds can be sustained by singing, and controlled for volume; the openings form syllables. (a, e, i, o, u, and y)

phonogram = a picture that represents the sound (see Table 1 and Table 2)

Teaching tools

1. Phonogram charts (single letter and multi-letter phonograms, sounds, and examples) “Uncovering the Logic of English—A common sense approach in Teaching Reading, Literacy and Spelling” book by Dr. Denise Eide (2012)
2. Activity practice sheets

Weekly Lesson Plan for Teaching Vowel Phonograms

Week 1 Phonograms a and e & i and y

Objectives:

- To teach students the different phonogram sounds of “a” and “e” and phonograms “i” and “y”;
- To have the students sound-out and pronounce the phonograms to hear the distinction; and
- To have the students write words with “a” and “e” and “i” and “y” phonogram sounds and read them orally.

Learning outcomes:

- Students will learn that when they see “a” in written words; they will be able to sound the phonogram accordingly; note: phonogram “a” has 3 distinct sound.
- Students will learn that when they see “e” in written words; they will be able to sound the phonogram accordingly. (Note: phonogram “e” has 2 distinct sound)
- Students will learn that when they see “i” in written words; they will be able to sound the phonogram accordingly; note: phonogram “i” has 3 distinct sound.
- Students will learn that when they see “y” in written words; they will be able to sound the phonogram accordingly. (Note: phonogram “y” has 3 distinct sound)
- Students will be able to read the words orally.

Task: Listen. Practice the phonogram sounds. Write sample words. Read the words orally.

Week 2 Phonograms o and u

Objectives:

- To teach students the different phonogram sounds of “o” and “u”;
- To have the students sound-out and pronounce the phonograms to hear the distinction; and
- To have the students write words with “o” and “u” phonogram sounds and read them orally.

Learning outcomes:

- Students will learn that when they see “o” in written words; they will be able to sound the phonogram accordingly; note: phonogram “o” has 3 distinct sound.

- Students will learn that when they see “u” in written words; they will be able to sound the phonogram accordingly. (Note: phonogram “u” has 4 distinct sound)
- Students will be able to read the words orally.

Task: Listen. Practice the phonogram sounds. Write sample words. Read the words orally.

Week 3 Phonograms ai, au, aw, ay, and augh

Objectives:

- To teach students the different phonogram sounds of “ai, au, aw, ay, and augh”
- To have the students sound-out and pronounce the phonograms to hear the distinction; and
- To have the students write words with “ai, au, aw, ay, and augh” phonogram sounds and read them orally.

Learning outcomes:

- Students will learn that when they see “ai, au, aw, ay, and augh” in written words; they will be able to sound the phonogram accordingly; (Note: phonogram distinct sounds).
- Students will be able to read the words orally.

Task: Listen. Practice the phonogram sounds. Write sample words. Read the words orally.

Week 4 Phonograms ea, ee, ew, ey, and eigh Phonograms ia, and igh

Objectives:

- To teach students the different phonogram sounds of “ea, ee, ew, ey, and eigh”
- To teach students the different phonogram sounds of “ia, and igh”
- To have the students sound-out and pronounce the phonograms to hear the distinction; and
- To have the students write words of the phonogram sounds and read them orally.

Learning outcomes:

- Students will learn that when they see “ea, ee, ew, ey, and eigh”
- in written words; they will be able to sound the phonogram accordingly; (Note: phonogram “ea, ee, ew, ey, and eigh” have distinct sounds).

- Students will learn that when they see “ia, and igh” in written words; they will be able to sound the phonogram accordingly. (Note: phonogram “ia, and igh” have distinct sounds).
- Students will be able to read the words orally.

Task: Listen. Practice the phonogram sounds. Write sample words. Read the words orally.

Week 5 Phonograms oa, oe, oi, oo, ou, ow, oy, and ough
 Phonograms ui

Objectives:

- To teach students the different phonogram sounds of “oa, oe, oi, oo, ou, ow, oy, and ough” and “ui”;
- To have the students sound-out and pronounce the phonograms to hear the distinction; and
- To have the students write words with “oa, oe, oi, oo, ou, ow, oy, and ough” and “ui” phonogram sounds and read them orally.

Learning outcomes:

- Students will learn that when they see “oa, oe, oi, oo, ou, ow, oy, and ough” in written words; they will be able to sound the phonogram accordingly; (Note: phonogram “oa, oe, oi, oo, ou, ow, oy, and ough” have distinct sounds).
- Students will learn that when they see “ui” in written words; they will be able to sound the phonogram accordingly. (Note: phonogram “ui” has its distinct sound)
- Students will be able to read the words orally.

Task: Listen. Practice the phonogram sounds. Write sample words. Read the words orally.

Table 1. Single-Letter vowel

Phonogram	Sound	Examples			
a	/ă-ā-ä/	mat	table	father	
e	/ě-ē/	tent	be		
i	/ĭ-ī-ē/	it	ivy	stadium	
o	/ō-ō-oo/	on	go	do	
u	/ŭ-ū-oo-ü/	up	pupil	flute ¹	put
y	/ĭ-ī-ē/	gym	by	baby	

Table 2. Multi-Letter Vowel

Phonogram	Sound	Examples			
ai	/ā/	laid			
au	/ä/	author			
aw	/ä/	saw			
ay	/ā/	play			
ee	/ē/	tree			
ie	/ē/	piece			
igh	/ī/	night			
oa	/ō/	coat			
oe	/ō-oo/	toe	shoe		
oi	/oi/	boil			
oy	/oi/	boy			
ui	/oo/	fruit			
augh*	/ä/	taught			
eigh	/ā-ī/	eight	height		
ew	/oo-ū/	flew	few		
ey	/ā-ē/	they	key		
ow	/ow-ō/	plow	snow		
ea	/ē-ě-ā/	eat	bread	steak	
ei	/ā-ē-ī/	rein	protein	feisty	
oo	/oo-ü-ō/	food	took	floor	
ou	/ow-ō-oo-ü/	house	soul	group	country
ough*	/ō-ō-oo-ow/	thought	though	through	bough

Note to the teachers:

Practice the phonogram sounds. Have a grip of all the sounds. Prepare as many example words as possible; check words in the class reading passages. Be patient with students. Let them hear the sounds silently and orally. Explain how the brain processes the sounds. Practice. Practice and practice. Enjoy teaching!



The logo of Rangsit University is a circular emblem. At the top is a stylized flame or sunburst. Below it, a series of radiating lines form a larger circle. The text 'มหาวิทยาลัยรังสิต Rangsit University' is written in a pinkish-red font along the bottom curve of the emblem.

APPENDIX F
VOCABULARY LIST

มหาวิทยาลัยรังสิต Rangsit University

Vocabulary List

	Inspired	Considerably
Unit 2 - Leadership	Crucial objectives	Recruit
Leadership	Strategic planning	Discontent
Terrorize	Competitors	Compromise
Indispensable	Legislation	Subsidiary
Harassment	Redefine	Compensation
Deadline	Apparel	
Hierarchy	Campaign	Unit 5 & 6
Tangible	attributes	decades
Impossible	Decision	Lobbying
Neurotic		Opponents
Fragile	Unit 4 - Pay	Defenders
Coaches	dilemma	Government
Liaison	Golden Parachute	Precautions
Presentation	Committee	Drilling sites
	Outrageous	Construction
Unit 3 - Strategy	Millionaire	Environmentalists
permission	Limbo	Consortium
Galvanize	Lavish	Threatening
Designers	Remuneration	Argument
Goddess	Boardroom	Forcefully
Achilles Heel	Breakdown	Aspirations
Competition	Guaranteed bonus	Guarantee
Forecast	Criticism	Advertisement
Potentially cheaper	Unacceptable	Barrier
Approach	Court case	Commercial veterans
Reenergize		Old-fashioned
		Responsibility

Vocabulary Quiz

1

customized

Flattened hierarchy

Standardized products

Bureaucracy

Durable

Freelance

Assets

Shares

Merger

Entrepreneur

2

refuge

Redundant

Upswing

Head hunter

Indispensable

Autonomy

Tasks

Motivate

Appraise

Turnover

3

founders

Apparel

Turnoff

Strategy

Galvanize

Opportunity

Campaign

Attributes

Pitch

Diverse

4

in limbo

Pension

Cause outrage

Fat cats

Golden parachute

Damages

Reject

Go under

Breakdown

5

upstream

Greens

Loan

Consortium

Downstream

Negotiation

Estimate

Tests

Reserves

Revenues

6

brand

Aspirations

Cynical

Corrupt

Bombarded

Premium

Logo

Brand

Benefit

Dominates

7

surplus

Downsize

Shortage

Backlash

Layoffs

Outsource

Productivity

Database

Saving

Offshoring

Biography

Name	Catherine De Guzman-Laddawan
Date of birth	10 January 1975
Place of birth	Bay Laguna, Philippines
Education background	Technological University of the Philippines Bachelor in Computer Science, 2001
Address	Don Mueang, Bangkok 10210, Thailand
Email Address	laddawan.cathy@gmail.com
Place of work	Faculty of Liberal Arts, Rangsit University
Work position	Lecturer, English Department

