
RESEARCH ARTICLE

Analysis on effects of prosodic features in the oral reading performance of IEP Students

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to determine the effects of prosodic features such as word stress, intonation, and pausing on the oral reading performance of Intensive English Program (IEP) students at Thanarat Wittaya School. Specifically, the study sought to determine the level of prosodic accuracy in terms of word stress, intonation, and pausing, the level of oral reading performance of the students, and the significant relationship between prosodic features and oral reading performance. The study utilized a quantitative descriptive-correlational research design with 23 IEP students as respondents. Data were gathered through one-on-one oral reading activities using selected words, phrases, and sentences taken from the students' English books. The oral reading performances were recorded and evaluated using a rubric focusing on word stress, intonation, and pausing. Statistical tools such as frequency, percentage, mean, standard deviation, and Pearson r were used to analyze the data. Findings revealed that the respondents demonstrated high accuracy in word stress and very high competence in pausing, while intonation appeared to be the most challenging prosodic feature among the students. The overall prosodic scores showed that majority of the respondents had very high prosodic accuracy. In terms of oral reading performance, most of the respondents demonstrated an advanced level of oral reading ability. However, the correlation analysis revealed that there was no significant relationship between prosodic features and oral reading performance ($r = .236$, $p = .278$). The findings suggest that although prosodic features contribute to oral reading fluency and pronunciation, other factors may also influence the oral reading performance of IEP students.

KEYWORDS

prosody, word stress, intonation, pausing, oral reading, performance, IEP, students

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1. INTRODUCTION

English has always been the lingua franca and been used as a tool of communication and understanding of not just teachers but almost all OFW's in different countries. In some countries, especially in Thailand, English played an important role in Thai education for more than a century. To teach English as a foreign language (EFL), several factors have to be taken into consideration such as choices about which language skills to teach and how, where the language will be used, learning environment, selection of appropriate content and materials, and assessment criteria (Graddol 2006). In the study of Pornapit Darasawang, in 2007, English Language Teaching and Education in Thailand: A decade of change, he mentioned that, when the political system of the country changed from an absolute monarchy to a constitutional monarchy in 1932 during the reign of King Rama VII, the focus of the educational system was to offer education equally to all citizens and more on political problems. A new English syllabus was introduced in secondary schools. It focused on reading aloud with correct pronunciation and comprehension of the text.

2. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The TNR school has established a so called IEP (Intensive English Program) which will help the students to acquire, learn and be fluent in English as soon as they go out of school. In my one year of teaching here in TNR, I have noticed that young Thai learners may read some of the English words correctly but once heard, it has different meaning due to the wrong placement of stress and intonation.

Therefore, this work will be conducted to analyze the effects of prosodic features specifically word stress, intonation and pausing—on their oral reading performance.

Specifically, this study seeks to answer the following questions:

1. What is the level of prosodic accuracy in terms of word stress, intonation, and pausing among IEP students during oral reading?

2. What is the level of reading performance of IEP Students during oral reading?

3. Is there a significant relationship between prosodic features (word stress, intonation and pausing) and IEP students reading performance?

3. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Prosody has been called “the organizational structure of speech” (Beckman, 1996). We use the term “prosody” to refer to stress, rhythm, and intonation in spoken sentences. Prosodic structure is formally described in linguistic theories of autosegmental phonology and intonation, and has measurable acoustic–phonetic correlates, including variation in fundamental frequency, spectral information, amplitude, and the relative duration of sound and silence across and between utterances.

English language teaching has been conducted in Thailand for more than a century. It was started in the reign of King Rama III (1824 -1851) by an American missionary. To cope with the threat of Western colonisation, King Rama IV (1851-1868) himself started to learn English and was the first king who could communicate with foreigners without the help of an interpreter.

English became the most prestigious foreign language during the reign of King Rama V (1868-1910), when many foreigners visited Thailand, creating a greater need for English. King Rama V believed that the modernization and progress of the country required more Thais to study foreign languages and be educated abroad. The importance of English can be seen from a ruling issue which stated that those who had completed English Schools’ Standard Two could be exempted from military services. The Ministry of Education was founded during this time and more schools for commoners were established. In 1891, English standard was added in the curriculum and examinations. It was a 6 year programme focusing on reading, writing and translation into and from English. Knowledge of English thus enabled Thai officials to deal with foreign traders and diplomats without the need for a translator, and also helped Thai students to learn about modern technologies which helped to develop the country.

4. METHODOLOGY

The goal of this study is to determine whether how prosodic features affects the oral reading performance of the students who are enrolled in the IEP. Such prosodic features will only focus on word stress, intonation and pausing. In this chapter, it will presents and discuss how this research will be conducted. Methods and procedures together with all the participants will be discussed. Additionally, ethical considerations and confidentiality of the respondents will also be discussed.

Research Design

The study will be using a quantitative descriptive-correlational approach to determine the level of accuracy on the prosodic features focusing on word stress, intonation and pausing of IEP students.

The descriptive approach was use to describe the level of prosodic accuracy and oral reading performance while the correlational approach was also used to determine whether there is a relationship between the prosodic features and oral reading performance of the students who are enrolled in the Intensive English Program.

Participants

This study focused on those primary students who are enrolled in the IEP in Thanarat Wittaya School during the semester academic of 2026-2027. Since the program is newly implemented Thanarat Wittaya School, all of the IEP students were invited to participate in the said study to produce sufficient data or analysis. A sum of 23 respondents were participated in the study.

To protect the students confidentiality, the researcher only focused on three categories of prosody: word stress, intonation and pausing, other questions, greetings and other techniques use by the researcher to put the students at ease will not be exposed.

Data Gathering Procedures

The researcher followed some procedures for the said research to be worked smoothly. To start, the researcher obtained first a letter of approval from the school. This approval from the school ensured the confidentiality and protection of the student's data. Teachers and advisers was also informed about the research and its Objectives.

To make the participants feel at ease the researcher created a friendly and comfortable atmosphere by asking few questions. Starting by some greetings, a little play for them to feel comfortable. Once the participants are at ease, the researcher will now starts by presenting the reading materials to the students.

For future references, documentation and as a proof, the researcher used a cellphone camera to record the students while reading. The students were asked to read 10 words, 10 phrases, and 10 sentences obtained from their English books. Students are instructed to read aloud the words, even if they are unsure of the correct reading. With each session lasting approximately 7-10 minutes per student, ensuring that school activities were not disrupted.

Data Analysis

To determine the level of accuracy, the researcher utilized a quantitative descriptive-correlational statistical tools that will fit on the researchers objectives of the study. To compute the level of accuracy, the researcher used a different statistical tools such as frequency, percentage, mean and standard deviation to determine the average performance of the students.

The researcher used 5 levels of accuracy depending on the scores obtained by the students. The accuracy levels are as follows: 25-30= Very High Prosodic Accuracy, 19-24=High Prosodic Accuracy, 13-18=Mderate Prosodic Accuracy, 6-12=Low Prosodic Accuracy, 0-6=very Low Prosodic Accuracy. Pearson r was used to determine the correlation between the prosodic features and oral reading performance of the IEP students.

Ethical Considerations

Prior to data collection, the researcher must informed the school administration, classroom advisers and the participants that the said research will be voluntary and that the participants on the said research can withdraw anytime they want without any consequences.

Hence, the researcher must also make sure that the said activity followed legitimate procedure such as, consent form the school administrators. The researcher must protect any confidentiality from the students. Additionally, other than prosodic features, no other information of the students will be exposed.

5. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This chapter presents the results, analysis, and interpretation of the data gathered from the study. The presentation of data focuses on the level of prosodic accuracy of the respondents in terms of word stress, intonation and pausing as well as their oral reading performance.

Reading is considered one of the four macro skills in language learning because it help student develop comprehension, pronunciation, fluency and communication skills. Thanarat Wittaya School implemented the IEP program to help students be more fluent in English. However, since the program is still new, students may experience difficulties in learning and using English for the fact that they do not really use English in their everyday conversation.

IEP students may experience difficulties in their oral reading performance not only for the fact that English is new to them but also there are more challenges to consider such as the applying of proper prosodic features specifically, word stress, intonation and pausing while reading orally.

Since prosody plays a significant role on oral reading fluency and expression, the main goal of this study is to determine whether or not prosodics features influence the oral reading performance of the IEP students. Through the gathered data, it analyzed the level of prosodic accuracy of the respondents and identified if theres a significant relationship exist between prosodic features and oral reading performance.

The findings in this chapter provide valuable insights into oral reading abilities of the IEP and it can also serve as a basis for future intervention activities and reading enhancement programs design to improve students fluency and reading skills.

Word Stress

Scores	Frequency	Percentage
7	1	4.3
8	1	4.3
9	6	26.1
10	15	65.2
Total	23	100.0
Mean – 9.52		
Std. Deviation – 0.79		

The table above shows the result of the frequency and distribution of the respondents' word stress scores when it comes to oral reading. With a percentage of 65.2, 15 of the respondents got perfect scores and an indication that most of the respondents have high accuracy when applying word stress during oral reading. However, there are 6 respondents got a score of 9 making it 26.1 percent while only 1 respondent each got 8 and 7 with a percent of 4.3 as shown on the table.

The findings on the table above clearly shows that majority of the respondents possesses strong word stress skills which is a large contribution to a clearer pronunciation and and better oral reading performance. The higher range in the concentration of scores is suggesting that most of the students were consistent in applying the proper word stress while reading orally.

Intonation

Scores	Frequency	Percentage
5	16	69.6
7	1	4.3
9	1	4.3
10	5	21.7
Total	23	100.0
Mean – 6.35		
Std. Deviation – 2.17		

The findings on the table reveals that there are 16 respondents out of 23 got 5 scores when it comes to pausing making it 69.6 percent. This implies that most of the IEP students have difficulties in applying proper intonation when reading orally. Meanwhile, there are 5 respondents got a perfect score of 10 with a 21.7 percent, suggesting that only a few students can demonstrate a high level of competence in using appropriate pitch and tone patterns. In addition, 1 respondent, each equivalent 4.3 percent obtained scores of 7 and 9 respectively.

The findings on the table implies that intonation is one of the areas that students can still find challenges when reading orally. This may suggest that the need for more reading activities and pronunciation exercises is necessary, also the proper expression, pitch variation and speech rhythm.

Pausing

Scores	Frequency	Percentage
10	23	100
Total	23	100.0
Mean – 10.4		
Std. Deviation – 2.09		

The table is showing that all of the respondents got a perfect score of 10, making it 100 percent. This was clearly shown that IEP students demonstrated a very high level of competence in applying proper usage of pausing during oral reading.

The findings on the table imply that the respondents consistently observed appropriate pauses and phrasing while reading. This may contribute to a clearer, smoother and easier way for the students to read and understand English.

Prosody Scores

Indicators	Frequency	Percentage
25 – 30 (Very high Prosodic Accuracy)	15	65.2
19 – 24 (High Prosodic Accuracy)	8	34.8
13 – 18 (Moderate Prosodic Accuracy)	0	0
7– 12 (Low Prosodic Accuracy)	0	0
0 – 6 (Very Low Prosodic Accuracy)	0	0
Total	23	100.0
Mean – 25.8		
Std. Deviation – 2.5		

Table 4 represents the prosodic scores of the respondents. It was found out that the highest scores obtained from the respondents is 25 with 34.8 percent. This means that students have high level of prosodic accuracy while reading orally. Meanwhile there are 6 respondents got 24 with 26.1 percent and there are 5 respondents who got a perfect score of 30 making it 21.7 percent.

There are 2 respondents got a score of 27 for 8.7 percent and respectively, only 1 respondent each got a score of 22 and 23 making it 4.3 percent.

The findings imply that while reading orally, most of the respondents demonstrated a strong prosodic skills such as word stress, intonation and pausing. The concentration of scores within the higher range is clearly showing that in this study, most students were able to apply appropriate prosodic features while reading orally.

Oral Reading Scores

Indicators	Frequency	Percentage
25 – 30 (Advanced)	15	65.2
19 – 24 (High Intermediate)	5	21.7
13 – 18 (Low Intermediate)	2	8.7
7 – 12 (Beginner)	1	4.4
0 – 6 (Needs special Attention)	0	00
Total	23	100.0
Mean – 25.8		
Std. Deviation – 2.5		

In this table, it was clearly shown the overall scores of the students during oral reading. A total of 9 students with 39.1 percent got a perfect score of 30. This suggests that many of the IEP students demonstrated advanced level of oral reading performance.

Scores of 28 and 29 were basically obtained by 2 respondents with 8.7 percent, while there are also 2 respondents obtained a score of 19 with the same percentage. Additionally, scores of 12, 15, 17, 20, 22, 24, 26, and 27 were each obtained by 1 respondents with a percent of 4.3

Correlation between Prosody Scores and Oral Reading Scores

		Prosody	Oral Reading
Prosody	Pearson Correlation	1	.236
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.278
	N	23	23
Oral Reading	Pearson Correlation	.236	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.278	
	N	23	23

The table presents the correlation between prosody scores and oral reading scores of the respondents. The computed Pearson correlation coefficient ($r = .236$) indicates a **weak positive relationship between prosody and oral reading performance. This means that as the prosody scores increase, the oral reading scores also tend to increase; however, the relationship between the two variables is minimal.**

Furthermore, the computed significance value ($p = .278$) is greater than the 0.05 level of significance. This indicates that there is no significant relationship between prosody scores and oral reading scores. Therefore, the null hypothesis stating that there is no significant relationship between prosody scores and oral reading scores is accepted.

The results suggest that prosody scores do not significantly influence the oral reading performance of the respondents. This may imply that other factors aside from prosody may contribute to the oral reading abilities of the participants.

6. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The said study aimed to determine the level of prosodic features on word stress, intonation and pausing as well as their oral reading performance. Also, the study aimed to determine the relationships between prosodic features and oral reading performance of the respondents.

In conclusion to the said study, most of the respondents demonstrated a very high level of prosodic accuracy in their oral reading. In terms of word stress, majority of the respondents obtained a high scores and an indicator that most of the IEP students were able to apply proper stress placement while reading orally. This suggest that the respondents possess strong word stress which may contribute to a clearer pronunciation and better oral reading performance. Furthermore, in terms of intonation, it was revealed that majority of the respondents obtained a lower scores compared to the other prosodic features. This indicates that intonation is one of the most challenging aspects to the respondents while reading orally. This may be due to the limited exposure to spoken English and the fact that English is not commonly used by the students in their everyday conversation. Findings in the pausing revealed that all respondents demonstrated a very high level of competence in applying proper pausing and phrasing during oral reading. This indicates that the students were generally able to observed appropriate pauses while reading aloud.

The overall prosodic scores further revealed that majority of the respondents obtained a very high prosodic accuracy, implying that though however there were some difficulties in intonation, most of the students still able to apply appropriate prosodic features such as word stress and pausing. Findings in their oral reading showed that many of the respondents demonstrated an advanced level of oral reading performance. However, the result also revealed that there are some students who experienced difficulties in reading orally.

It was found out that there was no significant relationships between the prosodic features and the oral reading performance of the respondents. All though, weak positive relationships were observed between variables, the obtained p-values were greater than 0.05 level of significance. This indicates that prosodic features alone do not significantly determine the oral reading performance of the IEP students.

Based on the findings of the said study, teachers may provide more oral reading and pronunciation activities focusing on intonation since it appeared to be the most challenging prosodic feature among the respondents. Schools may also implement reading enhancement activities that may help improve the fluency, pronunciation, comprehension and confidence of IEP students during oral reading. Additionally, stress is the most prosodic features that contributed to their oral reading, one factor is that the students are exposed too much on the English words they have read. Parents may also encourage students to practice oral reading regularly at home to further develop their reading skills and confidence in using the English language.

Furthermore, future researchers may conduct similar studies using a larger sample size and include other factors related to oral reading performance to further examine the relationship between prosodic features and oral reading performance among IEP students.

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