

**A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF GRADE 5 STUDENTS' WORD
STRESS COMPETENCE UNDER MULTISENSORY AND LISTEN
AND REPEAT TEACHING APPROACHES IN ENGLISH AS A
FOREIGN LANGUAGE CLASS AT A PUBLIC SCHOOL IN
BANGKOK, THAILAND**

**Yuthika Chayluxsamee¹
Richard Lynch²**

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Abstract: This study aimed to determine the level of word stress competence of Grade 5 English as a foreign language students taught through multisensory. To listen and repeat teaching approaches and determine whether there was a significant difference in the gain in word stress competence from the pre-test to the post-test among students taught in English as a foreign language class at a public school in Bangkok, Thailand. The research was a quasi-experimental study conducted on two groups. The experimental group (Class 5/2) used the multisensory teaching approach. The other group was the control group (Class 5/1), using the listen and repeat teaching approach in the 2019 academic year. The research instrument utilized was the pre-post test of word stress competence developed by the researcher. The scores were analyzed using standard deviations and an independent samples t-test (two-tailed). The study's findings revealed a significant difference in the gain in word stress competence from the pre-test to the post-test between students in the experimental and control groups. Students taught through the multisensory approach achieved higher than those taught through listening and repeat.

Recommendations are provided for the school, teachers, and future researchers.

Keywords: Word Stress Competence, Multisensory Teaching Approach, Listen and Repeat, English, Bangkok, Thailand

¹ English Teacher, Banbangkapi School, Bangkok, Thailand. yuthikayust@gmail.com

² Assistant Professor, Graduate School of Human Sciences, Assumption University, Thailand. richardlynch2002@yahoo.com

Introduction

The English language is utilized internationally as a *lingua franca*. It serves to be a worldwide language spoken in a wide range of countries (Crystal, 2003). In Thailand, English has been taught in all public schools from Grade 1 since 1996 (Punthumasen, 2007). According to Narksompong (2007), English has become an essential tool for communication in Thailand; English speakers should deliver their speech as clearly as possible. Thus, having intelligible pronunciation has become one of the necessary components of oral communication (Celce-Murcia, Brinton, & Goodwin, 1996).

Language teaching in Thailand includes pronunciation in the core curriculum from elementary to secondary. According to Jindathai (2015), the teacher is one of the crucial factors that can help students acquire good English communicative skills. Thai teachers must have pedagogical knowledge of the effective methodologies for teaching English pronunciation to learn how to produce English words and sounds correctly.

The target school of this study is located in Bangkok, Thailand. Grade 5 students in this school in the academic year 2019 were EFL learners who had English lessons in three class periods a week. One period was English communication and the other two periods were general English. Non-native English teachers taught all lessons. The students had minimal opportunities to speak English outside the classroom, and their English language level was within the beginner band of proficiency. As observed by the researcher, the pronunciation teaching approach used in the target school to teach Grade 5 students was primarily a traditional method. The teacher modeled for the students how to pronounce English words, the students imitated the teacher's pronunciation. In other words, it was the listen and repeat teaching approach. The researcher found that some students had good reading skills, and they were able to recognize grammar rules and basic English words. However, many of them were afraid of speaking English, and they also had problems with English pronunciation, especially in word stress competence. The students' pronunciation is influenced by their native language (Thai), so they were likely to stress the last syllable of every word.

The researcher believed that a different teaching approach applied in teaching and learning English could make a difference in these students' word stress competence. Therefore, the researcher decided to conduct a quasi-experimental study to compare two teaching approaches—the multisensory and listen and repeat teaching approach—focused on the word stress competence of Grade 5 students in English as a foreign language class at the school.

Research Objectives

The following research objectives were addressed in this study.

1. To determine the level of word stress competence of Grade 5 students taught through the multisensory teaching approach in English as a foreign language class at a public school in Bangkok, Thailand.
2. To determine the level of word stress competence of Grade 5 students taught through the listening and repeat teaching approach in English as a foreign language class at a public school in Bangkok, Thailand.
3. To determine whether there is a significant difference in the gain in word stress competence from the pre-test to the post-test between students taught through a multisensory teaching approach and those taught through a listening and repeat teaching approach in English as a foreign language class at a public school in Bangkok, Thailand.

Conceptual Framework

The study aimed to determine the level of word stress competence of students taught through multisensory and listen and repeat teaching approaches and to determine if there was a significant difference in the gain in word stress competence from the pre-test to the post-test among students taught through the multisensory and listen and repeat teaching approaches. Figure 1 shows the conceptual framework of the study.

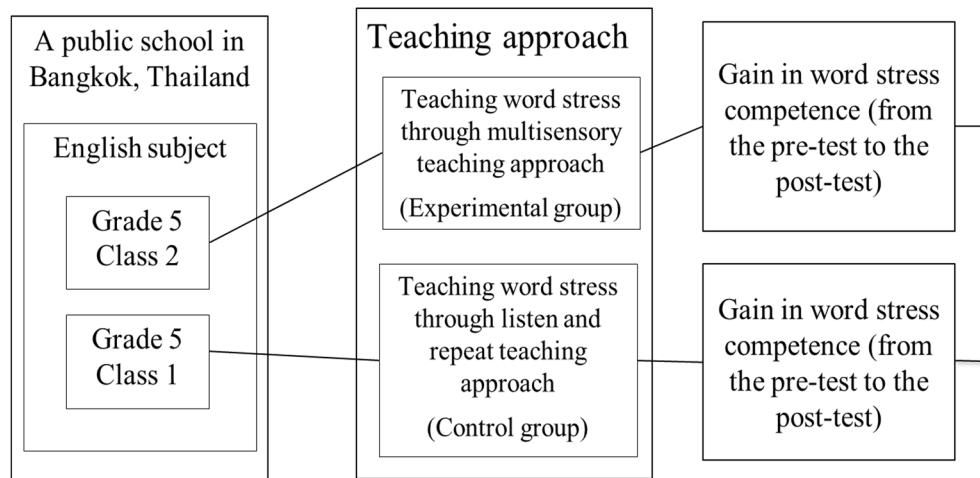


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework of the Study.

Literature Review

Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)

Hymes (1972) mentioned that competence is related to tacit knowledge and using language appropriately in different situations. The knowledge will allow

a speaker to produce and understand the conversation continually. According to Richards (2006), the goal of communicative language teaching is for language learners to acquire communicative competence. In a CLT classroom, the teacher's role is to facilitate and monitor language learning, while learners are expected to have responsibility for their learning. With the help of teachers, students learn language through class participation, group discussion, project work, and pair/group work activities. Students are taught to develop their communicative competence, including what to say and how to say it correctly in any real-life interactions (Richards, 2006).

Gardner's Multiple Intelligences Theory

The multiple intelligences theory identified eight areas of intelligence: linguistic, logical-mathematical, musical, spatial, bodily-kinesthetic, naturalistic, interpersonal, intrapersonal. Gardner believes each person has more than a single intelligence. Instead, human beings possess autonomous intelligence different from others (Gardner, 1983).

Each person has all eight intelligences but different capacities in each intelligence. All multiple intelligences work together in unique ways for individuals. Moreover, each intelligence level of competency can be developed by giving suitable instruction or encouragement (Armstrong, 2009).

Skinner's Operant Conditioning Theory of Learning

Skinner explained that reinforcement or punishment serves as the two critical aspects of raising or reducing a particular behavior's possibility. Reinforcement will increase the behavior, while punishment will reduce the behavior (Cherry, 2019). According to McLeod (2007), operant conditioning is considered the most effective in changing students' behavior to desired behavior in the classroom. Teachers can easily apply operant conditioning by providing positive reinforcement, such as compliments, approval, or encouragement.

Method

This study was a quasi-experimental study where two groups were used; students in Class 5/1 and Class 5/2 at the target school. The teacher held the English classes twice a week for 60 minutes each (the researcher in the current study). Word stress teaching and practicing were included and took about 10 minutes each time, with an average of 20 minutes per week. Therefore, students in each group were taught word stress 160 minutes over eight weeks or 16 classes, including the pre-test and post-test sessions. The research instrument utilized was the pre-post test of word stress competence developed by the researcher. The collected data were analyzed using descriptive statistics

(means and standard deviations) for objectives 1 and 2. The statistical hypothesis testing (independent samples *t*-tests) addressed objective 3 of this research.

Population and Sample

The population of this study was Grade 5 students from 12 classes at a public school in Bangkok, Thailand, during the 2019 academic year. The sample consisted of Grade 5 students in Classes 5/1 and 5/2, 34 students from each class.

Research Instrument

The pre-post test of word stress competence was used to measure the students' level of word stress competence before and after the two different English word stress teaching approaches. The researcher developed the pre-post test of word stress competence from Khamkhien (2010) and Kanoksilapatham (2014). English words in the test were randomly selected from the Grade 5 students' textbooks. The researcher selected the English words they would learn in the second semester of the 2019 academic year. The English words were grouped according to their syllables. Two-syllable and three-syllable words consisted of six test items for each. Four-syllable words consisted of three test items because few four-syllable words were provided in the students' English books. Proper nouns consisted of five items. This multiple-choice test consisted of 20 items making a total score of 20 points, 1 item for 1 point. The list of 20 words was arranged according to their syllables, beginning with two syllables and ending with proper nouns. The post-test of word stress competence was conducted the same as the pre-test of word stress competence, except that list of 20 English words in the test were rearranged. Pilot testing was conducted with ten students from Class 5/5. Table 1 shows the reliability statistics of the pre-post test of word stress competence in the pilot study.

Table 1. *The Reliability Statistics of the Pre-Post Test of Word Stress Competence in Pilot Study*

Cronbach's alpha	Cronbach's alpha based on standardized items	<i>N</i> of items
.76	.75	20

Table 2 below shows the interpretation of the pre and post-test of word stress competence scores.

Table 2

The Interpretation of the Pre-Post Test of Word Stress Competence Scores

Score	Word stress competence interpretation
17-20	Excellent
13-16	Very good
9-12	Good
5-8	Fair
0-4	Limited

Findings

In this section, the research findings are presented according to the objectives.

Research Objective 1

Table 3 indicates the means and standard deviations of pre-test and post-test under the multisensory teaching approach in English as a foreign language class at a public school in Bangkok, Thailand.

Table 3

Means and Standard Deviations of Pre-Test and Post-Test Under Multisensory Teaching Approach

Multisensory teaching approach	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Pre-test	8.44	2.27
Post-test	12.53	2.45

According to the findings shown in Table 3, the pre-test of Grade 5 students under the multisensory teaching approach was 8.44, and the post-test was 12.53. According to the interpretation key (see Table 2), they were interpreted as fair and good, respectively.

Research Objective 2

Table 4 illustrates the means and standard deviations of pre-test and post-test under the listening and repeat teaching approach.

Table 4. Means and Standard Deviations of Pre-Test and Post-Test Under Listen and Repeat Teaching Approach

Listen and repeat teaching approach	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Pre-test	8.59	2.04
Post-test	11.26	2.27

According to the findings shown in Table 4, the pre-test of Grade 5 students under the listening and repeat teaching approach was 8.59, and the post-test was 11.26. According to the interpretation key (see Table 2), they were interpreted as fair and good, respectively.

Research Objective 3

Table 5 illustrates the results of the independent samples *t*-test comparing the difference in the gain in word stress competence from the pre-test to the post-test among students taught through multisensory and listen and repeat teaching approaches.

Table 5. *Results of the Independent Samples t-Test (Two-Tailed) in the Difference in Word Stress Competence from the Pre-Test to the Post-Test Between Experimental Group and Control Group*

Group	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Experimental group	34	4.06	2.67	66	2.38	.020*
Control group	34	2.68	2.07			

Note. *An asterisk indicates a significant difference between groups. A significant difference level was set at $p = .05$.

The results of the independent samples *t*-test shown in Table 10 indicates that there was no significant difference between Grades 7 and 8 students' attitudes toward communicative language teaching in learning English as a foreign language, $t(68) = 2.38; p = .020$

Discussion

After eight weeks of instruction, although the control group improved their scores after experiencing the listen and repeat teaching approach, there was a greater significant gain in word stress competence for the experimental group. Although the difference in the gain in word stress competence between the two groups was not large, the researcher observed a real difference in the teaching and learning process. According to the study by Oksanen (2016), students were more interested in learning and practicing pronunciation after multisensory pronunciation teaching in Grade 3 students in Finland. It indicated that teaching pronunciation through a multisensory approach makes pronunciation more interesting. Likewise, the researcher of the current study noticed that using a multisensory teaching approach increased class participation and helped students learn better in a class that consisted of 34 students in the target school.

Odisho (2007) noted that each student is unique and has multiple intelligences, so teachers should broaden ways of teaching to facilitate students' various

intelligence. Several researchers have indicated that integrating auditory, visual, and kinesthetic modalities into pronunciation teaching and learning can encourage learners to speak English more clearly and accurately (e.g., Chan, 2018; Odisho, 2007). Therefore, all of the lessons for the experimental group in this study integrated multisensory teaching, which applied more than one sensory modality to teaching English word stress. In the current study, the researcher provided an opportunity for the students to learn word stress through auditory, visual, and kinesthetic modalities. Although this was a new learning approach for these Class 5/2 students, they were very interested in learning English word stress in a new and different way. The 10-minute English word stress lessons in each class started with the teacher introducing a new word, identifying the stressed syllables, presenting the stress patterns, and getting the students to practice by repeating and imitating the body movements. Students were excited by engaging in word stress practice. However, under the listen and repeat teaching approach, Class 5/1 students were taught through imitation and repetition only. Students were asked to do a lot of imitation drills and read aloud to match the typical word stress of given words.

The results of this study showed there was a significant difference in students' achievement under the two different word stress instructional approaches. The finding of this study conforms with the study of Mirzaei, Jahandar, and Khodabandehlou (2014). The study similarly showed a significant difference in pronunciation achievement between the control and experimental groups in Iranian students enrolled in an EFL course. The control group received no treatment, while the experimental group received pronunciation teaching that integrated multiple intelligences theory. The researchers concluded that implementing multiple intelligences theory can be an effective way to improve the pronunciation of intermediate Iranian EFL learners. However, there was no comparison of the gain in word stress competence between Iranian EFL learners in the experimental and control groups in that study.

Although this study showed a significant difference in students' achievement under the two different word stress instructional approaches, the margin was narrow. This could be due to the limitation of the 16 classes over eight weeks of instruction, or 160 minutes in total. The researcher believes that increasing the amount of instruction time would ensure higher achievement and could lead to more significant differences in the gain in word stress competence between the two teaching approaches. Based on the study results of Mirzaei et al. (2014), the Iranian EFL students had multiple intelligence-based instructions for 15 hours or 900 minutes in total. The mean score of the students in the experimental group was significantly higher than the students

in the control group. In addition, the teacher/researcher in the current study may have been a limitation of the study. The teacher was new in English teaching and the school. This may have affected the teaching and learning of word stress processes during the classes. Furthermore, students in the target school were EFL learners, and their English language level was in the beginner proficiency band. The current researcher believes, based on the findings of this study, that applying the multisensory teaching approach in other regular schools in Thailand could also improve Thai students' word stress competence in English

Recommendations

Based on the findings, some recommendations are for teachers, school administrators, students, and future researchers.

Recommendations for Students

The findings showed that students achieved higher word stress competence through multisensory, listening, and repeat teaching approaches. Students may frequently find some time to review the word stress lesson that they have been taught in the classes and do the English word stress practice with their friends, English speakers, or parents to be familiar with the correct English word stress and to reduce word stress misplacement. Moreover, if the students practice speaking English with the right word stress, they will finally achieve intelligible English pronunciation and have more explicit speech.

Recommendations for English Teachers

The researcher would recommend that English teachers at the target school prepare to integrate word stress and pronunciation lessons into EFL classes, whether reading, speaking, grammar, or any English language class. Although using the traditional listen and repeat method only in teaching English word stress can improve word stress competence, the multisensory teaching approach should be viewed as another practical approach for word stress instruction. The teachers need to broaden their pronunciation instructional repertoires and assessment procedures to address the needs of different types of learners. The researcher believes that teacher professional development and training programs, together with the cooperation of the school, students, and teachers, will make a change for the better in English language learning and teaching.

Recommendations for Curriculum Developers

The findings showed that students achieved higher word stress competence through multisensory, listening, and repeat teaching approaches. Therefore, implementing a multisensory teaching approach is highly recommended for

English classes and not only for Grade 5 but for other grade levels. Curriculum developers should include helpful information for designing and developing EFL oral skills courses for students to reach the highest learning outcomes.

Recommendations for Future Researchers

This study was conducted on only 34 Grade 5 students in a public school in Bangkok, Thailand. The sample size was small. The researcher would recommend future researchers interested in conducting a similar study carried out research with larger sample sizes and different grade levels. Future researchers should also consider doing mixed quantitative-qualitative studies. A qualitative component would focus on interviewing students to understand how they feel about multisensory pronunciation learning instead of learning through traditional pronunciation teaching approaches. Similarly, future researchers could consider studying students' achievement in pronunciation through a multisensory approach and their attitudes to that approach. They should explore teachers' attitudes toward and comfort using a multisensory approach in their English classes.

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