The Intelligibility of Indonesian Learners of English (ILE) in Understanding the Pronunciation of English Spoken by Thai Students

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Abstract

This study carried out an intelligibility of English pronunciation by Thai students. The objectives are to explain the intelligibility of ILE in the pronunciation of English and to identify the typical kind of English sounds which are delivered by the students in Thailand. The data included Thai English words gathered by using participant observation. The result showed: (1) the level of intelligibility of ILE have perceived intelligible (50.6%) and their unperceived as much as 49.4% in the English sounds pronunciation by ThaiE, (2) the typical kind of English sounds produced by ThaiE can be seen from the pronunciation of consonant sounds, vowels and diphthong sounds. For example, the vowel sounds (a, I, i ə, ʌ, a, ɑ, ɒ, o, U, u) are typically sounded by ThaiE's pronunciation is understood well and intelligible by Indonesian Learners of English (ILE).

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For Thai learners of English (ThaiE) or the English learners with Thai background, it is conveyed that to master in English is not just indicated by their capability in arranged some phrases or words into a sentence properly, remembering meaning, or memorizing alphabet/spelling, it is also seen from the fluency and skill of pronouncing the sounds of English correctly. Many ThaiE's have not understood how phonetic symbols are read as pronunciation words transcriptions properly, even though there are some methods in pronouncing sounds of English as RP (Received Pronunciation) in connection to the latter. The transcription of RP refers to the Standard English pronunciation system.

As the English speakers, ThaiE is struggled in pronouncing sounds closes to the Standard British accent, American accent or Received Pronunciation (RP) (Walker, 2001). ThaiE appears because of some acts or things, among that could be looked as phonological condition words, compound words, sound chain, differences in tongue-twisters, categories of word, and so on (Katamba, 1989; Kelly, 2000). In pronunciation of English sound, besides recognizing sound classifications like diphthong, vowel, consonant and how to pronounce them (Roach, 1991; Walfram & Johnson, 1981).

Understanding (intelligibility) refers to the accuracy of understanding (sound) when the listener tries to understand the words spoken. A series of features of English sound pronunciation that need to be learned by English learners everywhere in the world to achieve intelligibility have been revealed by Bryan Jenner with the term Common Core (Walker, 2001).

The intelligibility itself refers to the speaker's output proportion that listener could readily understand (Bowen, 1998). According to Smith & Nelson (1985, p. 67), they had formulated about the intelligibility definition through associating it with utterances and words. That is why Kachru & Nelson (2006, p. 67) firmly stated that "an intelligible English word is one that sounds like English-just that."

From introduction of some cases above, the researcher has concluded that variations diversity of ThaiE's English sound pronunciation among others because of the attention lack in right English pronunciation, ignorance of various English text contexts, lack of knowledge about phonetic bases, and changing difficulty accents Thailand to RP.

In addition, this research is strengthened by several previous studies related to this research. The previous study has researched by Rajadurai (2006), Doel (2011), Laila, (2012), Pathom (2013), Lahdae, (2015), Suntornsawet, J (2017), and Kim, (2017) were used to support the analysis of Intelligibility level in English sounds pronunciation to the Native Speakers or Non-Native Speakers of English. The researcher is going to do analysis about Indonesian Learners of English (ILE)

Intelligibility in understanding the pronunciation of English spoken by Thai students because the researcher is willing to detect pronunciation demonstration model sound. Playing a tape recorder from the NSE is not sufficient. That should be completed by articulation explanation, the mechanism illustration of sound pronunciation by specific sound organs as well as

appropriate presentation of the instructor (model) and then the introduction of various contexts of English texts are also going to help some students in the right pronunciation of English sounds.

Based on the evidence above, the researcher encourages in conducting this research entitled “The Intelligibility of Indonesian Learners of English (ILE) in Understanding the Pronunciation of English Spoken by Thai Students”. Which the aim of this research were (1) explaining the intelligibility of ILE on the pronunciation of English sounds by Thai students and (2) identifying the kind of English sounds produced by Thai students’ that are intelligible of ILE.

Method

The type of this research is descriptive qualitative. The objects were 10 Thai ESL students who spoke English, both during learning and in other contexts. They are Secondary High School of 6th grade students at Demonstration School of Suksasart Khon Kaen University of Thailand. The researcher chooses them because of their English proficiency in intermediate level. The data sources of this study are diversity of ThaiE English pronunciation in the mastery of various contexts of English vocabulary as a distinction of meaning in the relevant texts. The data are in the form of lingual units especially words that contain variation in ThaiE pronunciation of English sounds, which allows distinguishing the meanings between variations in NSE/ FSE and ThaiE pronunciation. The data are taken during the formal English learning process in the classroom or during conversations or pronunciations in English outside of learning. Based on data source the researcher divided the data sources into the main data in the form of recording as the results of pronunciation of words in various contexts of English and secondary data source is the speaker of the English sound, namely ThaiE from secondary school level when doing English-speaking activities in class or outside the classroom. The data were collected by using observation, testing, and document analysis and as the completeness of the information obtained by techniques of recording and note taking. To get the validity of this research, the researcher uses triangulation. Qualitative cross-validation is called triangulation according to William Wiersma (as cited in (Sugiyono, 2013, p. 372). The data analysis was applied by using the comparative and contrast technique is applied between standard pronunciation or Received Pronunciation (RP) with the pronunciation of English students which refers to the RP pronunciation standard based on (Clark & Yallop, 1990, p. 2) as a reference followed by using of sound transcription matches with the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA).

Results

The results of this study are divided into two parts, namely the intelligibility and the typical kind of English Sounds produced by Thai Students as in table 1. Based on the research that has been done, from the first data source are obtained about to measure the ability of Thai students to pronounce English vocabulary from all respondents namely 5 male students and 5 female students obtained the percentage of 43.2% Thai students who can pronounce English pronunciation about clothes precisely according to the standards of pronunciation and phonetic. The data also produced 56.8% of Thai students which were not appropriate in pronouncing English pronunciation about clothes and did not accordance with the standards of pronunciation and phonetic.

Table 1. The Thai Students Pronunciation and the Intelligibility of Indonesia Learners of English (ILE)

Students	Thai Students Pronunciation (Correct)	Thai Students Pronunciation (False)	Intelligibility of ILE	Unintelligibility of ILE	Total Words
I	20	30	33	17	50
II	19	31	22	28	50
III	24	26	21	29	50
IV	23	27	30	20	50
V	23	27	27	23	50
VI	25	25	29	21	50
VII	23	27	16	34	50
VIII	30	30	24	26	50
IX	14	36	29	21	50
X	25	25	22	28	50
Total	216	284	253	247	500
Percentage	43.2%	56.8%	50.6%	49.4%	

Then, from the data of English vocabulary pronunciation by Thai students of Secondary High School Thailand, the researcher also took the second data source, the second data was taken to find out how Indonesian Learners of English (ILE) can intelligibility understand the sounds of English pronunciation from Thai students. The data was taken through the method of listening to the vocabulary of English spoken by Thai students from the audio recording and then transcribing it into the orthography form.

From the second data, the result showed that although the percentage of ThaiE learner's intelligibility level of English to Indonesian Learners of English (ILE) are 50.6%. It means that Indonesian Learners of English (ILE) have been intelligible (50.6%) in understanding the pronunciation of English sounds by Thai students. In addition, their unintelligibility level of English sounds pronounced by ThaiE are 49.4%. The fact has appointed that Thai Learners of English (ThaiE)'s pronunciation is understood and intelligible properly by Indonesian Learners of English (ILE).

Broadly, based on the frequency of data appearing of English sounds pronunciation by ThaiE who experienced verbal intelligibility as much as 43.4%, and written as much as 50.6%, the variation of English sounds pronunciation by ThaiE is caused by many factors such as ignorance of sound science or phonetics, the model obtained during learning, as well as the lack of practice that can encourage ThaiE's habit of pronouncing English sounds correctly. On the other hand, it is possibly turns out that these factors influenced the intelligibility of Indonesian Learners of English (ILE) in understanding the pronunciation of English sounds that spoken by Thai students.

Discussion

The researcher provides some discussions related to the findings. The researcher was conducted based on two research questions. The first is explaining the Thai English sounds intelligibility to Indonesian Learners of English (ILE) produced by Thai students using the comparative and contrast technique between standard pronunciation or Received

Pronunciation (RP) with the pronunciation of Thai English students refers to the theory of [Clark & Yallop](#) (1990) and the second is identifying the typical kind of English sounds produced by Thai students that are intelligible to the Indonesian Learners of English (ILE) using the accuracy of the pronunciation from the subject of this research and listening techniques is routinely carried out. This research is strengthened and compared by several previous studies from year to year by the researcher.

The first research was conducted by [Rajadurai](#) (2006) about the intelligibility role which had raised several questions about the intelligibility and phonology of English new varieties. The findings suggest specific pronunciation aspects were being more important for intelligibility than others for Malaysian speakers of English. Other pronunciation aspects which appear to be non-core can be dealt with at the level of reception rather than production, even though learners who wish to acquire the whole range of features associated with a native model should be permitted to do so.

The second study was conducted by [Doel](#) (2011) about International Intelligibility in EIL. The results showed that native speakers tended to prioritise errors that demonstrably impeded intelligibility. They also attach importance to errors which did not lead to an actual breakdown in communication but it was because of mentor irritation.

The third study was conducted by [Laila](#) (2012) about study of case of Javanese ESL Students in Tertiary Level. The researcher had investigated the pronouncing English sounds quality by Javanese ESL students is mostly influenced by their speaking way of their native language. The result was Javanese ESL students produced consonant sounds by maximal force lack and tend to be lenis while in pronouncing vowel sounds, they tend to deliver several as its phonemes. This shifts the NSE/FSE have been intelligible in 53.8 %.

The fourth study was conducted by [Pathom](#) (2013) about Thai university students's aspiration to their pronunciation model. This study had provided many insights related to English pronunciation like learners' views of their own pronunciation, and learners' awareness of their aspirations in achieving native like pronunciation.

The fifth study was conducted by [Lahdae, A](#) (2015) about the Phonological Features Affecting Intelligibility of Thai Learners as Evaluated by Native and Non-Native Listener. The result were that final position of words makes more problem than the initial sounds and position because they were not found in Thai phonology tended in hindering intelligibility more than sounds which were founds in the Thai sound system. This study also integrated the result from preceding studied in demonstrating the problematic phonological features for Thai learners in various skills.

The sixth study was conducted by [Suntornsawet](#), (2017) about Thai-Accented English Pronunciation Intelligibility to Native Speakers and Non-Native Speakers of English. The result of this study mention that level of accent and intelligibility interaction affected the different L1 group in diverse manner especially non-native speakers. The salient features identified as posing the highest threat to international intelligibility were cluster simplification, final consonant release lack, fully stressed unstressed consonant and vowels.

Finally, the last study conducted by [Kim](#) (2017) about Listeners' Communicative Experiences effect in Thai English on the Thai English Intelligibility. The findings suggest that the listeners' communicative experiences in an L2 English variety that improves the intelligibility of that English variety regardless of the listeners' first languages.

Based on the previous studies above, this research conducted similar concern with the current related studies in analysing the intelligibility of English pronunciation spoken by L2 by using pronunciation and phonetic level. This research also applies similar instruments and methodology through testing, recording, transcription and document analysis. Therefore, what makes it different among others is the data source to be analysed. So it makes why this research is so important because of its point out the intelligibility of Indonesian Learners of English (ILE) in understanding the pronunciation of English spoken by Thai students as the research source. In this research, the researcher focuses on analysing Thai English to Indonesian Learners of English (ILE) intelligibility in understanding non-native speakers namely Thai which is not many researchers employ.

Conclusion

According to those results and discussion of the data analysis, the researcher has concluded that the level of intelligibility of Indonesian Learners of English (ILE) in understanding the sound of English pronunciation by Thai students is in the amount of 50.6%. It showed that the Indonesian Learners of English (ILE) perceived intelligibility for about 50.6% in the pronunciation of English sounds by Thai students. Their unperceived of English sounds is pronounced by ThaiE in the amount of 49.4%. The researcher also showed that the typical kind of English sounds produced by Thai students that are intelligible of ILE, it can be seen from the English sounds that produced by Thai students such as: (a) Front Vowel Sounds (a, I, i), Middle Vowel Sounds (ə and ʌ), and Back Vowel Sounds (ɑ, ɒ, o, U, u). (b) Diphthongs Sounds (eɪ, ɔɪ, ɪə, uə, eə). (c) Voiceless Consonant Sounds (p, k, t, h), and Voiced Consonant Sounds (d, g, ɟ, l, n, m, r, w, j, ŋ). It can be concluded that there are any sound pronunciations which are complicated for ThaiE because they are not found in Thai Language such as interdental sounds (ʃ, tʃ, ð, θ). The tendency of pronunciation as the latter is also influenced by the tendency of ThaiE to pronounce as its phoneme segments.

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