Teaching English through Technology: Use of TV Studio Production for the Improvement of English Speaking

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Abstract

Recently, the Faculty of International Studies, Prince of Songkla University, Phuket Campus, has set up a type of Production TV Studio with the objective to use it as a new language laboratory. We have conducted a first set of experiments with 80 students from grades 7 to 9 during a two day English speaking training by means of new technologies. This training was initiated by the use of English Speech Recognition software with the aim of helping students gain more confidence speaking English. The training took place on Saturday and Sunday. The training activities included practicing everyday English conversations and writing a short script for speaking about a tourist place selected by each student.

In terms of speaking competence, the first main finding of this study is that students still face common problems in English pronunciation. This can be explained by the fact that in most Thai schools students do not have many opportunities to speak English. The second major finding is that using this TV Studio Production would be a new laboratory of pedagogical testing in foreign language learning. After reviewing common problems committed by students, we wonder if we should talk about "mistakes" or "Thai English".

Keywords: Thai English Speaking, New Technology, TV Studio Production, Pragmatics

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Introduction

After the installation of our TV Studio Production applied to foreign language learning, we thought that this was a pioneer idea. But, after searching for related documentation, we found that Harvey (1954) in his article entitled "From language laboratory to television studio", from the University of Rochester in the United States of America, is the first to claim for the possibilities of teaching spoken French by means of television. His first script was for "French for Travel". After writing and using the script for producing his pedagogical video television for teaching French to his compatriots, he concluded that "Television is here to stay, and it offers opportunities that we must not neglect, and especially now while it is still a novelty. The reception given by the public in the Rochester area to the thirteen-week program 'French for Travel' indicates that millions of Americans are eager to study foreign languages in their homes by means of television. It also indicates that the possibilities of television lessons in foreign languages in schools and in industry are very great".

Objectives

The objectives of the research were to 1) to explore the television studio's application to foreign language learning. 2) to identify the advantages and disadvantages of this technology before promoting it as a new laboratory for foreign language learning 3) to propose suggestions on how to use this technology as an important means to develop speaking competencies of learners.

Conceptual Framework

In Thailand, when we begin talking about the problem of foreign language learning, a general excuse used by schools and universities (whose duties are to improve student speaking ability) for poor proficiency is student shyness and the lack of opportunities to practice or use the language in daily life. In a way, this is true because Thailand is a monolingual country. Thai is the national language while all other languages are considered foreign, even English whose importance is increasing. In East Asia, the degree of shyness self-reported by East-Asian students is much higher than European students (Paulhus, Duncan, & Yik, 2002). On one hand, for Asian students, the reason for shyness mainly relies on the fear of being wrong, on the other hand, for European students, the reason of shyness is related to the fear of being judged. Shyness is reported to be more prevalent among East-Asians than among those of European background. In Thailand, English language anxiety (Namsang, 2011) or foreign language anxiety (Horwitz, Horwitz, & Cope, 1986) is one of the

key factors for the incompetence of English learnt by Thai students. According to a study by Duxbury & Tsai (2010), Taiwanese students showed a higher anxiety rate in an English class when the teacher was Taiwanese. Namsang (2011) concluded that Thai undergraduate students experienced a high level of English language anxiety and many of them exhibited certain degrees of test anxiety in English class. This resulted from the fact that they were non-English-major students. What it is meant by that is that they had very low self-esteem and self-confidence in their English ability. If we wonder why our students are worried about any English test, we find the answer is that they fear to be wrong. When they are judged for doing something wrong, they feel they are losing face.

The above statement is justified by a phenomenon which occurred in China: a Chinese named Li Yang decided to create his own English learning method called "Crazy English" because he found that the fear of losing face is the main obstacle preventing Chinese people from learning English well. This method became well-known quickly and many Chinese people became involved in events he organized. His method consists of inviting learners to shout their English words, phrases and sentences. Woodward (2005) and Osnos (2008) described how Chinese people grew up with modesty and lacked confidence. When society is governed by the modesty culture, it is normal for common teaching methods of English to be oriented to an English grammar based teaching/learning. This is in order for students to get the best score on tests. In addition, Chaidaroon (2003) concluded, in a study using "the framework of communication competence, which consists of motivation, cognition and performance" (Ibid, 294) that Thai communication competence differs from the American or Western counterparts. It includes "shyness, reluctance to ask for favors, as well as knowledge and awareness of seniority, social links, and Krean Jai (being extremely considerate)" (id). The goal is to avoid embarrassment, even at the cost of learning to speak accurately and effectively. According to Woodward (2008), in reference to a blog of (May, 2005), there are "inherited social dynamics" that "play a role in silencing classroom discussion and participation in large groups because in traditional Chinese hierarchies, youths are not encouraged to show a mastery of skills that is greater than the skills of their adult counterparts" (Ibid, 27).

Another example that underlines again the problem of culture is based on a survey conducted by Sriussadaporn-Charoenngam & Jablin (1999) to find out what Thai business people perceive as communicative competent behaviors. The survey, found four issues: knowing how to avoid conflict with others; controlling emotions and displaying respect; showing tactfulness, modesty and politeness. We can conclude from this that Thai society considers communication competence to be an obstacle in foreign language learning because Thai people have grown up in a culture that promotes the idea that: "speech is silver, silence is golden" as a moral value (proverb) whereas in Western society "silence gives consent" (proverb). This can explain why the more Thai teachers of English pretend to cry out that

they use a communicative approach in their classes, the more they must be careful about the results. Thai teachers might ignore this approach, but ignoring it could be inappropriate for achieving the goal of teaching students to speak English more fluently and naturally. We don't need to prove the fact that Thais do not tend to speak up and respond slowly to any questions asked by English teachers. That means that "verbal prudence is highly valued among the Thais. We are taught to be conscientious in our behaviors and words" and "it is common to see Thai people becoming slow in speaking up or responding in interactions even among people who are skillful communicators as they have to take time to think carefully before they interact. It is this cultural value that teaches them to be slow in responding" (Chaidaroon, 2003, p.303).

In addition, Thai students are used to learning grammar rather than practicing speaking. They are often directed by teachers to learn grammar to pass exams. A report conducted at an Australian university stated that their teachers, "even when teaching us writing, teachers still corrected and gave feedback in terms of grammatical evaluating such as the right order of subject, object or using tenses in each sentence". This brings us to the conclusion that students learn "English theoretically and not pragmatically" (Nguyen, 2011, p.16). As it is commonly admitted that Asian students of English as a second/foreign language are reticent and passive learners (Cheng, 2000; Jones, 1999; Chaidaroon, 2003; Kim, 2006). When we question the causes of success and failures in language learning, Thai students, like Japanese students, use the "Attribution theory." They attribute external factors (such as teachers and classroom atmosphere) to success and internal factors (such as lack of ability and effort) to failure (Mori, Gobel, Thepsiri, & Pojanapunya, 2010).
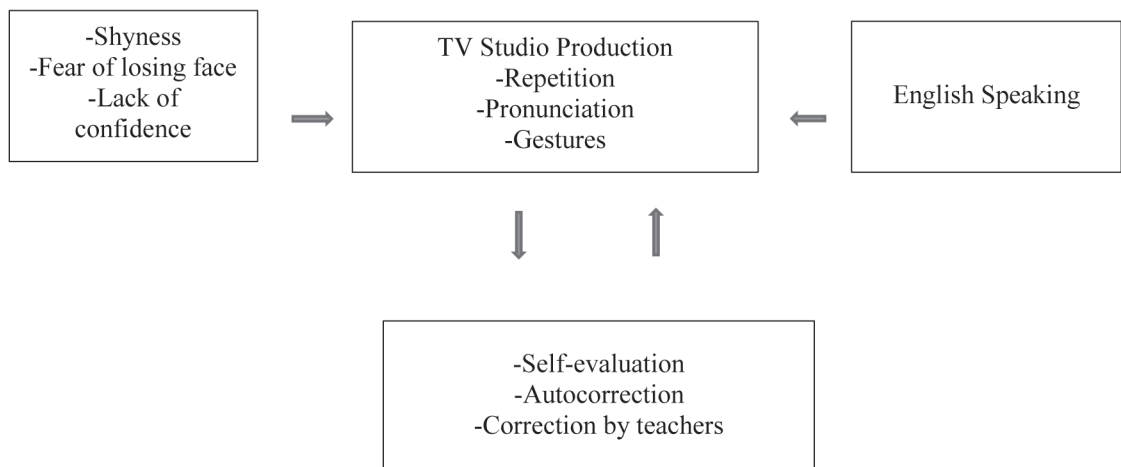
Holmes and Riddiford (2011), in a study focusing on the relationship between classroom and workplace, stated that "socio-pragmatic skills have been identified as important components of communicative competence in the workplace". The use of a TV Production Studio in foreign language learning can play an intermediate role between the classroom and the workplace. Putting learners in a workplace can cost a lot of money and also requires a significant amount of time for going back and forth between classroom and workplace.

As students who get involved in this practice have to go on stage and speak, we are then in the field of pragmatics. Bouton (1996) gave a short practical definition of "pragmatics and language learning" stating that it refers to all kinds of communicative competences that a learner would like to acquire. So, when it is stated that a language course aims at the development of communicative competence as their primary objective, "pragmatics was coming into its own also".Norrick & Bublitz (2011, p.3) define "pragmatics" as

"a systematic investigation of what and how people mean when they use language as a vehicle of action in a particular context and with a particular goal in mind. Thus, the context-dependency of utterance meaning is the central component of more narrowly defined accounts of pragmatics" and *"includes patterns of linguistic actions, language functions, types of inferences, principles of communication, frames of knowledge, attitude and belief, as well as organizational principles of text and discourse. Pragmatics deals with meaning-in-context, which for analytical purposes can be viewed from different perspectives (that of the speaker, the recipient, the analyst, etc.).*

Lonergan (1990, p.6), in the article entitled "Making the Most of Your Video Camera" as a tool in language learning, stated that

"an exciting aspect of learning a foreign language today is the acquisition of a new set of communication skills in the target language. Not only are new words and sentence patterns learned, they are coupled with cultural insights, with different gestures and body language, and with different degrees of social appropriacy of language in various contexts [...] Making video recordings of language learners and playing their communicative performance back to them for analysis and evaluation stimulates and interests language learners in a related way. It allows them to see themselves operating in the new environment of the target language, offering an overview of their use of language which goes beyond just words and sentences".

| -Shyness
-Fear of losing face
-Lack of confidence | ⇒ | TV Studio Production
-Repetition
-Pronunciation
-Gestures | ⇐ | English Speaking |

-Self-evaluation
-Autocorrection
-Correction by teachers

For the task given to school students, in this experimentation, we were only limited to the presentation of a tourist place selected by each student.

Research Methodology

1. Population or Samples design

After organizing 3 trainings on the use of voice recognition in smartphones or tablets for students mainly from junior high schools (matthayomseuksā tønton) in the southern part of Thailand, a sample group of 89 students was formed. In the third training, we had some students come from two information education schools in Phuket.

We used the quota sampling (gender) and the purposive sampling (tourist places) methods by dividing our population into two groups: male and female students. We selected 3 male students and 3 female students for observing English speaking problems in their presentation because female students were more numerous than male students.

2. Measurement and Data collection design

As it is described above, we used 10 video clips recorded during the trainings for observation: 3 video productions performed by 3 male students and 7 videos performed by 7 female students. The scales of measurement are based on these topics: errors of pronunciation committed by students, lack of confidence symptoms observed during the recording in TV Studio Production of the Faculty of International Studies.

3. Analytical design

For the analytical design, we will describe our observations and explain the relationships between each observed subject.

Results

As mentioned in the above section, we selected 3 male students and 7 female students. They were asked to choose a pleasant tourist place. To avoid any judgment to the students and their schools, we replaced students' names and schools with ***. Most students asked to use an autocue or teleprompter.

The tourist places selected by students we separated into two groups: Thailand and abroad. For Thailand, Hua Hin, Phromthep Cape, Emerald Pool, Sentosa, Bangriang Temple, Yanui Beach, Patong Beach, Phi Phi Island, Sarasin Bridge, Doi Suthep and the Emerald Buddha Temple were selected. Foreign attractions that were selected were Mount Fuji, Myeongdong, Carnival of Rio de Janeiro, the Eiffel Tower, Big Ben, Seoul, Harajuku, Halong Bay, the Colosseum, Hawaiin Beaches, Mecca and Tiananmen Square.

Student	Tourist place	Speaking script
M1	Patong Beach, Phuket	Hello, let me introduce myself. My name is ***. My nick name is ***. I am a student from *** school. I am at Patong Beach. It is in Phuket. Today is sunny. Patong Beach is famous for swimming, surfing, sunbathing. Patong Beach is comfortable. You will envoy delicious seafood.
M2	Walking Street at Tapae, Chaingmai, Thailand	Good morning, May I introduce myself. My name is ***. Today I am walking on Walking Street at Tapae in Chaingmai. It is opened on Sunday evenings. It is located at Three King Monument. There are many many shops which you can buy food and souvenirs. You will love to visit it. Thank you, bye-bye.
M3	The Great Wall, Beijing, China	Hello, everybody. My name is ***. My nickname is time. I am studying at *** School. Today, I'm at the Great wall of China, which the longest wall in the world. It is very interesting because it is a cultural heritage of China. I like it. See you. See you later.
F1	Animal farm	Now I am standing at the collar farm. This farm is a place where we are taking care of farm animals. But first of all, may I introduce myself… Let's begin. I will start with cows. Here they feed them for milk, so all of them are pretty giant. We are so lucky today. You know why? Because it is summer. It's time for a new baby cow to be born. And we are going to visit and feed the calves. It is so cute, right? Next pigs. Here it is. Yes, it is a pig, but why they are so small. They are only 20 cms tall because it is a pet pig. Normally we feed pigs for food. I will tell you why pigs became pet pigs. One day the villager found a nice pain piggy, so he saved it. He loved it enough to make it a pet. Later it gave birth, so there were many pet pigs. They became pets like today. When they became pet pigs, their size gets smaller, not fierce. And today, we are looking at the pet pigs soon. For the pet pigs, we are going to look at 2 types of pet pigs, microteacup pet pigs, and pot belly pet pigs. If you want to have a little pet pigs, either a microteacup pet pigs or pot belly pet pigs, you need to prepare food, shelter, and protection. Please keep in mind that pet pigs don't like cold weather, so you have to make sure that you keep them warm. If you are ready for this, get one pet pig. It must be your great little pet for you.

Student	Tourist place	Speaking script
F2	Morakot Emerald Pool, Krabi, Thailand	The Emerald pool is a tourist attraction. It is in Krabi Province. It is formed by rivers from lowland. It is the ultimate source where Gurney's Pitta which had to be extinct 100 years ago found. This pool takes water from Pra-bangkhram mountain range. The water is green like emerald, so we call it Emerald Pool.I hope you visit Emerald Pool. Bye!!
F3	Eiffel Tower, Paris, France	Bonjour, everybody. My name is ***. I am in Mattayom 1 at *** School. Paris is my dream place. Paris has many beautiful places, but now I have one to present that is Eiffel Tower where I want to go. Now I am in Paris. Paris is the capital city of France. It is the most beautiful city. Many people travel to the Eiffel Tower because it's the symbol of Paris. Au revoir!.
F4	Myongdong, Seoul, South Korea	Annyeonghaseyo, My nickname is ***. I come from *** School. Today, I'm at Myeongdong. Do you know Myeongdong? tik tok tik tok OH! I think you don't know Myeongdong. Ok! I will tell you. Myeongdong is the fashion street in Korea. More than 1,000 people visit here every day. The students, the youngsters, the workers and the tourists come here to buy clothes and accessories. There are also many hair salons, cafe, cinemas and international restaurants. If you come to Korea, don't forget to visit Myongdong. Good bye for today, Annyeongh.
F5	Phromthep Cape, Phuket, Thailand	Hello everyone. My name is ***. I am studying in Mattayom 1 at *** School. I am standing at Lam Phromthep, Phuket. Lam Phromthep is beautiful and there are many people coming *to travel at Lam Phromthep. Thank you.
F6	Maldives	Hi! My name is ***. My nickname is ***. I'm studying at *** School. Today, I will take you to a beautiful tourist attraction, which is "Maldives". Maldives are small Islands surrounded by nature, sea and corals. Snorkeling is a highlighted activity. However, if you can't do it, you can watch the dolphins or you can paddle a canoe. Welcome to Maldives. Thank you.
F7	Banriang Temple, Phangnga, Thailand	Good morning everybody. My name is ***. I am studying in Mattayom 1 at *** School. Today, I'm at Bangriang temple. It's in Thapput district, Phangnga province. It's on the mountain and surrounded by many big trees. There are Guanyin and many Buddha statues for people to worship. We can go there by car. Bangriang temple is the most beautiful temple in Phangnga. Hope to see you at Bangriang temple. Good bye.

Below are the observations from the video production process. We helped the students by preparing each tourist picture selected by the students and created a picture marked by the position where we want the presenter to be standing or sitting. Due to lack of time (two-day training: the first day for the use of voice recognition in smartphone and the second the presentation about a tourist place selected by students), we asked each student to write a very short script about his or her selected place.

M1: It was interesting to see M1, from a formal school. He asked to present his script five times describing Patong Beach, the famous tourist place of Phuket. He could not pronounce clearly the difference between "I am standing/I am studying". The pronoun "it" was pronounced as if it was completely deleted. The article "a", in front of a common noun, was not pronounced.

M2: He is from an informal school. He repeated his script twice. After listening to his script, we found that he might have a language disorder because he could not pronounce clearly some consonants and vowels. It was evident that this student lacked confidence. At the beginning of his speech, there was a bit of speech repetition. But, after evaluating the rest of his speaking, I found that he could speak English fairly well. To be honest, I have no experience in teaching English or French to a student having this language pathology.

M3: By standing on the Great Wall of China, one of the 7 wonders in the world, the student showed more confidence at the beginning of the presentation. He gradually slowed down his speaking and found some classic pronunciation problems: for example, he pronounced "must" instead of "much". A slight southern accent can be also perceived in his speaking.

F1: This student produced the longest script for her presentation about pet pigs. We wondered when she told us that she would like to talk about an animal farm. We had no idea what pictures to prepare until she revealed that she would present pet pigs. She was well mastered in her English: fluency, oral expression, gestures and body language.

F2: The student could present her emerald pool, located at Krabi province with confidence. She was taught to use gestures by expanding the arm in front of the "emerald water" in order to invite her spectators to witness themselves what she was talking about. During the presentation, she had to change the position: from standing position to sitting position. The spectators can see from the archived video that she was sitting by the pool.

F3: The place selected by the student was the Eiffel Tower which is located in Paris, in France. The student was very excited and committed small mistakes. She had to retake five times. She needed subsequent training for practicing her pronunciation and controlling her emotions.

F4: Myeongdong in South Korea was presented lively and lovely by the student. She knew how to search to get the right transcription of "Hello" in Korean. She asked to retake the script twice. The second time took place after all students had finished their production. That showed that she was highly motivated. A special remark is that she changed her hairstyle to make a new look. Her English level was good. She knew well how to play with our camera.

F5: This student was selected because she cried on the first day of training when we obliged all students to come to practice their speaking one by one in front of the class. We gave her special attention by asking a lecturer to record her voice in the student's smartphone. She was asked to listen to the audio clip and practice her pronunciation as much as possible. We found that she could overcome stress had a quite good result in speaking.

F6: The student selected a very pleasant tourist place desired by all tourists in the world: the Maldives. She enjoyed presenting the place while smiling the whole time. She asked to retake the script after all students had done their presentation. She has a slight problem in pronouncing the word "tourist" in her script. We heard "toilet" rather than "tourist". It might be due to the fact that she did not see the sentence well in the autocue.

F7: The presentation of this selected tourist place was very interesting because the student allowed us to identify her need: using English to serve her community by training junior and senior high school local guides. Located in Phangnga, the Bangriang Temple is worth a more developed project in order to receive a budget from its local authority to hire a local guide who can speak English well when a foreign tourist arrives there.

M1:Patong Beach, Phuket	M2:Walking Street Market, Chiangmai	M3:The Great Wall, China	F1:Animal farm	F2:Emeral Pool, Krabi
F3: Eiffel Tower, France	F4: Myeongdong, South Korea	F5: Phromthep Cape, Phuket	F7: Maldives	F7: Bangriang Temple, Phangnga

Conclusion and Discussion

As explained in the above result, these students encountered some common basic pronunciation problems. According to our observations illustrated by archived videos, we can see pronunciation errors, For example "is land" for "island"; "must" for "much"; "paple" for "people"; "studying" and "standing", etc. By using a short script, most students showed difficulties in pronunciation of English in daily life. The use of a TV Production Studio confirmed that English teachers should use more teaching activities related to speaking competence because Thai students will have to use more English when people from the ASEAN community visit Thailand.

Using this technology, in English classrooms of Thai schools, as a tool to help students observe themselves when they start speaking can play an important role in foreign language learning. For us, it is an innovation and it answers the needs of language teachers: throwing students in the swimming pool and after that see how they can survive. Students come to the TV Production Studio to practice target language as often as they can like most swimmers who go to the swimming pool to train their body.

It is interesting to recall the case of M2 because this new technology allowed us this established fact. If Fialkova & Yelenevskaya (2010) state that "proverbs are often used as a clinical test for schizophrenia, as well as aphasia and Alzheimer's disease", we will say that this TV Studio Production helped us to identify, in this case, a language disorder (speech repetition).

This first experimentation conducted with 89 junior high school students allowed us to explore the use of this television studio applied to EFL learning. One of the advantages in using this new technology as a part of teaching language is it helps us to measure student's competence in several angles: we discovered how students solved their problems during video production; how they used their gestures and how often. The disadvantage encountered during the 3 periods of training was the lack of time because some students needed more time to find and solve their problems. As mentioned in the abstract, TV Studio Production is highly applicable to language learning because the cost of material and software used for running the video production is not as expensive as in the past.

Finally, we don't conclude that this technology will make a revolution in foreign language learning in Thailand like the Crazy English that Li Yang promoted in China. We do agree with the name "Crazy English" chosen by Li Yang because this word reflects my belief that "everything in life should be done with whole-hearted passion and abandon". If whoever succeeds in learning English with this method by "practicing shouting English words, phrases or sentences on the roof of a building" (Woodward, 2005), we can find similar activities if learners come to the TV Production Studio in order to record what he would speak or shout.

We had some experiences in learning French in our rubber plantation when we were young. We were speaking alone very loudly in the night. As a rubber tapper, we had to wake up at 3 or 4 o'clock in order to best exploit the rubber tapping. In this case, we have a similar experience in language learning. We agree that "shouting English" is a good method because it is "kinetic. It is learning by doing. It is effective. It works" (Woodward, 2005).

To be honest, from this experimentation, we cannot yet develop the idea that all observed mistakes committed by trained students represent common "mistakes" committed by Thai English speakers because of the lack of English speaking corpus performed by Thai Anglophones. "Thai English" or "Thailish" might be studied when we Thai people are able to speak more fluently and at a national level.

Suggestions

For whoever is interested in this new technology, we can set up a research group for the promotion of the use of TV Production Studio in language learning. In fact, this technology, on its own, is not limited to language learning because it can serve also students who wish to best develop their speaking competence in order to perform an attractive presentation. Another point is that Thai teachers of English should apply drama techniques used for English language learning (Maley & Duff, 1978; Heldenbrand, 2003; Chauhan, 2004).

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