

ปัญหาการออกเสียงภาษาอังกฤษของคำที่ลงท้ายด้วย ed ของนักศึกษาไทย
ระดับปริญญาตรี

THE PRONUNCIATION PROBLEMS OF THE ENGLISH –ed ENDING SOUNDS
OF THAI UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS

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บทคัดย่อ

การออกเสียงมีบทบาทที่สำคัญในการสื่อสารอย่างเข้าใจ และอย่างมีประสิทธิภาพ แต่อย่างไรก็ตามการออกเสียงซึ่งเป็นพื้นฐานสำคัญในทักษะการพูดยังเป็นปัญหาสำหรับนักศึกษาไทย โดยเฉพาะอย่างยิ่งการออกเสียง -ed ที่ตำแหน่งท้ายคำกริยา ด้วยเหตุนี้ งานวิจัยนี้มีจุดประสงค์เพื่อศึกษาความสามารถ และศึกษาอุปสรรคของนักศึกษาในการออกเสียงภาษาอังกฤษของคำที่ลงท้ายด้วย -ed การวิจัยกึ่งทดลองถูกนำมาใช้กับกลุ่มนักศึกษาคณะมนุษยศาสตร์ ชั้นปีที่ 1 จำนวน 33 คน ปีการศึกษา 2561 ผลการวิจัยพบว่าการออกเสียงภาษาอังกฤษของคำที่ลงท้ายด้วย -ed ผู้วิจัยพบว่า นักศึกษามีปัญหาในการออกเสียงท้าย /t/ มากที่สุด นักศึกษาสามารถออกเสียงกลุ่มคำนี้ได้เพียง 49.38% รองลงมาคือเสียง /d/ นักศึกษาสามารถออกเสียงกลุ่มคำนี้ได้ 63.63% และเสียง /Id/ เป็นเสียงที่ง่ายที่สุดในการออกเสียง นักศึกษาสามารถออกเสียงกลุ่มคำนี้ได้ 70.90% จากผลการวิจัยแสดงให้เห็นว่า อุปสรรคในการออกเสียงภาษาอังกฤษของคำที่ลงท้ายด้วย -ed เกิดจากบทบาท

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ของการถ่ายโอนเชิงลบ การขาดความรู้ในการออกเสียงท้ายคำในภาษาอังกฤษที่เติม -ed การสรุปกฎเกณฑ์ที่เกินความพอดี และการเข้าถึงภาษาปลายทางที่ไม่เพียงพอ

คำสำคัญ: การวิเคราะห์ปัญหาจากข้อผิดพลาด, การออกเสียงภาษาอังกฤษของคำที่ลงท้ายด้วย -ed

Abstract

To communicate understandably and effectively, pronunciation plays an important role. However, in Thailand, the pronunciation aspect which is the important basic of the speaking skill is problematic for Thai learners, particularly regular verbs with -ed ending sounds. Therefore, this study aims to investigate students' ability to pronounce -ed ending sounds and difficulties faced by the students in pronouncing -ed ending sounds. A quasi-experimental design was employed to 33 Thai first-year undergraduate students from the Faculty of Humanities in 2018 academic year. The results show that the most problematic sound among Thai students was the /t/ sound. Only 49.38% of the students pronounced this sound correctly. For the /d/ sound, 63.63% of the students succeeded in pronouncing it. Regarding the /Id/ sound, it seemed to be the easiest sound for students since 70.90% of them pronounced this sound correctly. The problems encountered by Thai students in pronouncing the -ed ending sounds may be caused by the following reasons: the role of negative transfer, a lack of knowledge of the pronunciation of -ed ending sounds, overgeneralization, and the inadequate exposure to the target language.

Keywords: Error Analysis, Pronouncing the -ed ending sounds

Introduction

In the era of globalization, English has increasingly become the medium in every domain of communication. Of all four key language skills, speaking is deemed to be the most significant one in learning a second or foreign language (Ur, 1996). It is considered as one of the most influencing factors to exchange knowledge, communicate with other people from all over the world and apply for a job. To communicate understandably and effectively, Brown (1994) mentions that pronunciation plays an important role.

In Thailand, the Thai government has reformed the education policy to develop and enhance students' speaking skill. The English curriculum of Thai universities is designed to move away from traditional grammar-translation to communicative methods in order to enable learners to use the target language in a functional way and equip learners with communicative competency. English teachers also created effective teaching, learning activities for their classes and assessed their students' communicative language ability. However, the pronunciation aspect which is the basic of the speaking skill is not focused on and taught as it should be (Wiriyachitra, 2002). Thai EFL learners encounter a number of difficulties in listening and speaking (Winaitam & Suppasetsee, 2012). It can be seen in their pronunciation errors when communicating in English.

Learners have faced difficulties to pronounce final clusters, particularly those with -ed ending sounds. There are some studies conducting in this area. For example, Solt, Pugach, Klein, Adams, Stoynezhka and Rose (2004), Kanokpermpoon (2005), Dewi (2009) and Dávila (2013) investigated the production of the -ed ending sounds of Thai undergraduate students. Kosakul (2007) conducted a study which aimed to compare the ability of students from American Language Course at the Army Language Center who received pronunciation instruction in pronouncing the -ed ending sounds with that of

those who did not, and to investigate the effect of pronunciation exercises on the adult learners' pronunciation of –ed tense markers. Castillo (2013) conducted a study to identify strategies to help the students to pronounce the –ed ending sounds correctly. In this study, the researcher would like to conduct the study investigating how well the students pronounce the words with –ed ending sounds and to find out difficulties faced by the students in pronouncing the words with –ed ending sounds.

Research objectives

1. To investigate students' ability to pronounce –ed ending sounds.
2. To investigate difficulties faced by the students in pronouncing –ed ending sounds.

Hypotheses

1. Students will perceive the /-Id/ allomorph the most accurately.
2. Negative transfer can be contributed to pronunciation errors of the –ed ending sounds.

Methodology

A quasi-experimental design was employed to investigate students' ability to pronounce –ed ending sounds and difficulties faced by the students in pronouncing –ed ending sounds. In this study, there were two production tests focusing on pronouncing the same number of words which contained the -ed ending sound pronounced as /t/, /d/ and /Id/.

Population and samples

The population of the study was Thai EFL first-year undergraduate students who were from Srinakharinwirot University in Bangkok in 2018 academic year. The samples were 33 students from the Faculty of Humanities studying

the foundation English course. They ranged from 18 to 20 years of age. They were purposively selected based on three requirements. Firstly, they were homogeneous as they passed 12-year compulsory education. Secondly, their English proficiency was determined by the TOEIC scores. All of them were in the A2 (basic users) which meant that their scores were from 225 to 550 points out of 990 points according to European CEFR levels. Lastly, they enrolled “SWU123 English for International Communication I”.

Instruments

Two production tests were designed to investigate the level of the students’ mastery in pronouncing –ed ending sounds and difficulties faced by the students in pronouncing –ed ending sounds.

In the first test, the students were asked to read all words. The test comprised 30 words. 15 words were contained by the -ed ending sounds pronounced as /t/, /d/ and /Id/ (5 each). The other 15 words were distractors. All words were arranged in random order.

In the second test, the students were asked to read a dialogue including 15 regular verbs which contained the -ed sound ending pronounced as /t/, /d/ and /Id/ (5 each).

The words used in each test were taken from the 1st – 12th grade English textbooks used in compulsory education. They were selected from four English textbooks such as ACTIVE skills for reading 1 (Anderson, 2007), ACTIVE skills for reading 2 (Anderson, 2007), ACTIVE skills for reading 3 (Anderson, 2008) and Pathways 1: Reading, Writing and Critical Thinking (Vargo and Blass, 2013).

Regarding the scoring criteria, two tests contained a total of 30 regular verbs pronounced as /t/, /d/ and /Id/ (10 each). Students received one point if they pronounced correctly and zero point if they mispronounced.

Data collection

The researcher collected the data by herself. Before the test administration, the participants were informed that there were two tests. They were required to read all words in test 1 and read the whole dialogue in test 2. Furthermore, the students must pronounce the words with –ed ending sounds clearly. During the data collection, the students' sounds were recorded to analyze the data accurately.

Data analysis

To analyze the data obtained from two production tests, all records were listened by two raters: the researcher and a native speaker of English. The words with –ed ending sounds were checked whether each word was pronounced correctly or incorrectly. One point was given to the correct pronunciation, while the zero point was given to the wrong pronunciation. Then descriptive analysis was utilized to calculate and presented in percentage.

Results

The overall results of pronunciation of the –ed ending sounds demonstrated that the most problematic sound of Thai students was the –ed ending sounds after voiceless consonants except /t/. 49.38% of the students could pronounce them correctly while 63.63% of the students pronounced the –ed ending sounds after vowels and voiced consonants except /d/ correctly. On the other hand, Thai students had no difficulties to pronounce the –ed ending sounds after /d/ and /t/. 70.90% of the students pronounced the –ed ending sounds after /d/ and /t/ correctly.

For percentage of the correct pronunciation of each word, the results are divided into three groups: the –ed ending sounds after vowels and voiced consonants except /d/, the –ed ending sounds after voiceless consonants except /t/, and the –ed ending sounds after /d/ and /t/ respectively.

1. The –ed ending sounds after vowels and voiced consonants except /d/

The results on the correct pronunciation of the –ed ending sounds after vowels and voiced consonants except /d/ are shown in Figure 1.

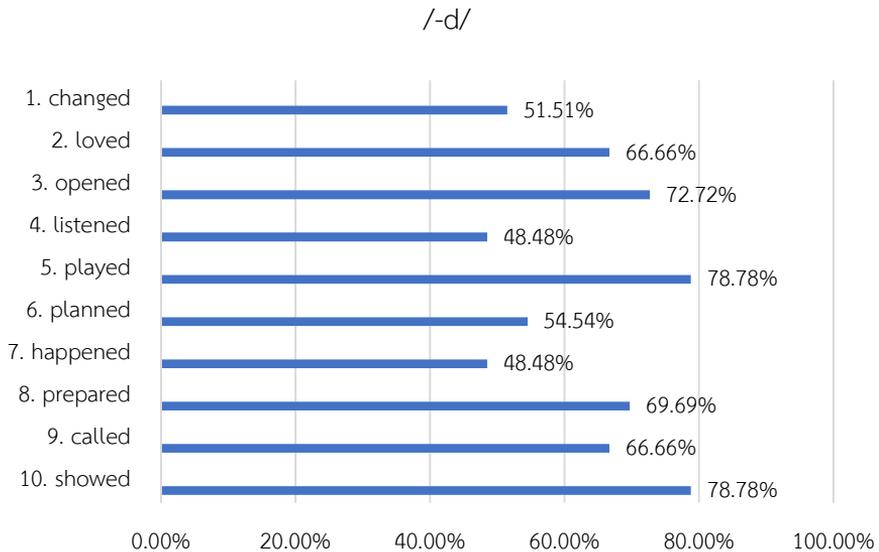


Figure 1: Percentage of pronunciation of the –ed ending sounds after vowels and voiced consonants except /d/

From Figure 1, the results show that 78.78% of the students pronounced the words “played” and “showed” correctly. The most problematic words in this group were “listened” and “happened”. Only 48.48% of the students pronounced it correctly. The mispronunciation of each word is shown in Table 1.

Table 1: The mispronunciation of the –ed ending sounds after vowels and voiced consonants except /d/

Words	Mispronunciation
1. changed	/-Id/, /-əd/, /-t/, /-/
2. loved	/-t/, /-/
3. opened	/-əd/, /-t/, /-/
4. listened	/-əd/, /-t/, /-/
5. played	/-əd/, /-t/, /-/
6. planned	/-əd/, /-t/, /-/
7. happened	/-Id/, /-əd/, /-t/, /-/
8. prepared	/-əd/, /-t/, /-/ , /-ər/
9. called	/-əd/, /-t/, /-/
10. showed	/-əd/, /-/ , /-dəd/

From Table 1, it shows that the students mispronounced the words with the –ed ending sounds after vowels and voiced consonants except /d/. There were four cases that students made errors. Firstly, they pronounced /-Id/ or /-əd/ instead of /-d/ in all words except “loved”. Secondly, they replaced /-d/ with /-t/ as shown in all words except “showed”. Thirdly, they chose to pronounce the words without /-d/. Lastly, a few students made serious errors. For example, the student pronounced the –ed ending sound of “prepared” as /-ər/. She understood that the rules of comparative degree could be applied to this word. Another interesting example was that the students mixed the rules of pronouncing the –ed ending sounds after vowels and voiced consonants except /d/ together with the rule of pronouncing the –ed ending sounds after /d and /t/. Consequently, she pronounced the word “showed” as /-dəd/.

2. The –ed ending sounds after voiceless consonants except /t/

The results on the correct pronunciation of the –ed ending sounds after voiceless consonants except /t/ are shown in Figure 2.

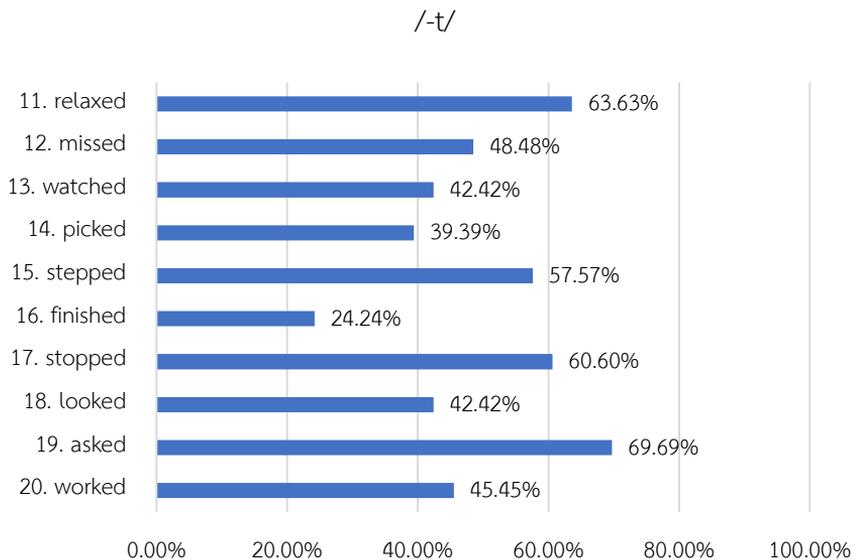


Figure 2: Percentage of pronunciation of the –ed ending sounds after voiceless consonants except /t/

From Figure 2, the results show that 69.69% of the students pronounced the words “asked” correctly. The most problematic word in this group was “finished”. Only 24.24% of the students pronounced it correctly. In this group, the students mispronounced all of the words. The mispronunciation of each word is shown in Table 2.

Table 2: The mispronunciation of the –ed ending sounds after voiceless consonants except /t/

Words	Mispronunciation
11. relaxed	/-d/, /-/, /-təd/
12. missed	/-d/, /-/, /-təd/, /-əs/
13. watched	/-d/, /-/, /-əd/, /-ər/
14. picked	/-d/, /-/
15. stepped	/-d/, /-/, /-təd/, /-əd/
16. finished	/-d/, /-/, /-əd/, /-ər/, /-ədt/
17. stopped	/-d/, /-/, /-əd/
18. looked	/-d/, /-/, /-əd/, /-ədtəs/
19. asked	/-d/, /-/, /-əd/, /-əd/
20. worked	/-d/, /-/, /-əd/, /-təs/

From Table 2, it shows that the students had difficulties to pronounce the words with the –ed ending sounds after voiceless consonants except /t/. Firstly, they always replaced /-t/ with /-d/ and ignored to pronounce the –ed ending sounds as shown in all words. Secondly, students pronounced /-Id/ or /-əd/ instead of /-t/. Thirdly, some students made serious errors. They misunderstood how to pronounce the –ed ending sounds after voiceless consonants except /t/. Therefore, they attempted to generate new rules and mispronounced the words with the –ed ending sounds as /-əs/, /-ər/, /-ədt/, /-ədtəs/, /-təs/ and /-təd/. For instance, the student pronounced the –ed ending sound of “missed” as /-əs/ since she understood that the rules of pronouncing the English -s ending sounds could be applied to pronounce this word. Similarly, the student pronounced the –ed ending sounds of “watched” and “finished” as /-ər/ because she thought that the rules of comparative degree could be used. Another example was the student knew that the –ed ending

sound of “finished” is pronounced as /-t/ but she understood that all syllables in the word “finished” must be pronounced first and ended with the /-t/ sound. This is the reason why she pronounced the –ed ending sound of “finished” as /-ədɪt/. Moreover, a few students tried to combine two different rules together. For example, he mixed the rules of pronouncing the English -s ending sounds and the rules of pronouncing the English -ed ending sound together. Therefore, he pronounced the word “looked” as /-ədɪtəs/. In the same way, the student combined the rules of pronouncing the –ed ending sounds with the rules of pronouncing the English -s ending sounds. He then pronounced the word “worked” as /-təs/. Finally, the student mixed two rules of the –ed ending sounds between /-t/ and /-əd/ and pronounced the words “relaxed”, “mixed” and “stepped” as /-təd/.

3. The –ed ending sounds after /d/ and /t/

The results on the correct pronunciation of the –ed ending sounds after /d and /t/ are shown in Figure 3.

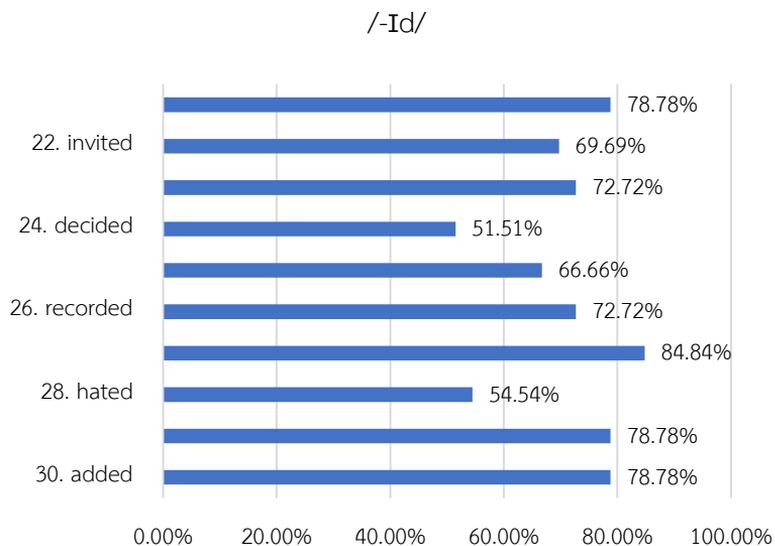


Figure 3: Percentage of pronunciation of the –ed ending sounds after /d and /t/

From Figure 3, the results show that 84.84% of the students pronounce the words “ended” correctly. The most problematic word in this group was “decided”. 51.51% of the students pronounced it correctly. The mispronunciation of each word is shown in Table 3.

Table 3: The mispronunciation of the –ed ending sounds after /d/ and /t/

Words	Mispronunciation
21. wanted	/-t/, /-/
22. invited	/-t/, /-/ , /-Is/
23. started	/-t/, /-/
24. decided	/-t/, /-/ , /-d/
25. visited	/-t/, /-/ , /-d/ , /-əs/
26. recorded	/-t/, /-/
27. ended	/-/ , /-ər/ , /-Is/
28. hated	/-/ , /-d/ , /-əs/
29. needed	/-/
30. added	/-/ , /-Is/ , /-əs/

From Table 3, it shows that the students mispronounced the words with the –ed ending sounds after /d/ and /t/. Normally, students replaced /-Id/ with /-t/ and /-d/ for almost all of the words or chose not to pronounce the –ed ending sounds after /d/ and /t/. Moreover, they pronounced /-Is/ and /-əs/ instead of /-Id/ since they understood that the rules of pronouncing the English -s ending sounds could be applied to pronounce these words. Similarly, the student thought that the rules of comparative degree could be replaced. Thus, she pronounced the word “ended” as /-ər/.

Discussion

Relating these results to the first prediction which is students will perceive the /-Id/ allomorph the most accurately, it is confirmed. The results show that the students can pronounce /Id/ the most correctly, followed by /d/ and /t/ since the students got a high percentage of the correct pronunciation, 70.90%, 63.63%, and 49.38% respectively. These results are mostly consistent with the previous studies conducted by Kosakul (2007), Dewi (2009), Castillo (2013), and Dávila (2013). All of them investigated learners' production of regular verbs and obtained the same results as this study. They were found that students have the most difficulties in pronouncing the –ed ending sounds after voiceless consonants except /t/ or the /t/ sound, the /d/ sound, and the /Id/ sound respectively. On the contrary, the results of this study seem to contrast with a previous study. For example, Kanokpermpoon (2005) mentioned that the students had the most difficulty in pronouncing /d/ but in this study, the problematic sound for students was /t/.

For the second prediction which is that negative transfer can be contributed to pronunciation errors of the –ed ending sounds, it is confirmed. A particular sound which does not exist in the native language can pose a difficulty for the second language learners to produce. It sometimes makes learners try to substitute those sounds with similar ones in their mother tongue. These sounds include both vowels and consonants.

Based on this study, the sources of errors can cause from several reasons. Firstly, Wiriyaichitra (2002) explains that English pronunciation is difficult for Thai students owing to interference from the Thai sound system which is different from English. It is found that Thai students have difficulties in pronouncing final sounds when they speak English because the Thai language does not have tenses and final consonant clusters. For instance, some words such as “government” and “politics” are pronounced with the /rn/ and /ks/ consonant clusters

respectively, but students may have wrong pronunciation by omitting the /n/ or /s/ and keeping the /r/ or /k/ sounds only according to Wasowicz (2007). With this reason, the word like “relaxed” /-kst/ in this study is difficult for Thai students to pronounce it correctly. They then select to omit the –ed ending sounds. Secondly, overgeneralization is another factor that causes students’ errors. In this study, it is obvious that the students completely misuse the rules. They pronounced /-Is/, /-əs/ and /-ər/ instead of /-Id/ because they understood that the rules of pronouncing the English -s ending sounds and the rules of pronouncing the comparative degree could be applied to pronounce these words. Another case is more interesting. The students combined many rules of pronouncing the English ending sounds together. For instance, they mixed the rules of pronouncing the English -s ending sounds and the rules of pronouncing the English -ed ending sound together to pronounce the word “looked” as /-ədtəs/, or combined two rules of the –ed ending sounds between /-t/ and /-əd/ to pronounce the words “relaxed”, “mixed” and “stepped” as /-təd/. Thirdly, Thais frequently make phonological intralingual errors because they lack the concept of English phonological grammar. One example is that Thai students pronounce /d/ for every word with the –ed ending. They do not realize that there are three different ways to pronounce the words with the –ed ending which are /t/, /d/ and /Id/ (Likitrattanaporn, 2014). Thus, they mispronounce the words. Lastly, the factor that contributes to the errors is the inadequate exposure to the target language. In this context, many students do not have good access or environment to practice their English, especially in speaking. Consequently, the students have limited exposure to the language learnt. It is possible for them to make errors when pronouncing.

Pedagogical implications

The results show that Thai students can pronounce the words with the –ed ending sounds correctly. However, some students seem to completely mispronounce and misunderstand about the rules of pronouncing the English –ed ending sound. Therefore, the transfer of training plays an important role. A pronunciation course or an intensive training should be provided for the students. Also, the English instructors should obtain adequate knowledge of English pronunciation in order to teach students to produce the sounds correctly. To make the students succeed in pronunciation, the teacher’s help, great lesson plans, good preparation, wide variety of listening, speaking and pronunciation drills and using interesting materials or multimedia-based audio and visual function should be taken into account. Another important thing is that the teachers should focus more on learners’ performance than the evaluation.

For future study, the number of the participants in the present study was limited to generalize. Therefore, it will be beneficial to explore in future studies whether it will yield similar results when conducting research with participants in others setting and levels such as school. For those who are interested in replicating this study, it is recommended to include qualitative research to get insightful data.

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