

Using Podcast To Enhance Pronunciation Competence For High School Students

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Abstract- Pronunciation is regarded as the most crucial component of language for learners who study English as foreign language (EFL) in their learning. When communicating, pronunciation is often the first aspect that makes an impression on listeners. Nevertheless, it is difficult for high school students who only learn English as a subject to pronounce correctly, and it is due to the pronunciation aspect being commonly ignored in English lessons. Since the development of technology, many equipment and techniques are carried out to promote students in improving their ability in pronunciation, and one of the most effective media is "Podcast". The present study aimed to explore a) the current situation of the high school students' pronunciation competence; b) the effectiveness of using Podcast to improve English pronunciation competence for high school students. 30 students at grade 10 at Thai Nguyen high school for the Gifted who were chosen as the main participants and were divided into the control group and the experimental group took part in the experiment within 12 weeks. The researchers used questionnaires and tests as data collection instruments for the current study. The findings of the pre-test and post-test acquired by high school participants were compared in more depth in this study. This study showed that the incorporation of Podcast in practicing pronunciation was expected to have a positive impact on assisting students to improve English pronunciation competence.

Index Terms- *Podcast, Pronunciation competence, technology.*

I. INTRODUCTION

It is not surprising if English is the most spoken language in the world. It is assumed that in many countries, English has a particular role as the language of communication between people who are speakers of the different indigenous languages. Since English is one of the core subjects at school, more and more schools are teaching English to their pupils and English centers can be found popular in many cities in Vietnam, especially big cities. Nevertheless, many foreign people in Vietnam said that many Vietnamese people can communicate in English, but just a small percentage of them can pronounce it intelligibly.

To learn a language, mastering vocabulary and pronunciation is as important as building the foundation of a house. Learners can pronounce well, as a basis for them to perfect the remaining skills when learning their English skills. Pronunciation is one of the most important challenges for English second language (ESL) learners in their learning, and it is a vital part of a language that allows people to communicate and interact with each other via the use of words. Boyer (2002) indicated in his study that in regular speech, each speaker has their own style of saying words because each word is made up of letters, every letter has a specific sound, while some letters are stressed, some of them are not. It can be understood that pronunciation is like the musical tones when the speech flows out smoothly. If there is a break in the rhythm, misunderstanding will appear, so Gilakjani (2011) believed that pronunciation skills are linked to musical skills.

In high schools, learners who learn English as a second language are difficult to pronounce exactly and it is the fact that English is a compulsory subject, but it is not really interesting for all students. In the education system, pronunciation teaching is a prominent factor in foreign language teaching, since sounds play an important role in communication, foreign language teachers must attribute proper importance to teaching pronunciation in their classes. However, in language teaching, pronunciation is one of the most commonly ignored aspects. Students hardly have the opportunity to speak the language, because their exams almost exclusively test grammar and reading comprehension; therefore, high school teachers also guide students on how to get the highest score on the test. As a result of this attitude toward pronunciation teaching, it led to a time that language teachers are careless about students' pronunciation (Elliott,

1995). That is the reason why teachers need to spend more time and have positive methods for assisting learners to improve pronunciation.

Nowadays, with the advent of technology, one of the most effective tools for learning is a Podcast to promote students in improving their ability in pronunciation. From a pedagogical perspective, Swain (1985) declared that Podcasts enable students to produce “comprehensible output”, which is an essential feature for language learning. According to Swain’s hypothesis (1985), as Podcasts are generated by students, they have to listen to themselves and edit their output in the same period and repeat these two steps until they determine how they themselves want to express utterance. Users can catch their own pronunciation errors, evaluate their intelligibility, and also recognize their own creation of sounds patterns. It also shows that the students who use Podcasts have positive views of Podcasts: students believe that Podcasts help them lower their anxiety, increase their confidence, improve their oral performance and pronunciation, and expand their vocabulary. Regarding the backgrounds above, the researchers conducted a study entitled “Using Podcast to enhance pronunciation competence for high school students.”

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Pronunciation in language teaching

Pronunciation plays a fundamental role in learning and teaching the target language. There are a variety of terms of the concept of pronunciation that have been declared before; however, it cannot give an exact definition of pronunciation. Dalton (1998) defined ‘pronunciation’ as the production of significant sound in two senses. First, the sound is significant because it is used as a part of a code of a particular language. Second, the sound is significant because it is used to achieve meaning in contexts of use. Reed and Michaud (2005) refer to pronunciation that is an integrated system, claiming that it is an integral component of language instruction. In their view, pronunciation consists of speaking and listening (or production and perception). According to Oxford Advanced Learner’s English Dictionary, The way a language or a specific word or sound is uttered is called pronunciation. This definition has obvious information: Pronunciation is a way of producing something and the product of this act is language or word or sound.

Pronunciation is a significant part of learning for improving communication skills. Morley (1998) declared that good pronunciation is the best way to impress other people in communicating. Learners now have the same goal, which exchanges meaningful information effectively. Therefore, in recent, the unreasonable expectation that learners of English sound like native speakers is quickly fading. Burns. A (2003) indicated that English speakers need to reach intelligibility, comprehensibility, and interpretability. She also gave an example that using inaccurate sound, intonation, and stress in sentences brings about the listeners would not find comprehensible; in other words, pronunciation mistakes will lead to misunderstanding among them. As the speakers communicate with others, clear pronunciation is a key giving them the power to be more confident (Zaigham, 2011). Generally, clear pronunciation is essential in spoken communication. Because, even though learners make small grammatical and vocabulary mistakes, they are still more likely to communicate more effectively, if they have nice intonation and pronunciation.

The features of pronunciation

Burns. A (2003) refers to pronunciation involves features at: the segmental (micro) level and the suprasegmental (macro) level.

In former ESL approaches, segmental features were the major focus for pronunciation teaching. While these features are vital, current research has shown that focusing on suprasegmental features improves learners' intelligibility significantly. Therefore, in this study, the researchers would like to focus on the suprasegmental level. At this level, intonation, stress, and linking are important features for effective pronunciation.

Intonation

Intonation is the language's melody — the way the voice rises and falls in response to the circumstances and meanings of the communication. The use of intonation remains an influence in the hearer’s mind like to express anger, happiness, a requirement for something, or a greeting. If the intonation is misplaced, the meaning of the utterance can be changed.

Word stress

The prominence given to specific words in an utterance is referred to as word stress. These stress words are emphasized (made longer and louder) to transmit the most significant section of the sentence and the overall rhythm of the utterance. Moreover, the stress in the

English language shows the speaker's high and low pitch and it is a very important aspect to be dealt with. The misplacement of stress may lead to misunderstanding and sometimes to communication loss.

Linking

Linking is simply defined as the transition or link between sounds or words in connected speech. It refers to the way the last sound of one word is joined to the first sound of the next word. To produce connected speech, words are run together to link consonant to vowel, consonant to consonant, and vowel to vowel. Some sounds are also shortened, while others are omitted entirely.

Podcast in language teaching

There are tons of technologies invented, and one of those which provides material for language learning is called the Podcast. Besides, several experts defined the definition of Podcasts in different field. According to Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary, Podcast is defined as a recording of a radio broadcast or a video that can be taken from the Internet. The term Podcast was coined by Meng (2005) that an amalgam of the word broadcasting and the name of the popular MP3 player from Apple Computer called the iPod. It's a bit misleading that Podcasting necessitates the use of an iPod. Indeed, Podcasts can be used with a variety of digital audio formats and play on almost any MP3 player or portable digital audio device - as well as any brand of desktop computer or laptop. Simply, Podcasts are any type of audio or video format that is made up of a series of recordings for various purposes.

Advantages and disadvantages of using Podcast

Podcast is one of the best tools to extend English language learning besides some traditional ways such as watching movies or listening to music related to English. According to Yaman (2016), Podcast has given audio-video materials in the form of digital natives that can assist students in their language studies; therefore, it allows students to extend their learning not only inside but also outside the classroom and develop their English skills by themselves. Moreover, Sansinadi, Wardhany I.T., D.S. & Winarko (2020) pointed out that Podcast users will hear a variety of interesting topics of their favorite categories to get the information. Users are stimulated to imitate or to pronounce English words correctly, as well as improve their English speaking skills. Besides that, Podcast also helps students reduce stress and feel more confident in learning the language. In addition, the technology is extremely cheap and effective. In today's world of technology and distance education, podcasting becomes an important factor in proving that online learning is an effective method in classrooms.

Besides, it has also some drawbacks, Barto (2008) found that the easiness of use can make some users and learners be lazier if they do not discipline and be self-conscious. Furthermore, technical issues may happen like no electricity, bugs, or file- corruption. Finally, everyone needs prerequisite IT knowledge and computing basics for minimal use.

In short, based on the above discussion, several advantages to the implementation of Podcasts in the language learning process. Meanwhile, the difficulties or disadvantages of Podcast installation can be forecasted.

Previous studies

There are numerous studies on Podcasting reviewed in the world before, one of them is a report on an investigation of Podcast as a tool for honing pronunciation skills in intermediate language learning by Ducate. L & Lomicka. L (2009). They examined the effects of using Podcasts to improve pronunciation in second language learning and how students' attitudes changed toward pronunciation over the semester. The Podcast project was perceived positively by students, and they appreciated the feedback given for each scripted recording and enjoyed opportunities for creativity during extemporaneous Podcasts. Additionally, Lord's study (2008) is one of few research projects targeting pronunciation and podcasting specific to teaching language. Participants were 19 students in an undergraduate phonetics class who recorded short readings, tongue twisters, and personal reflections on their own pronunciation. He used the Pronunciation Attitude Inventory (Elliott, 1995) as well as scores from six oral tasks, and then rated by three judges on overall pronunciation ability. Both attitudes and pronunciation abilities were evaluated in pre-semester and post-semester, and they were proven to increase their English competencies. Furthermore, Harika and Kocoglu (2016) discovered a link between podcasts and oral performance, as well as podcasts and student anxiety levels. They also observed that students who were exposed to Podcasts had a favorable view of Podcasts: learners claimed that Podcasts aided them to reduce tension, gain confidence, and raise their oral performance and pronunciation.

In Vietnam, Podcast is no longer a new concept for all users, many studies have used Podcasts as a tool to improve their English skills, especially listening skills. Besides, in this study, the researchers expected to learn more about previous studies in Vietnam about using

Podcasts to enhance pronunciation. In the study "Mobile Podcasting as a tool for learning English pronunciation in Vietnam", Cunningham, U. (2010) was invited to develop a group of students at a college in Hanoi to deliver a 4-week course in English pronunciation. The courses were designed for Vietnamese learners, and the audio material covers the same pronunciation issues as learning inside the classroom. The efficacy of extensive and intensive listening is a way of helping learners to improve their perception and thus improving their production of specific areas of English pronunciation. In addition, Quyen T. T. T. (2016) investigated a Podcast learning project integrated into an English communication 1 class. Results showed that the students had considerably positive attitudes towards the effectiveness of the Podcast learning project on their linguistic competencies improvements.

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Instruments for collecting data

The questionnaire is one of the most effective tools to gather information about factors of learning, such as beliefs, attitudes, motivations, and preferences. Creswell (2005) reveals that a questionnaire is a form used in a survey design, and it will be completed by participants' research to return to the researchers. In this study, the researchers purposefully designed the questionnaire to investigate the current situation in pronunciation of high school students. Besides, Overton (2008) investigated that tests are a method to determine a students' ability to complete certain tasks or demonstrate mastery of a skill or knowledge of content. In the present study, tests were used to measure pronunciation competence which is possessed by students to gather data. The pre-test and post-test took place to collect the data on students' pronunciation skills before and after the administered treatment.

Participants

The researchers conducted with the participation of 30-grade 10th students at Thai Nguyen high school for the Gifted who are enrolled during the school year 2021-2022. Most of them are at the age of 15-16. The learners were divided into two equal groups: the experimental group, which use Podcast as the way to improve English pronunciation (n=15), and the control group, which did not use Podcast in the learning process (n =15). Participation in the project will be completed over 12 weeks and participants were selected based on a convenience sample.

IV. INNITIAL MAJOR FINDINGS

Results from Questionnaires

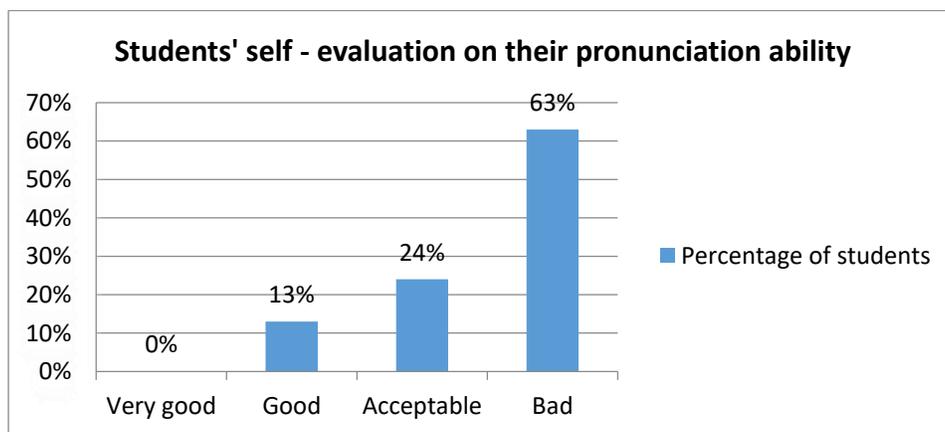


Chart 1. Students' self – evaluation on their pronunciation ability

The chart highlights the percentage of students who assessed their English pronunciation competence. It is clearly seen that 13% of students self-assessed their pronunciation at good levels, while a high proportion of the subjects responded that they pronounce English badly with more than 60%. Besides, there were 24% of students thought that their English pronunciation competence was acceptable. None of them chose the option "Very good". In general, most of the respondents were quite unconfident in their pronunciation competence. It is due to that the participants of the research are in high school, except English, they had a lot of subjects at their school; therefore, they did not have enough time and environment to practice pronunciation frequently.

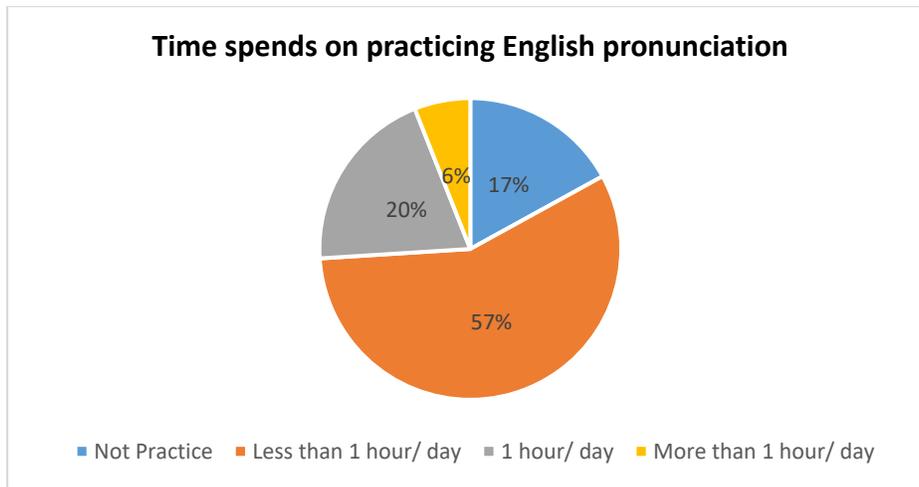


Chart 2. The amount of time high school students spent on practicing pronunciation

The given pie chart depicts the amount of time high school students spent practicing pronunciation per day. It was noticeable that the number of students who chose the option “less than 1 hour per day” was the highest with 57%. There was a fifth of students said that it took them an hour to practice pronunciation every day. Besides, the number of students who did not practice frequently took accounted for 17% of the total, while only 6% of students spent more than one hour per day on English pronunciation. This result pointed out that most students have realized the importance of learning English and practiced pronunciation every day, but a few of them did not spend their time on pronunciation, it also brought about their pronunciation was not improved.

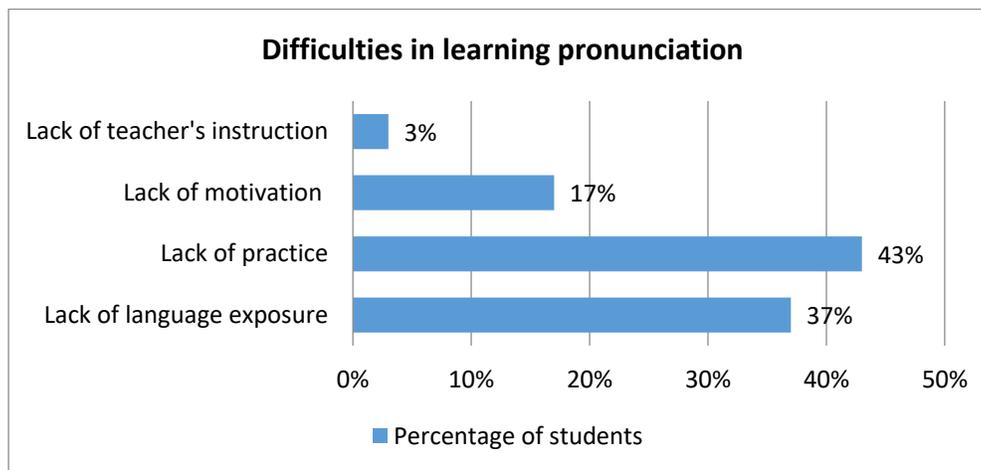


Chart 3. Students' difficulties in learning pronunciation

Bar chart 3. illustrates the proportion of students' difficulties in learning pronunciation. Generally, there were four main reasons which students often encounter in pronunciation. A significant number of participants, 37%, agreed that *lack of language exposure* was the reason for their poor pronunciation. In Vietnam, English is considered a foreign language, they learn English for work but not for communicating in daily life, so students do not have the environment to practice English every day. Students' practice was regarded as the hardest obstacle which they had to face up because 43% of them agreed that *lack of practice* led to not pronouncing well. Pronunciation skill is often ignored by both teachers and students, since English is a subject at high school, learners have to take in vocabulary or grammar for passing the exams. Besides, another reason influencing their pronunciation was *lack of motivation*, this accounted for 17%, and only a small minority of students (3%) claimed that they had difficulties in pronunciation due to *lack of teachers' instruction*.

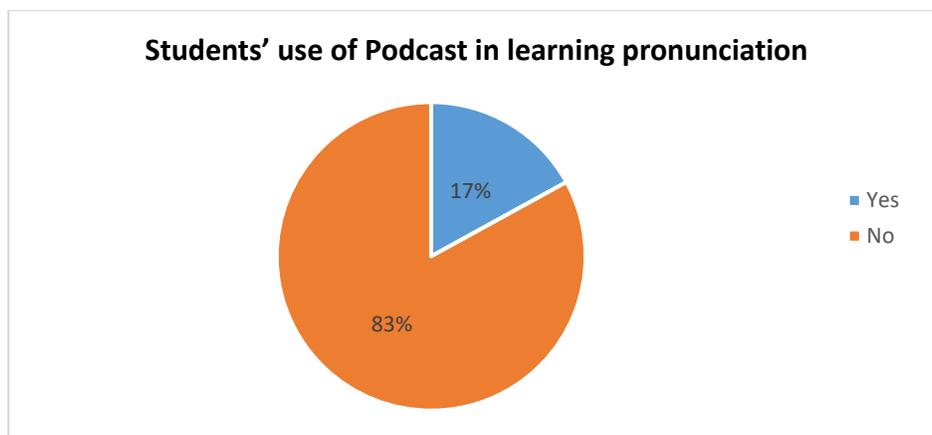


Chart 4. Students' use of Podcast in learning pronunciation

The pie chart above reveals the proportion of the answers of students to the question about the use of Podcast in learning pronunciation. As can be seen from chart 4, that 83% of participants replied that they have never applied Podcast to practicing pronunciation, and 17% of them had ever utilized Podcast in pronunciation before.

Results from Tests

No	Classification	Score	Experimental Group		Control group	
			F	P (%)	F	P (%)
1	Excellent	9.0 to 10	0	0%	0	0%
2	Good	8.0 to 8.9	1	7%	1	7%
3	Satisfactory	6.0 to 7.9	4	27%	5	33%
4	Partially Effective	4.0 to 5.9	8	53%	6	40%
5	Ineffective	0 to 3.9	2	13%	3	20%
Total			15	100%	15	100%

Table 1. The classification of students' pre-test

Table 1 illustrates the students' scores of pre-tests in the experimental and control group. It is visible from the table, no one in the two groups was excellent in pronunciation. Besides, just 7% of students had a score from 7.0 to 8.4 and was accessed at Good level in two groups. It is interesting to note that, students who were classified at Satisfactory level in the experimental group accounted for 27% and it had 33% in the control group. The number of students who got the Partially Effective level is 8 students (equivalent to 53% students) in the experimental group while the number of students' control group at this level accounted for two-fifths (6 out of 15 participants). There was 2 student (13%) at Ineffective level in the experimental group, and the students who got this level in the control group were three with 20% of the total. The results revealed that the students' pronunciation ability was still limited and needed to improve.

IV. CONCLUSION

To put it simply, there were some conclusions concerning using Podcasts to improve English pronunciation for 10th learners at Thai Nguyen high school for the Gifted. Firstly, without any doubt, students have struggled with pronunciation and have made little improvement in English classes; therefore, the researchers believed it is critical to look for practical solutions that can help students boost their pronunciation. Secondly, Podcast is a new technology that has a large impact on enhancing second language learners' pronunciation skills. Creating Podcast is also appropriate for less confident ELT students because of alleviating nervousness and less confidence (Gardner, Day, & MacIntyre, 1992). To clarify the effectiveness of using Podcast in improving students' pronunciation competence, the researchers carried out the experiment within 12 weeks. The treatment of using Podcast was applied towards 15 participants in the experimental group, and then the result was compared to the control group. Because of the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, the researchers initially determined the beginning level of the experimental and control groups. The results of the pre-test

revealed that there was not a significant difference, and it indicated that the study could be executed with confidence and trust. Hopefully, the incorporation of Podcast in learning and teaching will become a meaningful way to enhance students' pronunciation competence in high school.

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