

A Post-method Condition Pronunciation Teaching Approach in an EFL Classroom in Taiwan

Shu-Hsiu Huang Ph.D. Indiana University Bloomington (Nov. 17, 2009)

'Wowo's Adventure', a story made up of 24 consonants and 17 vowels employs a culture-related and mnemonics-based pronunciation teaching approach with an aim of infusing it into Taiwanese pronunciation instruction to help resolve how pronunciation is taught in Taiwan. The first part of this paper introduces a story with the use of vivid description and pictorial representation of personified character of each consonant and vowel. The second part of this paper focuses on implementation of this approach for children. Close and detailed observation taking place in an EFL classroom in Taiwan is described. In the last part, a qualitative description from interviews of teacher (1) and students' (11) reaction to this approach is presented to show their positive attitude toward pronunciation as well as English teaching and learning.

INTRODUCTION

There is no best method

Nowadays, it is common for teachers to state that there is no best method for language teaching. This is so real for teachers of EFL teaching scenarios in eastern countries whose teaching methodologies are deeply influenced by western theories, especially Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach and occasionally results in resistance and alienation among learners and teachers. (Barkhuizen, 1998; Hu, 2002; Li, 1998; Lo, 2001; Shamim, 1996 & Yu, 2001).

Prabhu (1990) indicates the "no best method" situation and offers three explanations based on a broad interpretation of the term method: a) different methods are best for different teaching contexts; b) all methods are partially true and valid; and c) the notion of good and bad methods is

itself misguided (p.161). These explications adequately reflect the language teaching conflicts and give a light to the notion of postmethod condition.

Postmethod condition

According to Kumaravadielu (1994), a postmethod condition is a state of event that compels the rethinking of the relationship between the theorizers and the practitioners of method. It empowers practitioners to construct classroom-oriented theories of practice and enables them to generate location-specific and classroom-oriented innovative practices. He further proposes a product of postmethod condition shaped by three operating principles: particularity, practicality and possibility. *Particularity* seeks to facilitate the advancement of a context-sensitive, location-specific pedagogy that is based on a true understanding of local linguistic and social, cultural, and political particularities. *Practicality* seeks to rupture the reified role relationship between theorizers and practitioners by enabling and encouraging teachers to theorize from their practice and to practice what they theorize. *Possibility* seeks to tap the sociopolitical consciousness that students bring with them to the classroom so that it can also function as a catalyst for identity formation and social transformation (Kumaravadielu, 2006, p.69).

Under this framework, several macrostrategies for the second / foreign languages teaching are suggested, such as creating learning opportunities in class, utilizing learning opportunities created by the learner, facilitating negotiated interaction between participants, activating the

intuitive heuristics of the learner and contextualizing linguistic input (Kumaravadivelu, 1992).

Taking a closer look at Kumaravadivelu's postmethod condition and the proposed macrostrategies, the contemplation of of culture-relatedness and learner-centeredness are emphasized in the language classrooms. It is based on these notions that the present pronunciation teaching approach was framed.

Post-method condition pronunciation teaching approach

Before providing answer for what a postmethod condition pronunciation teaching is, I would like first to discuss pronunciation teaching issues in my country, Taiwan. In the past, when learners of 10-11, began their journey of English learning, it usually started with the learning of the pronunciation of consonants and vowels, which are termed "KK Phonetic Alphabet", the assortment of twenty-four consonants and seventeen vowels originated from American phonetic system. Because of the lack of background knowledge about these consonants and vowels, learners always felt eccentric to these isolated phonemes and had difficulty to remember them.

Few years ago, with an effort to complement the learning deficiency resulted from KK Phonetic Alphabet, "Phonics", the method of teaching the correspondences between letters and sounds, was introduced along with the bringing in of CLT approach. This pronunciation teaching technique provoked lots of critique as well for its many exceptions, for example, "i_e" pronounces /ɪ/ in live, but /aɪ/ in life; "oo" pronounces /ʊ/ in book, but /u/ in Hoover. Thus,

just as the debate about phonics versus whole language approach in American (Foorman, 1995); the argument about the learning efficiency between KK Phonetic Alphabet and Phonics took place in Taiwan. The recurrence of KK Phonetic Alphabet back to the English classrooms has been urged.

Bearing the dispute and the shortcoming of traditional KK Phonetic Alphabet teaching methods in mind and being inspired by a speaker of a seminar I attended several years ago, I originated a phonetic story, called “*Wowo’s Adventure*”, consisted of 24 consonants and 17 vowels. This story connected students’ first language and culture to the phonetic symbols and activated their background knowledge for a more meaningful learning. As Sun (2004) indicates that meaningful context of stories and the use of L1 can help children to understand unfamiliar knowledge and connect completely new language with the background knowledge they have already had (Shin, 2005). This familiarity, in terms, helps to lower learners’ stress and reduces their anxiety in the language classroom (Mixon & Temu, 2006). As suggested above, “*Wowo’s Adventure*” accompanying the use of first language and mnemonics devices, contextualizes meaningfully all of the consonants and vowels and specifies meaning to each phonetic alphabet by relating them to learners’ existing cultural and background knowledge and results in long-term memorization. (Gray, 1997; Lu, 2002)

Accompanying the story, three sets of visual aid are utilized. The first one is a set of big

pictorial flashcards that provide visual representations of each phonetic symbol. For example, two pictures of snakes, one is fat, the other one is thin, illustrates the sound of / s / and / z /. The second sets of cards are phonetic symbols flashcards of each consonant in blue (dark blue for voice consonants and light blue for voiceless consonants) and vowel in pink ground color (dark pink for long vowels and light pink for short vowels). The use of blue and pink also reinforce assignment of gender for phonetic symbols; consonants are male (son sound) while vowels are female (mother sound). The acknowledgement of genders for phonetic symbols helps students to pronounce C+V combination (Eckert & McConnell, 2003). This set of flashcard is used to introduce the original consonants and vowels after the introduction of the story and pictures. The third set of visual aids, “phonetic-symbolized playing cards” (small version of phonetic flashcards) is used to engage students in meaningful and interactive activities.

THEOTRICAL FRAMEWORK

Mnemonics devices and language teaching

Mnemonics devices are useful strategies of language teaching and learning for its organizing information in a way that makes it more likely to be remembered (Gore, 2004; Gray, 1997). Among several mnemonics strategies, keyword mnemonics is the one that applied extensively for vocabulary teaching, such as the researches done by Atkinson (1975) who applied

keyword method among a group of Russian L2 learners and Pillai (n.d.) who asked students to make audio and visual connection of L1 and target language when teaching vocabulary and pronunciation of certain words in the ESL classroom. Both of them found that mnemonics utilization enhances students' ability of organizing and retrieving information which in turns increases their self-esteem as well as learning.

Localized materials and language teaching

Le (2005) suggest that materials from western English-speaking countries do not reflect EFL learners' learning styles or cultural values, as a result, leads to learners' demotivation and reluctance to interact in class and share opinions or ideas. Localized materials are a good solution for such condition, in that they are revised to relate more specifically to the culture, experience and background knowledge of EFL learners. Localized materials successfully improve learners' learning interest and participation because of their meaningful and naturally relevant contexts to encourage students' showing of interest and allows more effective lessons delivering from teachers.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Techniques of teaching pronunciation

Celce-Murcia et. al. (1996), in the book titled *Teaching Pronunciation: a Reference for Teachers of English to Speaker of Other Language*, presented an overview of classroom techniques and approaches that have been used to teach pronunciation as follows:

1. Fluency-building activities: such as effective listening exercise, fluency workshop, discussion wheel, value topics and personal introduction collage.
2. The use of multisensory modes:
 - (i) Visual and auditory reinforcement: visual reinforcements include charts, diagrams and sketches on the board or the overhead projector through the use of flashcards and wall charts. Auditory reinforcement is the use of mnemonic device, like imagining the sound of a buzzing to assist in producing [z]. (This technique was also used in the teaching approach I developed)
 - (ii) Tactile reinforcement: a sort of reinforcement used by the sensing of touch, such as having students place their fingers on their throat or cup their hands over their ears to experience the vibration on the vocal cords.
 - (iii) Kinesthetic reinforcement: the use of hand signals and body movement to augment other instructional practices.

3. The use of authentic materials: such as anecdotes, jokes, advertising copy, comic strips, passages from literature and so on.
4. Techniques from psychology and theater art
 - a. Techniques from psychology: the use of breathing exercises in which students stand and place their hands on their diaphragms, breathing deeply in and out which can be accompanied by guided imagery activities, visualization activities in which teachers get students to call up images.
 - b. Techniques from theater arts: the employment of drama coaches to give students better control over their articulation, pitch, volume and rate of speech. For example, when practicing various phoneme sequences, students can concentrate on the position of the various articulators until the problematic phonemes take on a familiar character and their production becomes semiautomatized.
5. The use of instructional technology: such as oral dialogue journal, video, computer-assisted instruction devices and speech spectrographic devices.

(Celce-Murcia, Brinton & Goodwin, 1996, pp.290-318)

Activities of teaching consonants and vowels

Focusing on the teaching of consonants and vowels, Avery & Ehrlich (1992) introduced a variety of activities, such as information-gap activities, matching exercises, chain stories, fluency

square activities, dialogues and role-plays. All of these activities (pair or group works) offer learners the opportunities of realizing the articulatory features of consonants and vowels (for example, voiced vs. voiceless, stops vs. fricatives, etc.) in a meaningful and interactive way (For detail, see Avery & Ehrlich, 1992, pp165-167).

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

After using the story and follow-up flashcards to teach my students pronunciation, I obtained much positive feedback from them. Most of them suggested the meaningful learning this approach provided increased their motivation of learning English. With the compliment and delight in my mind, I would like to introduce this approach through this study and encourage EFL teachers, the practitioners in the classroom, to become postmethod condition supporters by creating their teaching materials and approaches fit for their teaching contents. Therefore, within this study, I would like to present: (1) What exact is *Wowo's Adventure*? (2) How are the flashcards used in the classroom? (3) What are teacher's and students' reactions to the story and the utilization of the flashcards?

METHODOLOGY

The research setting is an EFL classroom in the middle of Taiwan. The participants consist

of 11 elementary school learners aged from 7 to 13 and one EFL teacher who has taught English as a foreign language for more than 10 years.

The methods of data collection include (1) classroom observation: the teaching and learning process audio-recorded for the purpose of keeping track of how the approach and visual aids are used to facilitate the learning as well as for data analysis later and (2) individual interview conducted several weeks later after the initial implementation of the story and the flashcards. The interview process will be audio-recorded with a MP3 and further translated and transcribed verbatim to ensure the richness and for later analysis. (See Appendix A and B for interview questions) To protect participants' identity, pseudonyms will be used throughout the study.

DISCUSSION AND FINDINGS

The story: Wowo's Adventure

One day, a kid called "Wowo" / w / on his way home met a beautiful aunty / i /. Because the aunty is beautiful like an angel, there is always a lunar halo around above her head. The aunty met a duck / a / who quacks loudly. Because the duck is so noisy, the aunty kicks it / t /.

Consequently, the duck becomes angry, and fires a machine gun / d / toward the sky while spitting around / p / and accidentally to a big-bellied uncle / b / who has the difficulty to open his eyes because of the duck's spitting. As a result, he can't see anything as if it is dark / ɔ / at night.

Meantime, a sea gull / o / appears in the sky. Because it is so cold / n /, the sea gull keeps coughing / k /. In order to cheer the sea gull up, a kind brother frog / g / sings a song for him. Several meters away comes an ugly monster who beckons / e / Wowo by his three-finger hand / ε /. The monster nips Wowo's neck / æ / with his three-finger hand when meeting him. In order to make the monster let go, Wowo gives him Mcdonald's food / m / and runs away by a scooter / η /. During his escaping, he encounters a crew of soldiers shouting catchwords / ɪ / with an axe / f / at one hand and gestures victory / v / at the other. At the same time, two crows, one with a tail / u / and the other one without a tail / ʊ / flying by and claim that they saw two strange swimming snakes: fatty snake / s / and skinny snake / z / and two comical dogs: tongued dog / θ / and upright dog / ð / who are pissing / ʃ / near an aluminum door / ʒ /. Meanwhile, a train / ʃ /, carrying a mouse conductor, *Qiuqiu* / dʒ / and four geese: tipped goose / ʌ /, tailless goose / ə /, collared goose / ɜ / and tailed goose / ɝ /, passes by. The mouse leads the four geese to sing / l / three children's songs / r /: a love song / aɪ /, a dog song / au / and a Taishan song / ɔɪ /. After encountering all of these adventures, Wowo finally meets his grandpa / j / and goes home while drinking soda / h /. (For original story in Mandarin, see Appendix C)

The description and pictorial representation

In the story, each consonant and vowel is personified to fit cultural background knowledge

and connect to students' first language. When the story is told, each personified phonetic symbol is introduced along with a pictorial representation providing visual reinforcement and make these phonetic symbols more memorable (Pillai, n.d.).

The following is detailed description of each personified phonetic symbol and its' pictorial representation. (Detailed pictorial representations and corresponded phonetic symbols are shown at Figure 1)

1. Wowo / w /: the name Wowo sounds similar to / w / and *wo* in Mandarin means 'I'.
2. Aunty / i /: In Taiwan, we call aunty *a-yí*, which similar to the sound of / i /. Also the description about the aunty – having a lunar halo above head – intensify students' remembrance and avoid confusion with / ɪ /.
3. Duck's quacking / a /: we usually describe a duck's sound as / a /
4. Kicking / t /: kicking in Chinese is *tī*
5. A machine gun / d /: a machine gun makes *dada* sound.
6. Spitting / p /: spit around in Chinese is *pēnkóushuǐ* → / p /.
7. A big-bellied uncle / b /: we call uncle, *a-bèi* → / b / in Taiwanese.
8. Darkness / ɔ /: we use the sound of / ɔ / to describe darkness in Taiwanese. Also, the picture of darkness is a crescent moon, the same as symbol / ɔ /.
9. A sea gull / o /: sea gull pronounces *hǎi ōu* → / o /. In the picture, the sea gull has a around

abdomen, the shape of symbol / o /.

10. Coldness / n /: coldness sounds *lěng* → / n / in Taiwanese.
11. Coughing / k /: coughing sounds *kés òu* → / k /.
12. A kind brother frog / g /: we call brother as *gēgē*, similar to / g /.
13. Three-finger hand / ε /: when saying hello to someone impolitely, we usually use our hand to touch their shoulders and pronounce / ε /.
14. Beckoning / e /: when beckoning someone far away, we usually say / e / loudly.
15. Nipping neck / æ /: if someone is nipped on the neck, he enlarges his eyes and lowers the position of jaw and pronounces / æ / like sound.
16. McDonalds' food / m /: it is easy to remember / m / because McDonalds' begins with M, which corresponds with / m /.
17. A scooter / ŋ /: a scooter produces / ŋ / sound when moving.
18. Soldiers' shouting catchword / ɪ /: usually soldiers shout *yì* → / ɪ /, *èr*, *sān*, *sì*, means one, two, three, four in English.
19. An axe / f /: an axe sounds *fǔtóu*, similar to / f /.
20. Victory gesture / v /: Students are told that / v /, a voiced sound is the “brother sound” of / f /, a voiceless sound. This direct connection facilely strengthen students' memorization of / v /.
21. Tailed crow / u / vs. tailless crow / u /: Crows are called *wūyā* in Mandarin and the tailed

crow shows students / u / is a long vowel, while the tailless crow represent / u /, a short vowel.

22. Fatty snake / s / vs. skinny snake / z /: The fat snake produces / s /, voiceless sound because of greasy body, on the other hand, the thin snake produces / z /, voice sound owing to rugged body.

23. Tongued dog / θ / vs. upright dog / ð /: the symbol / θ /, a voiceless sound, is taught by telling students tongue should be put between teeth with air is burst while / ð /, voiced sound and the brother sound of / θ /, should be pronounces with the movement of vocal cords. Pictures of these two dogs are again a direct connection for memorized reinforcement.

25. Pissing / ʃ /: we use sound like / ʃ / to describe pissing.

26. An aluminum door / ʒ /: an aluminum door is called *lumen* → / ʒ /.

27. A train / tʃ /: a train makes / tʃ / sound when moving (Firth, 1992a).

30. A mouse conductor – *Qǐyǐqǐú* / dʒ /: the mouse is named the same as the sound of / dʒ /.

31. Tipped goose / ʌ /, tailless goose / ə /, collared goose / ɜ /, tailed goose

/ ɜ /: Geese sounds é in Mandarin. Because the above four phonetic symbols sound similar to Mandarin é, students are taught to differentiate them by the position of tongue and month.

/ ʌ / is pronounces heavier with a more wider-open month, and the month position for / ə / is the same while with lighter emphasis. For both / ɜ / and / ɜ /, the tip of tongue should be

retroflexed, while / ʌ / pronounces longer than / ə /.

32. Singing / l /: we use *lālā* → / l / to describe sing songs in Mandarin. Also, / l / is pictured as musical note in visual flashcard.

33. Children’s songs / r /: a children’s song is called *érgē* in Mandarin. “er” pronounces the same as / r /.

34. A love song / ai /: the word ‘love’ sounds exactly the same as / ai / in Mandarin.

35. A dog’s song / au /: A dog produces / au / sound when howling.

36. A Taishan song / ɔɪ /: Taishan makes / ɔɪ / sound when swinging in the jungle.

37. Grandpa / j /: We call a grandpa *yéyé*, similar to / j /.

38. Drinking / h /: the word ‘drinking’ sounds the same as / h / in Mandarin.

Figure 1: Pictorial representations and corresponding phonetic symbols



| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|--|---|
| [b] | [ɔ] | [o] | [n] | [k] | [g] |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| [e] | [ɛ] | [æ] | [m] | [ŋ] | [ɪ] |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| [f] | [v] | [u] | [ʊ] | [s] | [z] |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| [θ] | [ð] | [ʒ] | [ʃ] | [tʃ] | [dʒ] |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| [ʌ] | [ə] | [ɜː] | [ɜ] | [ɹ] | [r] |



In the classroom

To learn pronunciation, students met four times. Each takes 90 minutes. The story is divided into three parts (see Figure 2 for detail) and taught at the first three sessions of meeting.

Figure 2: division and sequence of phonetic symbols taught in the classroom

| Division | Phonetic symbols |
|--------------------|---|
| Part 1 / session 1 | [w] [i] [ɑ] [t] [d] [p] [b] [ɔ] [o] [n] [k] [g] [e] [ɛ] [æ] |
| Part 2 / session 2 | [m] [ŋ] [ɪ] [f] [v] [u] [ʊ] [s] [z] [θ] [ð] [ʒ] [ʃ] |
| Part 3 / session 3 | [tʃ] [dʒ] [ʌ] [ə] [ɜ] [ə] [l] [r] [aɪ] [aʊ] [ɔɪ] [j] [h] |

The following are detailed depiction of teaching procedure for each class meeting. It includes the implementation of this approach and combination of other teaching methods.

Session One:

P1. Telling ‘*Wowo’s Adventure*’ and introducing phonetic symbols of Part 1 (/ w / to / æ /):

Teacher told the story and brought in each personified characters with each pictorial representation shown at Figure 1. Meanwhile, the correct pronunciation of Part 1 phonetic symbols was reinforced when repetition was used with the introduction of each phonetic

symbol.

T: One day, a kid called “Wowo” / w / on his way home. (Pictorial representation for / w / was posted on the board when it was introduced.) Now please repeat after me / w /...

Ss: / w // w /...

T: He met a beautiful aunty. Do you remember how you call aunty in Mandarin?

Ss: a-yí.

T: Right, and because the aunty is so beautiful, there is always a lunar halo above her head. So now, way, / i /...

Ss: / i // i /...

P2. Introduce the corresponding phonetics symbols: After the telling of the story and

presenting of the pictures, teacher took out the second set of phonetic symbol flashcards and

posted them under each phonetic picture. Students were asked to pronounce one by one the

sound of each symbol posted. After several times of listening and repeating, teacher

explained meaning of background color, dark blue for voice consonants and light blue for

voiceless consonants while dark pink for long vowels and light pink for short vowels. The

purpose of so doing is to reinforce students’ memorization of each symbol. Also, the symbol,

“/ / or [] “ is described as a coat for protecting each phonetic symbol from catching a cold.

This helps students discriminate the differences between alphabets and phonetic symbols.

P3. Remove the pictorial representation: Teacher asked students one by one to the front to

re-describe each phonetic symbol and its correspondent pronunciation while removing the

picture of that symbol from white board. The rest have to repeat after the appointed student.

T: Now I will call your name. If being called, please come to the front. I want you to re-describe the story of the symbol assigned to you and pronounce it. Those sitting have to repeat after the called person. So, Betty, come to the front.

Betty: Wowo goes home, / w // w /

Students: / w // w /

T: Lily

Lily: a pretty a-yí, / i // i /

Ss: / i // i /

P4. Reinforce the pronunciation of vowels: Teacher removed all the taught consonants from the board and asked students to stand in two lines.

T: Now I want you to line in two and listen to me very carefully. Please hop and repeat as many times as my pronouncing of a sound, for example, if I say / o // o / / o /, you have to hop and pronounce / o / three times. Any questions?

Ss: No.

T: Good. Now / g // g // g /

Ss: (Hop three times) / g // g // g /

T: / d // d // d // d // d /

Ss: (Hop five times) / d // d // d // d // d /

P5. Teach pronunciation of consonant+ vowel conjunction (one syllable): Teacher put the

flashcards of vowel, / i /, / a /, / o /, / e /, / ε // æ /, at the upper side and consonants, / b /,

/ d /, / t /, / w / at the left side of the white board to introduce the combination of C+V

pronunciation (See Figure 3 for illustration).

T: (point to the area under / i / and next to / b /) / bi /

Ss: / bi /

T: (point to the area four spaces under / e / and next to / w /) / we /

Ss: / we /

She then added / p /, / g /, / n /, / k / for the introduction of C+V+C (See Figure 4 for illustration).

T: (point to the area under / o / and three spaces next to / b /) / bop /

Ss: / bop /

T: (point to the area four spaces under / a / and two spaces next to / w /)

/ wap /

Ss: / wap /

Figure 3: illustration for C+V conjunction teaching.

| | | | | | | |
|-----|------|-----|-----|------|-----|-----|
| | [i] | [a] | [o] | [e] | [ε] | [æ] |
| [b] | [bi] | | | | | |
| [d] | | | | | | |
| [t] | | | | | | |
| [w] | | | | [we] | | |

Figure 4: illustration for C+V+C conjunction teaching.

| | | | | | | | |
|-----|-----|-------|-------|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| | [i] | [a] | [o] | [e] | [ε] | [æ] | |
| [b] | | | [bop] | | | | [p] |
| [d] | | | | | | | [g] |
| [t] | | | | | | | [n] |
| [w] | | [wak] | | | | | [k] |

P6. A game for C+V pronunciation practice: Teacher (used Figure 3) further divided students

into two groups (Group A and B) and assigned each group member a number (A1 vs. B1; A2

vs. B2 and so on.). When she called a number, group members of that number must come

forward and put magnets in the space described and produces correct pronunciation.

T: The big-bellied uncle saw the pretty aunty..... Number 4.

Ss of No. 4: (Put magnets at the corresponding space and produce) / bi /

Session Two:

P1. Warm-up

- a. Review the phonetic symbols taught at Session One: Show flashcard of each taught consonant and vowel and cue students to produce correct pronunciation by reminding them the characters in the story.
- b. Review pronunciation of C+V and C+V+C combination: (Grouping process is the same as what was described at Session One P6.) Teacher called a number, group members of that number must come forward and write down what teacher described and produces correct pronunciation.

T: Wowo likes the Duck, but the Duck spits on him. Number 2.

Ss of No. 2: (Write down /w/ /a/ /p/ and pronounce) / wap /

P2. Teaching phonetic symbols of Part 2 (/ m / to / j /): Teacher told the story and the

correspondent pronunciation of phonetic symbols at Part 2 with the introduction of each

pictorial representation shown at Figure 1. Students were asked to listen and repeat chorally

several times.

P3. Introduce the corresponding phonetics symbols: second set of phonetic symbol flashcards are

used again to help students remember the corresponding consonants and vowels. Again students were asked to repeat for each symbol being posted.

P4. Game for Part 2 phonetic symbols practice: Teacher removed the pictorial representations while cuing students to pronounce the removed pictures. Now what is left are second set of flashcards. Again teachers divided students into two group and assigned number. She also put two toy hammers on the floor. Students this time need to listen carefully what teacher described (personified characters) and picked up the hammer to hit the correct symbol while producing correct sound.

T: Mcdonald's. Number 3.

Ss of No.3: (Pick up the hammer, hit and pronounce) / m /

P5. Practicing all the taught symbols (Part 1 and 2) and C+V+C combination: Teacher put four vowels (/ ɪ /, / ɔ /, / u /, / ʊ /) in the middle of white board (in vertical) and rotated randomly consonants to the left and right side of these vowels while students must produce correct pronunciation for posted flashcards (see Figure 5 for illustration).

Teacher: (Post / m / and / k / next to the four vowels)

Students: / mɪk // mɔk // muk // mʊk /

P6. Teach pronunciation for more than two syllables: Teacher divided students two in a group and gave each group a set of phonetic-symbolized playing cards (the third and small set of flashcards). Students needed to pick up the symbols taught so far. After students were ready, teacher would use the personified characters to make up stories. Students then needed to

pick up the right cards and arrange them accordingly and pronounce.

T: The big belly uncle beckons to Fatty Snake and he also saw the Moon singing in the sky.

Ss: (Find and arrange the cards of / b /, / e /, / s /, / ɔ // l / and pronounce) / ' bes `bəl /

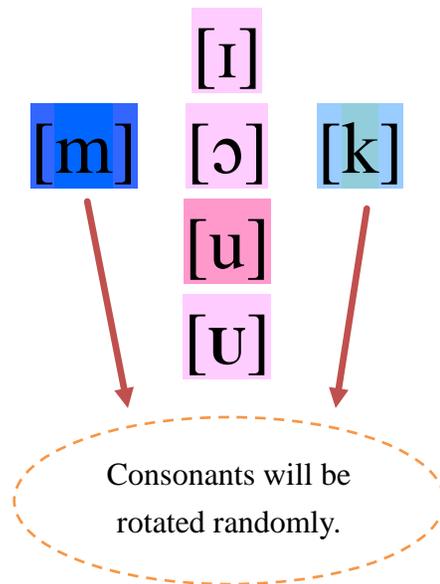


Figure 5: illustration for C+V+C practice at Session Two P5.

Session Three:

P1. Warm-up

- a. Review the phonetic symbols taught at Session One and Two: Show flashcard of each taught consonant and vowel and cue students to pronounce correctly.
- b. Review two- syllable pronunciation: Teacher wrote down 15 two- syllables phonetic symbols on the board. When teacher pointed to one of them, students must produce correct pronunciation. After couple times of repetition, teacher again divided students

into two group and assigned number. When number was called, students of that number must come, erase and repeat the pronunciation.

T: / pleɪŋ / number one.

Ss of No.1: (Erase / pleɪŋ / and pronounce) / pleɪŋ /.

P2. Teach phonetic symbols of Part 3 (/ ʃ / to / h /): Teacher continued telling the story and the correct pronunciation of phonetic symbols at Part 3 with the introduction of each pictorial representation shown at Figure 1. Students were asked to repeat chorally several times for correct pronunciation.

P3. Introduce the corresponding phonetics symbols: The same as what described at Session P3.

P4. Remove the picture cards: Teacher requested individual student to remove the pictorial representations while cuing other students to pronounce the removing pictures.

T: A dog's song. Gary.

Gary: (Come to the front, remove the picture of a dog's song and pronounce) / au /.

Ss: / au /

P5. Game for Part 2 phonetic symbols practice: Now again, what is left are second set of flashcards. Teacher divided students into two group and assigned number. She this time would ask students from the largest to the smallest number to come forward. She then showed randomly a picture of personified characters. These students had to use their body languages to delineate the shown picture while others from smallest to largest number have to point the corresponding flashcard and make correct sound.

T: (Show the picture of “Drinking”)

Ss of No. 6: (Gesture drinking something by pouting their mouth and making a fist underneath their chins)

Ss of No. 1: (Rush to the front, touch and pronounce) / h /

P6. Practicing of C+V+C combination for all the phonetic symbols: Teacher

used the method similar to P5 at Session One. She put the flashcards of vowel,

/ ʌ /, / ɜ /, / aʊ /, / ɔɪ /, / aɪ /, at the upper side, consonants / dʒ /, / l /, / tʃ /, / ʃ / at the

left side and / h /, / m /, / θ /, / ʒ / at the right side of the board and number

each space (see Figure 6 for illustration). She again divided students into two

groups and assigned number. Students whose number were called must

pronounce the sound of the number appointed.

T: Number 5, 14

Ss of No. 5: / tʃɔrθ /

P7. Use third set of small flashcard for practicing pronunciation of more than two syllables: The

same as what was described at P6 Session Two.

Figure 6: illustration for practicing of C+V+C combination for all phonetic symbols.

| | | | | | | |
|------|-----|-----|------|---------------|------|-----|
| | [ʌ] | [ɜ] | [aʊ] | [ɔɪ] | [aɪ] | |
| [dʒ] | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | [h] |
| [l] | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | [m] |
| [tʃ] | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 [tʃɔrθ] | 15 | [θ] |
| [ʃ] | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | [ð] |

Session Four:

The last class meeting time was used to practice these 41 consonants and vowels by reviewing either individual symbol or their combination through the utilization of several methods applied before.

Learners' reaction

After the implementation of studied pronunciation approach, a mini interview was conducted to investigate learners' reaction to it. Five questions were asked (see Appendix B).

Most students suggest that they enjoy learning pronunciation through the present approach.

As several students said,

Lily: I like to learn pronunciation through this method because it makes pronunciation learning more interesting, not boring anymore.

Cybil: I think learning pronunciation through this method is interesting because this method is very interesting and it helps me to memory vocabulary faster.

Harvey: I pretty like learning pronunciation through this method because I don't know..maybe I am not under any pressure when learning. And it is interesting, too.

Betty: I like learning pronunciation through this method because it helps me to memorize new vocabulary.

However, one of the students, Ann said she doesn't prefer learning pronunciation through this approach, still she thinks this approach is a good way of learning pronunciation as she said,

“It is just so-so for me to learn pronunciation through this method. I think the story doesn't connect well and I don't know. But I think to some extent, consonants and vowels are difficult to remember. The listening of story does make the memorization of consonants and vowels easier” (Anna, 2008).

Most of the students stated that they like both the story and the utilization of small

flashcards. As one of the students, Johnny suggested “I like the story-telling part which is the most interesting. And I think the use of small flashcards will help to improve my pronunciation.”

Meanwhile Sophie suggested the use of the small set flashcards and other games fasten their pace of learning pronunciation.

“I feel that it is just fine for me to learn pronunciation through this method, although I may feel it is interesting to learn pronunciation through this method, but I think I quickly learn how to pronounce a word through the use of small flashcards and the playing of games.” (Sophie, 2008)

Two students, Lily and Ann, said their motivation of learning English didn't increase, although she likes this method. However, some students, such as Sophie, Harvey, Nicole, Johnny, and Cindy expressed their increasing of learning English to some extent because of this method, while two students, Betty and Cybil feel their motivation increased largely thanks to this interesting learning method.

When asking them to pronounce the consonants and vowels I pointed, Gary, Debby, Ann, Betty, Johnny, Nicole and Lily can pronounce 100%, while Sophie can pronounce 90% and Cindy, Harvey and Cybil can pronounce 80% of the pointed consonants and vowels.

Teacher's reaction

To elicit this teacher's reaction to this approach, a post-teaching interview was conducted and the following is her attitude and reaction to this approach:

“Generally speaking, this is an effective and useful pronunciation teaching method. I feel that my students learning pronunciation faster and easier through

this method. And then the use of small flashcards make my students learn to pronounce new vocabulary quickly and improve the sense of satisfaction. I think the pictorial presentation is the best. The pictures are so vivid and they are just so good for my visual learners. Also, the story is simple and vivid. It is easy to remember. In addition, the utilization of these pictures and body languages reinforces the learning process and improve the memorization of consonants and vowels. The small flashcards are good because my learners can actually “operate” the symbols and this intensifies their memorization, too. I think two-third of my students learn pronunciation quickly and easily through this method. But one-third of them need more KK symbols learning. I think five sessions are not long enough. I think for my students to learn better, the teaching sessions should be prolonged and more utilization of small flashcards are indeed necessary. I will continue using this method for my next class because it is too interesting for a pronunciation teaching method (Trista, 2008).

This teacher seems to like this teaching approach because it is different from traditional pronunciation teaching approach in Taiwan. She also found that the visual representations intensify her students’ memorization of consonants and vowels and this helps her students to produce correct pronunciation. Also, she thought the utilization of small flashcard let her students “operate the sound”. This operation of sounds improves the memorization and understanding of pronunciation.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Teaching of pronunciation is an important component in the EFL classroom, as Abercrombie (1949) pointed out that it is impossible to not to get much attention on pronunciation teaching to any type of learner, for any purpose and by any method. When

examining back the existing literature regarding pronunciation teaching methodologies and techniques, the employment of mnemonic device, a proven productive tool for vocabulary teaching and learning (Atkinson, 1975; Pillai, n.d.; Pressley et. al, 1982) seems to be neglected. Thus, the present study, a work of mnemonic utilization of teaching pronunciation in the EFL classroom, is a pioneer with an effort to fulfill the lacking piece of the pronunciation teaching puzzle. Also, when authentic native materials from western discourses do not fit in the eastern teaching contents, EFL teachers should be encouraged to develop “appropriate pedagogy that takes into account both the global and local needs of learners of English.” (Kramersch & Sullivan, 1996, p. 200)

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Appendix A: Questions for teacher's interview

1. 整體來說，妳覺得這是一套有效教授音標及拚音的方法嗎?為什麼?

Generally speaking, do you think it is an effective method of pronunciation (consonants, vowels and spelling) teaching? Why or why not?

2. 你覺得此教法中，那個部分最有趣並帶動學生的整體學習效果?

Which part do you think the most interesting which leads to good learning efficacy among your students?

3. 你覺得你的學生藉由這套教法將音標學法並能靈活應用嗎?

Do you think your learners acquire consonants and vowels and are able to apply them flexibly?

4. 你覺得此教法有需要改進的地方嗎?

Can you think of any improvement for this pronunciation approach?

5. 你以後還會再繼續使用此教法教授發音嗎?

Will you continue using this teaching approach to teach pronunciation?

Appendix B: Questions for students' interview

1. 你喜歡藉由這種說故事的方式學英文發音嗎?為什麼?

Do you enjoy learning pronunciation through storytelling? How?

2. 你覺得在整個學習過程中，那個部分最有趣?

Which part do you think the most interesting during the learning process?

3. 你覺得藉由聽故事及玩字卡的方法，讓你很快的將音標及拼音學會嗎?

Do you think that you acquired the consonants, vowels and their combination of pronunciation easily through the learning of storytelling and the use of small flashcards?

4. 聽故事學音標及拼音提高你學英文的興趣嗎?

Does the way of learning phonetic alphabet through storytelling improve your motivation of learning English?

5. 可否請你發出老師所指的音。

Please pronounce the sound of the phonetic alphabets I indicate.

Appendix C: 窩窩的奇遇

有一天窩窩 [w] 在回家的路上看見一個漂亮的阿姨 [i]，因為阿姨很漂亮，所以像天使頭上都有一朵雲。那位阿姨遇到一隻鴨子 [a]，一直在亂叫所以阿姨就踢了它一腳 [t]，結果鴨子就很生氣並拿起機關槍對天空一直達達地 [d] 亂掃射而且還一直噴口水 [p]。後來噴到一位大肚伯 [b]，害阿伯眼睛都張不開好像天黑 [ɔ] 了一樣。這時天空出現一隻海鷗 [o]，因為天氣很冷 [n] 所以它就感冒而且一直咳嗽 [k]，青蛙哥哥 [g] 就出來唱歌安慰它。就在這個時像遠遠的地方有個怪物向窩窩招手 [e] 並伸出它醜醜的一指大怪手 [ɛ] 要東西，還掐掐窩窩的脖子 [æ]，後來窩窩就用很香的麥當勞 [m] 來哄它放手，窩窩就趁機趕快騎著機車 [ŋ] 逃走。他在路上看到一支軍隊喊著口令 [i]，一手拿著斧頭 [f]，一手比著勝利的手勢 [v]。這時有一隻有尾烏鴉 [u] 和一隻無尾烏鴉 [ʊ] 說他們看到兩隻奇怪的蛇，肥肥蛇 [s] 和扁扁蛇 [z] 在游泳，還看到兩隻好笑的狗，大舌狗 [θ] 和站立狗 [ð] 對著一片鋁門 [ʒ] 在噓噓 [ʃ]，後來有一列火車 [ʒ] 開來上面坐著一隻老鼠指揮家叫球球 [dʒ] 帶領四隻鵝：尖頭鵝 [ʌ]、無尾鵝 [ə]、領節鵝 [ɜː] 和有尾鵝 [ə]，啦啦啦 [l] 地在唱兒歌 [r]，三首歌分別是愛之歌 [aɪ]，狗之歌 [aʊ]，泰山之歌 [ɔɪ]。窩窩和爺爺 [j] 就高興的喝著汽水 [h] 回家了。