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# Development of Phonics Teaching Instructional Material for English Teachers in Thailand

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## Abstract

This study aimed to develop phonics instructional materials tailored for English teachers in Thailand to tackle specific pronunciation challenges encountered by Thai speakers of English. It utilized a mixed-methods research approach, integrating both quantitative and qualitative methodologies. The research sample consisted of 2,000 Thai individuals selected through stratified random sampling, ensuring diverse representation across various regions, age groups, and socioeconomic statuses, thus providing comprehensive coverage of the population's phonetic challenges.

Quantitative data were gathered through a structured survey designed to pinpoint specific pronunciation challenges at the alphabet, word, and phoneme levels, particularly focusing on sounds absent in the Thai language. Qualitative data were collected from 300 English teachers who implemented the developed phonics materials, "Phonics Focus" in their classrooms. These teachers provided feedback via reflection notes, which were analyzed to evaluate the effectiveness of the materials.

The results revealed significant pronunciation difficulties, particularly at the alphabet and word levels, with 47% of participants encountering challenges at the alphabet level, 31% at the word level, and 22% with sounds not found in Thai. Additionally, rhythm analysis indicated a distinct preference for three-syllable English phrases across all age groups, with 92% of the surveyed population reporting a notable comfort level.

Based on these findings, the "Phonics Focus" materials were developed, incorporating segments such as A to Z Phonics, AEIOU Phonics, and FIXED Phonics to address specific phonetic challenges. Feedback from teachers indicated high satisfaction, with the majority achieving competence level three or above in teaching English pronunciation using the newly developed phonics approach.

## Introduction

English pronunciation stands as a pivotal facet of language acquisition, presenting unique challenges for learners situated in regions where linguistic disparities

with English are notably pronounced. In this context, Thai learners grapple with a linguistic landscape vastly different from English, encountering specific hurdles in their pursuit of accurate pronunciation. This study

undertakes a detailed investigation into the effectiveness of employing phonics methods to address these challenges, thereby shedding light on the intricate intersection of language pedagogy, phonetics, and cross-cultural communication (Akhatovna, 2022; Cahyaningrum, 2023; Futrakul, 2022). The foundational distinctions between the Thai and English languages form the bedrock for pronunciation difficulties faced by Thai learners. The tonal nature of Thai, set against the non-tonal backdrop of English, along with variations in phonemic structures, introduces a layer of complexity to the acquisition of accurate pronunciation (Amelia, 2023; Dandee & Pornwiriyaikit, 2022; Ehri, 2020).

A comprehensive review of the historical development and global integration of phonics in English language education is addressed. This historical analysis provides valuable insights into the adaptability and relevance of phonics in diverse linguistic and cultural contexts, offering a rich context for the current study (Low, 2021; Nieser & Cárdenas-Hagan, 2020; Piyamat & Deekawong, 2021). Acknowledging that pronunciation extends beyond mere phonetic accuracy, a dedicated section of the research explores the broader dimensions of pronunciation as a multi-faceted skill. Factors such as stress patterns, intonation, and rhythm are dissected as integral components contributing to communicative competence in pronunciation (Malik & Asif, 2022; Sanden, MacPhee, Hartle, Poggendorf, & Zuiderveen, 2022; Sun & Xie, 2021).

The study further examines the interconnectedness of pronunciation with other language skills, including speaking, listening, reading, and writing. This holistic approach informs the development of a comprehensive pedagogical strategy, recognizing the synergy between these skills in shaping a learner's overall linguistic proficiency (Nieser & Cárdenas-Hagan, 2020; Nugraha, Suminar, Octaviana, Hidayat, & Ismail, 2019; Putri & Harisma, 2023). Highlighting the paramount importance of mastering pronunciation, the research emphasizes its far-reaching impact on communication, language proficiency, and the broader sociolinguistic context. The relevance of proficient pronunciation in a globalized landscape is underscored, emphasizing its role in effective cross-cultural communication.

Identifying gaps in existing pronunciation instruction methods serves as a springboard for emphasizing the need for a more targeted and systematic approach. This section establishes a compelling rationale for the exploration of the potential efficacy of

phonics-based methods in addressing the pronounced linguistic disparities faced by Thai learners (Ruengwatthakee & Koptelov, 2019; Stainthorp, 2020). The study goes on to delineate the stark linguistic differences between Thai and English, particularly in terms of tonality, vowel sounds, and phoneme structures. It posits that phonics materials can be purposefully designed to explicitly address these differences, offering a tailored approach with targeted exercises and examples aligned with the specific pronunciation challenges encountered by Thai learners (Phopayak, 2023; Srimanothip & González, 2021; Suminto & Bram, 2021). Phonics, as the research contends, provides a systematic and structured approach to teaching pronunciation.

The research embarks on an exploration of how these linguistic disparities manifest in specific pronunciation challenges. This examination considers the influence of tonality, vowel sounds, and consonant clusters, providing a nuanced understanding of the intricate phonetic landscape that Thai learners navigate. This understanding, in turn, serves as a foundation for the subsequent scrutiny of phonics as a targeted pedagogical intervention (Gozali, 2019; Kumar, 2023; Mompean & Fouz-Gonzalez, 2021). Delving into the theoretical foundations of phonics, the study critically examines how this instructional approach aligns with cognitive processes involved in language acquisition. The systematic relationship between sounds and symbols in phonics offers a structured framework, contrasting with traditional rote learning methods and potentially offering more effective avenues for overcoming pronunciation challenges (Khoshmuratovna, 2023; Moats, 2019; Roatchanaphaphong, 2020).

The development of phonics materials, the study argues, empowers educators to guide learners through a meticulous process of connecting sounds to letters and understanding the nuanced phonetic rules of English. This systematic instruction is posited to enhance clarity and reduce ambiguity in the pronunciation learning journey (Tiewcharoenkij, Kanokkamalade, & Wichian, 2023; Wama, 2023). Moreover, well-designed phonics materials are envisioned to incorporate interactive elements, ranging from audiovisual aids to engaging activities and interactive exercises. This interactivity is suggested to inject dynamism into the learning process, making pronunciation improvement a more dynamic and enjoyable endeavor and fostering a positive attitude among students (Wichayut & Sitthitikul, 2019; Yusoff, Abullah, Ismail, & Shaari, 2023).

Additionally, the study proposes that phonics materials can be meticulously customized to incorporate examples and content that are not only linguistically relevant but also culturally relatable to Thai learners. By integrating familiar contexts and scenarios into the materials, comprehension and retention are expected to be heightened, rendering the learning experience more meaningful for students (Mekawy, Abu-Rahmah, & Albaaly, 2021; Putra, 2023). Tailoring phonics materials to address the unique challenges faced by Thai learners is seen as a crucial strategy to provide targeted support. By focusing on difficulties with certain vowel sounds or consonant clusters, educators can ensure that learners receive guidance on the aspects of pronunciation that prove particularly challenging for them (Kumar, 2023; Mompean & Fouz-Gonzalez, 2021).

The adaptability of phonics materials to cater to learners at different proficiency levels is another facet explored in the research. Whether a student is a beginner or at an advanced stage of language learning, the adaptable nature of materials is touted as allowing for a customized learning experience that meets individual needs, thus enhancing the effectiveness of pronunciation instruction (Mompean & Fouz-Gonzalez, 2021; Ruengwatthakee & Koptelov, 2019; Srimanothip & González, 2021). Moreover, the research posits that the development of phonics materials is not solely beneficial for students but also aids teachers in delivering effective instruction. Providing educators with well-structured materials is seen as equipping them with the necessary tools to facilitate pronunciation learning, especially in instances where they may not have had extensive training in phonics methods (Cahyaningrum, 2023; Dandee & Pornwiriyakit, 2022; Sun & Xie, 2021).

Furthermore, the study contends that phonics instruction goes beyond immediate pronunciation improvement. Rather, it is depicted as laying the groundwork for long-term language skill development. The research suggests that investing in the creation of phonics materials reflects a commitment to building a robust foundation for English language proficiency. This encompasses not only pronunciation but also extends to reading and spelling skills, positioning phonics as a holistic and foundational component of language education (Amelia, 2023; Phopayak, 2023; Putri & Harisma, 2023).

The invention or development of phonics materials that are meticulously tailored to the needs of Thai learners, addressing the unique linguistic

challenges they face. Such materials, it posits, provide a systematic, interactive, and culturally relevant approach to pronunciation learning, contributing to both short-term improvement and the long-term language proficiency of students. Furthermore, these materials are seen as supporting teachers in delivering effective instruction, fostering a more comprehensive and sustainable approach to English language education. The culmination of these efforts is envisioned to contribute not only to the immediate enhancement of pronunciation skills but also to the broader development of language proficiency and communication skills in the globalized landscape.

Objectives

- 1. To study problems in pronouncing English words or phrases by Thai people.
- 2. To investigate the comfortable and natural rhythm of pronouncing English words or phrases for Thai people.
- 3. To develop phonics teaching instructional material for English teachers in Thailand.
- 4. To explore the effectiveness of phonics teaching instructional material for English teachers in Thailand.

Conceptual framework

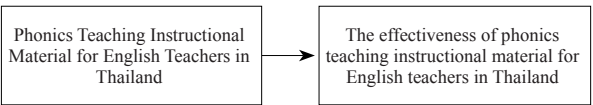


Figure 1 Conceptual framework

Ethics and data protection

This study was subjected to an ethical review by the Ethics Committee, which oversees research projects that involve human participants. It received approval under the certification number SDU-RDI-SHS 2024-031, issued by Suan Dusit University. In safeguarding the rights of the participants, the researcher undertook to clearly communicate the objectives of the study, the methodologies employed, and the participants' rights. It was emphasized that engagement in the study was entirely at the discretion of the participants, who were afforded the option to either consent to participate or decline. Furthermore, participants were informed of their right to discontinue their involvement at any point during the study. Measures were implemented to ensure the

confidentiality of the information collected, including the anonymization of participant data and the subsequent destruction of documents upon the completion of the research.

### Research methodology

The methodology for this research is organized into four distinct phases, each aligning with the objectives of the study. These phases involve both quantitative and qualitative methods to comprehensively address the pronunciation challenges faced by Thai learners of English and to evaluate the effectiveness of the phonics instructional material developed.

#### Phase 1: Identification of Pronunciation Challenges

**Objective:** To study problems in pronouncing English words or phrases by Thai people.

**Participants and sampling:** The initial quantitative phase involves a survey of 2,000 Thai individuals selected through stratified random sampling to represent various regional dialects and socioeconomic statuses across Thailand. This ensures diversity and generalizability of the findings.

**Survey methodology and tools:** The survey is designed to identify specific difficulties at the alphabet, word, and phonemic levels. Survey questions are formulated to assess difficulties in pronouncing specific sounds that do not exist in the Thai language. Examples of items include: "Identify the English sounds that you find most difficult to pronounce" and "Rate your difficulty level for each listed English sound."

**Data analysis:** Descriptive statistics such as frequencies and percentages are used to quantify the common pronunciation challenges, while comparative analyses, including chi-square tests, are employed to examine regional differences in pronunciation difficulties.

#### Phase 2: Assessment of Natural Rhythm Preferences

**Objective:** To investigate the comfortable and natural rhythm of pronouncing English words or phrases for Thai people.

**Participants and sampling:** This phase involves a sub-sample of 1,200 participants stratified by age groups (6-12, 13-18, and 19-25 years) from the original survey cohort.

**Survey methodology and tools:** The survey focuses on rhythm preferences in English pronunciation. Participants are asked to pronounce phrases with varying

syllabic structures and rate their comfort level. Example items include: "Pronounce the following phrases and rate how naturally they come to you."

**Data analysis:** The analysis includes calculating mean scores and standard deviations for comfort levels associated with different syllabic structures. ANOVA was used to explore age-related differences in rhythm preferences.

#### Phase 3: Development of Phonics Instructional Material

**Objective:** To develop phonics teaching instructional material for English teachers in Thailand.

**Participants:** Collaboration with linguists and experienced English teachers in Thailand to ensure cultural and linguistic appropriateness of the materials.

**Material development:** Based on the data collected from the previous phases, instructional materials named "Phonics Focus" were developed. These materials include sets of phonics exercises and interactive activities designed to address the specific pronunciation difficulties identified.

**Validation of materials:** Expert review was conducted where selected English teachers and linguists evaluated the content for clarity, appropriateness, and effectiveness. Modifications were made based on feedback to ensure the materials meet learning objectives effectively.

#### Phase 4: Effectiveness of Phonics Teaching Instructional Material

**Objective:** To explore the effectiveness of phonics teaching instructional material for English teachers in Thailand.

**Participants and sampling:** A cohort of 300 English teachers from various regions in Thailand was selected using purposive sampling to participate in a training workshop and then implement the materials in their classrooms.

**Implementation and feedback collection:** Teachers used the "Phonics Focus" materials in their classrooms. Reflection notes and feedback forms were collected to gather qualitative data on the teachers' experiences and the perceived impact on students' pronunciation skills.

**Data analysis:** Thematic analysis is employed to analyze qualitative data from reflection notes to identify common themes related to material effectiveness and teacher satisfaction. Descriptive statistics are used to summarize the level of satisfaction and perceived effectiveness among teachers.

Research results

This section presents a detailed analysis of the findings obtained from both quantitative and qualitative phases of the study, directly addressing the objectives set forth in the research. The data gathered and analyzed from 2,000 and 1,200 participants as well as the implementation feedback from 300 English teachers, provide a comprehensive insight into the pronunciation challenges faced by Thai learners and the effectiveness of the "Phonics Focus" instructional materials.

Quantitative results

Table 1 Pronunciation Challenges

Pronunciation Level	Percentage of Participants Facing Difficulties
Alphabet Level	47%
Word Level	31%
Sounds not in Thai	22%

Table 1 reveals that the greatest challenges are at the alphabet level, highlighting the importance of phonetic instruction that focuses on individual sounds within the English language. The complexity at the word level indicates difficulties in sound combinations, whereas the lower percentage for non-existent Thai sounds suggests a specific need for targeted phonics strategies.

Table 2 Rhythm Preferences by Age Group

Age Group	Preference for 3-syllable Phrases (%)
6-12	93%
13-18	92%
19-25	91%

Table 2 demonstrates a strong preference across all age groups for three-syllable structures, indicating a natural rhythm that phonics instruction should incorporate to maximize comfort and effectiveness in pronunciation.

Qualitative results

Development of Phonics Focus Implementation Teachers' Development:

The qualitative data collected from the reflection notes of 300 teachers showed significant professional growth in their ability to implement phonics effectively. Many teachers reported an increase in confidence and competence in teaching English pronunciation, moving from basic understanding to proficient and advanced levels of instructional capability.

Table 3 Teacher Satisfaction and Competence Level

Competence Level	Percentage of Teachers
Basic	10%
Competent	40%
Proficient	35%
Advanced	15%

As shown in Table 3, a substantial majority of teachers achieving a competent level or higher in phonics-based pronunciation teaching, with a noteworthy 15% reaching an advanced level. This reflects the high effectiveness of "Phonics Focus" in enhancing teachers' instructional skills and satisfaction.

Discussion

1. Pronunciation Challenges: The findings confirm that Thai learners face significant pronunciation challenges, particularly at the alphabet and word levels. The development of "Phonics Focus" aimed at these specific challenges has been validated as an effective approach (Khoshmuratovna, 2023; Moats, 2019; Roatchanaphaphong, 2020).

2. Natural Rhythm Preferences: The data underscored the preference for a three-syllable rhythm across different age groups, guiding the rhythmic structure of the phonics materials. This adaptation ensures that the learning materials align with the natural linguistic patterns of Thai learners, facilitating easier and more effective learning (Ruengwatthakee & Koptelov, 2019; Stainthorp, 2020).

3. Development of Instructional Material: "Phonics Focus" was crafted to address both specific phonetic challenges and rhythm preferences. The material includes interactive components that cater to various learning styles, enhancing engagement and retention (Mompean & Fouz-Gonzalez, 2021; Ruengwatthakee & Koptelov, 2019; Srimanothip & González, 2021).

4. Effectiveness of Instructional Material: The positive feedback from teachers, demonstrated through qualitative data and satisfaction ratings, confirms the high level of teacher satisfaction and the capability enhancement in pronunciation teaching. Teachers' reflections provided insights into their observational assessments of student improvements and their personal satisfaction with the instructional materials (Amelia, 2023; Phopayak, 2023; Putri & Harisma, 2023).

The comprehensive approach adopted in this study, encompassing both quantitative and qualitative methodologies, has effectively addressed the research



objectives. The development of "Phonics Focus" not only meets the specific needs identified through rigorous data analysis but also significantly contributes to the professional development of English teachers in Thailand. The high levels of satisfaction and competence among teachers are a testament to the success of the instructional materials, promising a sustained positive impact on English language education in Thailand. Future research is recommended to explore long-term effects and demographic variations to further refine and tailor phonics instruction.

### Future research recommendations

1. Venture into longitudinal studies to assess the enduring impact of Phonics Focus over extended temporal horizons.

2. Explore how the material's effectiveness evolves and sustains over time, providing insights into its long-term educational implications.

3. Delve into demographic variations and their potential ramifications on the effectiveness of Phonics Focus.

4. Examine how age, regional differences, and other demographic factors influence the learning outcomes, necessitating in-depth statistical methodologies for robust analysis.

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