

Thai Prosody Problems with First Year Students

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Abstract—Thai language is difficult in all four language skills, especially reading. The first year students may have different abilities in reading, so a teacher is required to find out a student's reading level so that the teacher can help and support them till they can develop and resolve each problem themselves. This research is aimed to study the prosody problem among Thai students and will be focused on first year Thai students in the second semester. A total of 58 students were involved in this study. Four obstacles were found:

1. Interpretation from what they read and write
2. Incorrectness Pronunciation of Prosody
3. Incorrectness in Rhythm of the Poem
4. Incorrectness of the Thai Poem Pronunciation

Keywords—Interpretation, Pronunciation, Prosody, Reading.

I. INTRODUCTION

THIS reading Course- THH 1202, is a part of Bachelor of Arts, program in Thai Studies, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University, Thailand, and it is the requirement for all first-year students with the aim to develop their reading skills and support other fields of studies with effectiveness. However there are many students who do not realize the importance of reading and often make mistakes in reading. From the observation last semester, this enables the researcher find out basic problems that students require to develop, for instance *Thai pronunciation, sentence analysis, reading in poems and prose*, and so on. Thus, the researcher is interested in studying problems and causes that influences to reading abilities of students and effective ways leading to classroom management and instruction.

Reading is an important process of human communication; especially it is a way that everyone can search for knowledge. Wanna Buakert said, "The importance of reading helps readers understand general knowledge and technical terms to develop personalities that readers prefer and enables them more prudence, delicacy to themselves and others." [1] Moreover, there is lots of academic professors share meaning of reading. For example, Supanee Waratorn said that "reading is like decoding something influenced by messaging and symbol observation. Reading is a complex process that relates to 1) perception: word referring to symbols of alphabets 2) understanding the combination between meaning and alphabet. Understanding of language requires reading skill and translation complied altogether and links to what reader read". [2] Sombat Janpengun and Samnieng Maneekarn suggest "the compilation of thought in the book and summary with three

mean factors namely translation, interpretation and word modification." [3] From definition above, reading is the process of perceiving data or information of brain by requiring factors that help understand systematically. That's to understand and perceive words from learning and experiences that need both abilities in translation and interpretation. This can guarantee the success of reading.

With effective reading skill, it benefits to communicate or convey with others easily and precisely; besides, this skill is necessary for self-development that allows creating and having more fun. It is with no doubt that reading skill plays important roles in all levels of Thai education. For the university level, students are required to take this course as a requirement

On the part of instructional management, the researcher and lecturer studied methods that enabled all learners to solve problems themselves with advisors to guide practical ways. The researcher also studied various researches from different sources about ways to solve those problems and found benefits of doing classroom research. The researcher came to the conclusion that to do classroom research, this enabled all lecturers or teachers to become aware of the problems and figured out ways to solve those problems suitably and systematically. [4]

The research of Paiboon Chuwatthanakij with the topic "The Development of Learning Outcomes towards Second-Year Students by Applying Project of Constitutional Law Course (LAW 2304)" from the first semester of the year 2012, found that classroom management is the only way to find out the problem of students precisely and also know more problems among their friends. [5] To conduct social research enables the classroom researchers to know how to develop human thought and behavior in a social context. [6]

In addition to researching and studying, the researchers also conducted classroom management by urging learners to find out problems based on Problem Based Learning (PBL) and allowing them to create their own projects with an eye to analyze and synthesize ways of solving themselves.

II. OBJECTIVES

This research is for the purpose of studying the cause of reading problems among first-year Thai students within the Thai Studies course provided by the Humanities and Social Science department of Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University.

III. METHOD

Data was collected to (1) analyze the course content, design the exercises, tests, and questionnaires (2) apply toward 58 sets of interviewing questionnaires as a tool of research: Pre-test, Mid-Tests, and Post-Test (3) apply the lessons for the

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researcher to divide the students into 5 groups (4) discuss the problems observed (5) and summarize, compile and report the result.

IV. RESULT

The researcher found problems from group work and each member had to participate in that group from the beginning of the semester till the end of the semester as shown in Figs. 1-4.

A. Interpretation from What They Read

1. Lack in skimming and scanning reading
2. Unable to summarize what they read
3. Unable to analyze and synthesize
4. Unable to criticize literary works



Fig. 1 Groups of students present in class

The conclusions of these results found the students had a lack of proverbs, sayings, similes, figure of speech, and metaphors. Their reading skills were limited when it came to scanning, skimming and detailed reading. When asked to repeat what they read, their interpretation and comprehension was poor. They lacked in knowledge of process of writing and categories of books. They lacked in knowledge of literary works and poems.

B. Incorrectness Pronunciation of Prosody

1. Unclear Pronouncing: sound /R/ร/ /L/ล/ /S/ส/ /KW/คว/ PR/ปร/ and so forth
2. Incorrect in consonant pronunciation
3. Incorrect ways of reading, especially those words from Bali and Sanskrit
4. Cannot read Thai word
5. Incorrect in pronunciation tones
6. Not smooth and melodic

The conclusions of these results found the students had Problems of articulation, illiteracy, local dialects, less interest in the root of exotic language, error in Thai Grammar since childhood, and less practice.



Fig. 2 Students discuss issues of reading

C. Incorrectness in Rhythm of the Poem

1. No understanding of meaning of each word and unclear pronouncing
2. Unable to categorize each type of poem.
3. Cannot explain the different types of poetry.
4. Reading poem in wrong sounds and distorted melodies

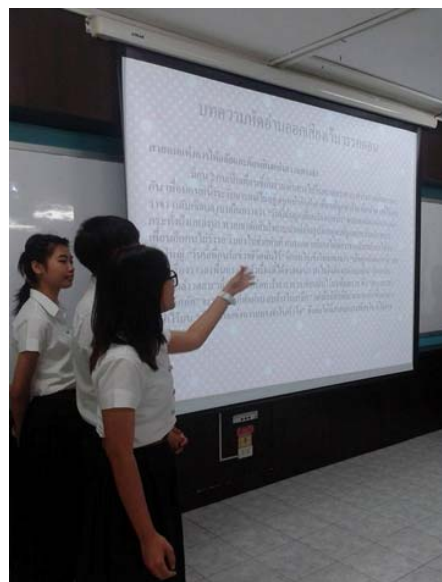


Fig. 3 Students share their views

The conclusions of these results found the students had no awareness of the rhythm or the complexity of Thai poem comprehension, while lacking in the knowledge of Thai literature and culture. Moreover, the students do not like to read poetry but prose.

D. Incorrectness of Thai Poem Pronunciation

1. Mistakes from wrong rhythm and accuracy leading to non-melodiousness and versification
2. No matching between tones and meaning
3. Inaccuracy in Thai pronunciation
4. Not smooth melodic tone
5. No suspension emotions



Fig. 4 Students debate issues and summarize

The conclusions of these results found the students had no knowledge of Thai poem pronunciation, no understanding of word meaning, no control of breath, no practice, no affection and faith to poem, no confidence and determination, no optimism to poem, and finally, no knowledge of social context and Thai Culture about the poems.

V. DISCUSSION

From this study, a researcher found two main problems of reading, namely a problem of reading by heart and a problem of pronouncing. For reading by heart, that was concerned with interpretation and lack in abilities to analyze and summarize including sayings, metaphors, and proverbs. For a problem of pronunciation, a researcher found that students had less practice and skills in reading in Thai which was also the basis of Thai literature including articulating system that affected to the attitudes of students

The researcher, in fact, analyzed and later found the 2 problems: dissolvable problem of reading and one hard to be dissolved.

Dissolvable problem of reading is about lacking of disciplines, reading skills and basic knowledge of Thai literature and language. To dissolve this problem a researcher as a lecture boosted students to group activities concerning developing and finding problems and analyzing themselves. Besides the teacher should emphasize on objectives of reading for readers, book categories, and types of writing because each article may harmonize writing model as Viput Sophawong said, each writing paper may be mixed in different forms depending on content.[7] To encourage readers to read enables them to know appropriate writing styles effectively. Another way to solve the problems of articulation is to not put together with tones and wording. The way to solve this problem was to

encourage students to practice long words and pronunciation. Mainly it was also a problem of dialects that students have been taught since they were children: Antithetically, the researcher had to be tolerant to deal with this problem.

VI. CONCLUSION

The main objective to study Thai Prosody Problems with First-Year Students is to find out ways to dissolve problems in Thai reading and develop abilities of students for the next semester. This research allows me to know the best way to solve reading problem. That is to encourage readers to practice as often as they can and to apply this skill in their real lives effectively. This way requires both teachers and peers to support and guide them ways and errors clearly; however, the process of practice cannot be proceeded within a semester as the researcher found that building a reading skill needs more time continually and more understanding from both teachers and readers/students, especially, poems and poses. All readers require more practice and correct pronunciation relevant to Thai identical model to reach melodiousness.

From this study in both poems and poses, the researcher found that encouraging ability in reading increases effectiveness in reading alphabets by sight, fixing breath with correct rhythm, correct tone, and reading appreciation. Supposed that readers understand and often practice, it can benefit them to convey knowledge and reach the goal.

Besides, to develop a result in reading skill based on psychological teaching is essential. From this research, the way to stimulate students is to admire and inspire them to compete and emphasize on sharing one another and awarding readers to develop this skill proudly.

With reference to this research, the researcher has not only learned problems and causes but also revised knowledge about reading skill to develop teaching strategies and interaction among students and a teacher with an eye to a new model for classroom management in a just society.

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