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Using an Animation Movie to Develop Ability of Stress in English of Primary School Students

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Abstract

The study employed an animation movie to develop the ability of stress in English of EFL students. The participants of the study were 30 Grade 5 students in a primary school in Thailand. The research instruments comprised the animation movie titled “Frozen,” syllable stress exercises, and an oral test which acted as a pre and posttest. The garnered data were examined and expressed as means, standard deviations and t-test. The interview information was analyzed through content analysis. At the 0.01 statistical significance level, the results of this study demonstrated that the syllable stress posttest score ($M=16.30$, $S.D.=8.77$) was significantly higher than the pretest score ($M=14.33$, $S.D.=7.26$). This signifies that students could pronounce words more accurately. Furthermore, the interview results suggested that the animation movie could create much more relaxing mood in the classroom, which remarkably contributed to language learning. All in all, it indicated that the animation movie was able to effectively develop the ability of stress in English in a pleasant classroom.

Keywords: Animation Movie, Pronunciation, Stress, Students

1. Introduction

English is considered as the most important international language because it is widely used in the age of globalization, which is better known as the borderless world for people to communicate and exchange information with each other (Kraikratok 2011). English is, therefore, essential in communication for economy, politics, culture and occupation. In addition, English is an important tool for academic and professional advancement since various types of media are in English. As such, the ability to use English effectively is very significant (Khothanam 2016).

Thailand is one of the countries that has made a strong commitment to teaching English which can be seen from the 8th edition of the National Education Development Plan (1997-2001) to the present one (2017-2036), in which the government has designated English as one of the eight basic subject groups that everyone must learn (National

Education Development Plan, 2017-2036). Learning English requires thinking processes and practices of listening, speaking, reading and writing skills, causing the current English language teaching management to be adjusted by the application of new teaching materials in the digital age in order to stimulate students' interest and to promote the organization of teaching and learning activities in English in accordance with the objectives of teaching and learning management (Damnet 2018).

Although Thai education provides teaching and learning of English as a foreign language, and English is widely acknowledged in Thailand as an essential topic taught from kindergarten to the highest education level, some unsatisfactory results were found in English instruction due to teachers' teaching behaviors that focused mostly on language forms rather than language use (Kraikratok 2011). Furthermore, it has been frequently asserted that English instruction in Thailand has been a failure. Students in schools learn English for more than ten years, but the majority of them are unable to successfully explain their thoughts or simply speak in English on a daily basis (Noom-ura 2013).

When studying English, students are required to acquire a number of knowledge, for example, vocabulary and grammar in order to listen, speak, read and write in English. Students must be able to use structures and words appropriately. Proper pronunciation is also required for effective communication (Ellis 1997). Speakers with poor pronunciation, according to Gilakjani (2011), will fail to communicate successfully since words would be incomprehensible to listeners. Good pronunciation is the cornerstone of efficient spoken communication (Garriagues 1999). Individuals who communicate clearly and accurately should have no problem getting messages across to intended audiences. On the other hand, miscommunication can arise when words are conveyed or stressed incorrectly.

Several studies involving EFL students' pronunciation (Rasyid 2016; Sahatsathasana 2017; Widyaningsih 2017; Rahmawati & Ratmanida 2020; Juma 2021) reveal that EFL students encountered problems when pronouncing English sounds because of the influences of their mother tongue. Thai students, for example, have a hard time speaking English, especially when it comes to pronunciation (Ratchawiang and Sornsuwit 2013). This is due to the fact that the Thai language has a completely different sound system from English. English is a language with stress on words or sentences while the Thai language emphasizes every word on its tonal base, so it is difficult for Thai people to use stress correctly when speaking English. Correct English pronunciation, therefore, is important in communication since wrong word stress may result in misunderstanding among interlocutors. Given this importance, learning materials are essential in assisting learners to stress words correctly. At present, technology is a crucial part in learning and teaching; consequently, incorporating technology into pronunciation teaching should not be overlooked (Plailek 2012). One of those technological media which is able to attract learners is cartoon animation.

"Animation" is defined as figures that are manipulated to appear as moving images (Maio 2020). Similarly, Utamachan (1995) explained that animation refers to what resulted from the use of techniques to make lifeless things move. It aims to give life and soul to a design through the transformation of reality that is very popular nowadays. Utamachan (1995) also said that using visual techniques is a knack of the producers because a good visual technique leads to good programs, and the visual technique works well with young children.

Cartoon or animation is one of the media used in teaching and learning in terms of imparting values, culture and entertainment to children. Whether in the form of books or in animated films, it can attract a lot of attention from children (Canning and Wilson 2000). Yanarom (2013) said that using English animated movies is a method that can help students succeed in pronouncing and speaking English because the activities help students practice using the language and motivate them to learn it naturally. By watching movies, listening to English, and sometimes reading translated movie scripts in English, students simultaneously learn the pronunciation of words or phrases as well as slangs, idioms, and sentence patterns commonly used by native speakers. If they do not understand what is said in the movie, they can rewind and watch the scene again. This result is consistent with Alghonaim's (2020) conclusion which mentions that children can learn English pronunciation by watching TV cartoons.

However, in Thailand, few research studies have been conducted on the use of an animation movie to improve primary school students' stress ability in English. The aim of this study is to investigate the effectiveness of an animation movie for developing stress ability in English among primary school students. The findings of the study could serve as guidelines for teachers teaching English speaking or English pronunciation. Moreover, learners who want to improve their stress skills in English can make use of English animation movies to better their pronunciation skill.

2. Method

A mixed method research was used in this study. To this end, both quantitative and qualitative methods were employed to obtain information about the development of stress ability in English of Grade 5 students in one primary school in Thailand. A one group pretest-posttest design and a semi-structured interview were used to collect data from the participants in the study.

2.1 Participants

The participants in this research consisted of 30 Grade 5 students in a primary school in Thailand. They were selected by purposive sampling method based on Taro Yamane's research demographic formula from a total population of 221 students in six classes.

2.2 Instruments

The present study employed four sets of instruments.

2.2.1 An animation movie titled "Frozen"

2.2.2 Three sets of handouts for practicing to stress sounds in English

2.2.3 A pretest/posttest consisted of 30 items containing 30 words extracted from the animation movie, Frozen. These 30 items accounted for 30 scores which later was interpreted in order to measure the participants' ability of stress.

2.2.4 A semi-structured interview for examining students' opinions toward the use of animation movie in developing their ability of stress in English where all of the participants were asked the two questions below after the posttest administration

1. Do you like incorporating an animation movie into the English class? Why?
2. Can the animation movie, Frozen help you to pronounce English words better? How?

2.3 Data collection

The data collection procedure was divided into three stages as follows:

Stage 1: Pretest administration

Before having the participants watch the animation movie, they took a pretest which was an oral test where they pronounced 30 English words extracted from the animation movie.

Stage 2: Treatment period

The participants watched the animation movie, "Frozen," and did oral exercises for three weeks. In every class, the participants were taught the principles of word stress before the animation movie was displayed. This way of teaching can let them have more focus on the target words. In the first class, the participants were taught the principles of word stress for 2-syllable words. After that they watched the movie and did some oral practices. In the second week, how 3-syllable words were stressed was presented to the participants before they watched the movie and practiced pronouncing those words. In the last week, the principles of pronouncing 4-syllable words were explained and the participants then watched the movie and practiced pronouncing the words.

Stage 3: Posttest administration

The participants took the posttest which was the same as the pretest.

The participants' pre and posttest results were checked by three teachers. Two of them were Thai teachers who specialized in English phonetics. The other one teacher was an English native speaker.

2.4 Data analysis

The data obtained from the pretest and posttest were analyzed through means, standard deviations, and t-test in order to examine the participants' development of stress ability in English. The interview data were analyzed, summarized and reported descriptively.

3. Results

The findings relating to participants' demographic characteristics are presented in Table 1 and the pretest and posttest results are shown in Table 2.

Table 1: The number and percentage of demographic characteristics of the participants by gender.

	Number	Percentage
Male	16	53.34
Female	14	46.66
Total	30	100.00

As shown in Table 1, from 30 students, 16 of them counting for 53.34% were male and 14 of them (46.66%) were female.

Table 2: Pretest and posttest scores

	Number	Full score	Scores		Mean (M)	S.D.	T-value	Sig.
			Min	Max				
Pre	30	30	9	20	14.33	7.26	2.88	0.01
Post	30	30	11	23	16.30	8.77		

**p<.01

As displayed in Table 2, the mean score for the pretest was M=14.33 (S.D.=7.26) and that for the posttest was M=16.30 (S.D.=8.77). A paired sample t-test indicated that this difference was statistically significant, $t(29)=2.88$, $p<.01$. The students obtained higher scores in the posttest after watching the animation movie and doing exercises weekly for a period of three weeks.

The results of the interview with 30 students were tallied, grouped and interpreted. Based on the analysis, the obtained information can be categorized into two main points. The first one is the students' preference for using the media in the classroom. Most of the students thought that the animation movie could attract and motivate them to learn because they would like to watch and understand the cartoon story. Therefore, they paid attention to the movie. They focused on the English sounds spoken by each character. This could let the students learn correct English pronunciation. The other point is the classroom atmosphere which is more relaxing and entertaining, compared to the one before incorporating the movie. Although the students had to watch and listen to English sounds, they could concentrate on the movie because they were interested in the story.

Apart from the movie, the students asserted that exercises which let them practice pronouncing words after watching the movie helped improve their English pronunciation as they provided examples to stress words correctly. They were more confident in pronouncing English words since they had good examples. In addition, the students mentioned that they would like to improve word stress in order to speak English more accurately in real-life language use. This means that the animation movie helped raise their awareness on the importance of correct English pronunciation, in particular, how to stress English words accurately for effective communication.

4. Conclusions and Discussions

The present study was conducted with the objective to develop stress ability in English of Grade 5 students by using the animation movie, *Frozen*. The findings showed significant differences between pre and posttest scores ($t=2.88, p<.01$). This means that the students were able to pronounce English words more accurately after learning with the animation movie and practicing doing exercises for a certain period of time. This result is in line with those of Ponglangka (2016), Widyarningsih (2017), Rahmawati & Ratmanida (2020), and Juma (2021), all of which reported the improvement of students' English speaking ability after learning with animation movies. This signifies that using animation movies as a medium of instruction helps develop students' English speaking skill, particularly their stress in English. They could pronounce words almost similarly to native speakers because they were familiar with the English sounds spoken by native speakers. This finding reinforces the effectiveness of using an animation movie on improving students' ability of stress in English.

In addition, the interview results showed that students enjoyed learning English with the animation movie because the movie stimulated them to have fun and enthusiasm in learning English. Some students mentioned that they liked the main cartoon character, Elza and they wanted to be like her; therefore, they tried to imitate her speaking style. This finding is similar to Prayogi's (2013) result which suggested that using animation movies to develop students' speaking ability would help them speak fluently and pronounce words more correctly. They were more attentive and involved in the learning process. This finding also lends support to Rasyid (2016) who concluded that this type of movies encouraged students to have more participation in their language learning due to its presentation and interesting story. Furthermore, animation movies could create a relaxing atmosphere because students were motivated to speak English without embarrassment. They were more confident in speaking English. This finding corresponds with the result of Widyarningsih (2017) who reported that a class atmosphere with animation movies was fun and enjoyable, contributing to getting students' more participation.

In conclusion, animation movies are effective media for improving students' oral skills. They can gain students' interest and unforcedly help them learn to pronounce words correctly. This process ultimately leads to students' English pronunciation improvement. Moreover, they can have fun while learning. This way of teaching also makes them aware of the effectiveness of correct pronunciation and lets them have good attitudes towards learning English.

5. Suggestions

The study suggests a number of areas for English teaching and future research.

1. Based on the positive results from this study, teachers can incorporate animation movies in a language classroom in order to naturally teach students about correct pronunciation. However, it is essential to employ a movie that can arouse their interest. Therefore, students' information about their favorite movies will be very useful.
2. Using animation movies to teach other skills of English, for example, listening or reading can be considered since students can also practice listening English sounds and reading English subtitles while watching a movie.
3. Similar investigations should be carried out with other target groups in order to examine whether this form of learning can improve students' ability to pronounce English.
4. Results between learning English with and without animation movies should be compared to examine significant differences between these two methods.
5. The results of the test should be reported to students continuously in order for the students to know their advantages and disadvantages and use them as a source of their English learning ability improvement and of effective self-development.
6. Besides animation movies, exposures students to other authentic media with English sounds, for example, English movies can be considered as a tool for developing learners' proper pronunciation.

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