Thai EFL Teachers' Beliefs and Reported Practices: An Investigation of English Language Pronunciation Instruction

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated pronunciation instruction in Thailand through different lenses, which were teachers' beliefs and teaching practices, by using a sequential mixed-method design whereby the quantitative survey data was collected followed by a semi-structured interview. The objectives of this study were to explore Thai EFL teachers' beliefs and their reported practices vis-à-vis English pronunciation instruction, and their perceived challenges when teaching pronunciation. The participants of this study were 60 Thai EFL teachers who taught English to sixth-grade students in public elementary schools in Thailand. The results revealed that the teachers believed that pronunciation instruction was a pivotal part of their English language teaching and learning. In practice, pronunciation was taught implicitly based on the intuitive-imitative approach. Their instruction focused on segmentals and was greatly dominated by the nativelikeness paradigm. However, pronunciation was still marginalized compared to other English skills, owning to achievement tests, absence of a coherent curriculum, time limitations, and teacher shortages. Findings from this study are important for informing the professional development of Thai English teachers and the development of teacher education, as well as curriculum design.

Keywords
Teachers' Beliefs; Teaching Practices; Pronunciation Instruction; Thai EFL Teachers; Primary English Language Teaching

Introduction

Since English has become an international medium of communication, there have been significant changes in the English language teaching (ELT) of both English as a Second Language (ESL) and English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts. In the same vein, the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach was implemented in Thailand, where English is taught as a foreign language, to improve the English communicative competence of Thai students (Teng & Sinwongsuwat, 2015). However, despite the implemention of the CLT approach, Thai students still have not performed well in English oral communication (Anyadubalu, 2010). Several factors could be emphasized as pathways to ameliorate students' performance, but one of the most crucial factors is pronunciation, which is regarded as a key element for the learning of English oral skills (Somdee & Suppasetseree, 2013). Despite its bona fide importance for English oral communication, pronunciation has nonetheless been marginalized in ELT, especially in the CLT era. According to Foote et al. (2016), some implemented CLT principles, which emphasize fluency rather than accuracy, resulted in the decline of pronunciation. Pronunciation was often viewed as being non-essential (Sonsaat & Levis, 2017) because it was regarded as a component of linguistic rather than communicative competence which meant it was related more to accuracy rather than fluency. Additionally, the integration of pronunciation seemed to be impossible as it was too difficult, particularly for EFL students (Macdonald, 2002).

Due to the neglect of pronunciation in ELT, many researchers have attempted to investigate pronunciation teaching in both ESL and EFL contexts (e.g., Foote et al., 2011; Murphy, 2011). Several investigated students' pronunciation competence or problems (e.g., Khamkhien, 2010; Anam, 2018), teachers' pronunciation proficiency (e.g., Kanoksilapatham, 2014), or the use of technology in pronunciation instruction (e.g., Pennington & Rogerson-Revell, 2019; Wongsuriya, 2020). In addition, there were studies

conducted to explore pronunciation through teachers' beliefs (e.g., Alsofyani & Algethami, 2017; Szyszka, 2016), the relationship between teachers' beliefs with their teaching practices in ELT (e.g., Moedjito, 2016; Buss, 2015) or teaching in languages other than English (Huensch, 2018) since teachers' beliefs could impact their teaching behaviors, decision making and lesson planning (Pajares, 1992; Xu, 2012). However, even though teachers' beliefs concerning pronunciation instruction have gradually received more interest from researchers in both ESL and EFL contexts, there is a paucity of research in teachers' beliefs and their teaching practices, focusing on pronunciation instruction, in Thailand. Moreover, to the best of the researcher's knowledge, only a few studies have been concentrated on pronunciation in an elementary education setting specifically in Thailand. This educational level should be regarded as salient as it underpins all English skills for students (Kanoksilapatham, 2014). Thus, to bridge the gap, the present research aimed at exploring beliefs and the reported practices of Thai EFL elementary school teachers vis-à-vis pronunciation instruction.

Literature Review

Teachers' Beliefs

Teachers' beliefs could be conceptualized in various ways, but the common characteristics in the definitions of teachers' beliefs were whether they were explicit and/or implicit, stable and/or dynamic across time, situated in contexts and/or generalizable across situations, and best understood as individual propositions and/or larger systems (Five & Buehl, 2012). However, it should be noted that teachers' general beliefs were close to teachers' pedagogic beliefs which comprised their beliefs about teaching, learning and learners, subject matter, and their roles as teachers (Borg, 2001). According to Asadi & Abdi (2015), teachers' beliefs are derived from various sources, such as their experience as language learners, their teaching experience, their personality, and their education.

According to Pajares (1992), beliefs held by teachers concerning their work, students, subjects, roles, and responsibilities seemed to impact their perception and judgement which, consequently, indicated their teaching behavior in classrooms. For instance, Hung (2011) stated that teachers' beliefs about teaching methods underlined their judgements about textbooks and methods. In other words, teachers' methods, instructional planning, teaching strategies, interaction with students, and classroom management were all propelled by their pedagogic beliefs which could also impact students' development. Therefore, Xu (2012) suggested that teachers who were willing to

examine their beliefs and how such beliefs were related to their teaching practices would be able to make the most of such beliefs. In this regard, it could in turn help students in various ways, such as developing their knowledge and decision-making. Conversely, if teachers were not aware of their own beliefs, it could cause unanticipated consequences by the instructors misconceiving students' motivation and behavior, disregarding valuable curriculum, and limiting learners' potential.

Pronunciation Instruction

Celce-Murcia et al. (2011) stated that there were three general approaches in teaching pronunciation. The first approach was the intuitive-imitative approach, which suggests that students could acquire correct pronunciation by listening and imitating language from sources, such as audio recordings or their teachers, without explicit theoretical explanation. In other words, the acquisition of pronunciation was primarily based on students' listening and imitation skills of the target language sounds. The second approach was the analytic-linguistic approach, which suggests that students should make use of linguistic devices, such as phonetic alphabet or articulatory description, in tandem with listening and imitation. Thus, explicit pronunciation instruction was required, for example, in the manner of articulation (Roohani, 2013). The last approach was the integrative approach, which is a combination between the first and the second

approaches. That is, teachers are required to teach pronunciation both implicitly (listening and imitation through reliable sources) and explicitly (theoretical explanation). In addition, this approach generally emphasized suprasegmental or features rather than segmental ones (Shabani & Ghasemian, 2017).

With the advent of World Englishes, the hegemony of native English speaker (NS) models regarding pronunciation was altered. Thus, this polycentric nature of English posed a question about the most suitable pronunciation model for ELT curricula. Smith (2011) postulated that there were three pronunciation models which had arisen in this controversy. The first model was intelligibility, whereby the concept focused on comfortable intelligibility as a suitable goal for learners. Most teachers and researchers considered this model to be the most realistic (Yoshida, 2016). The second model was called Lingua Franca Core, which was proposed by Jenkins (2000). Similar to the previous model, the aim was achieving intelligibility but specifically amongst non-native speakers (NNS). However, this model only concentrated on certain pronunciation features which appeared crucial to intelligibility, such as all English consonant sounds except /θ/ and /ð/, most consonant clusters, vowel length, and appropriate word grouping and placement of nuclear stress. The last model was native-speaker likeness, which aimed at achieving NS accent. However, according to Smith (2011), students should be the ones to decide how they wished to sound in English, not their teachers. In this respect, teachers should employ multiple models (both NS and NNS) in class so that their students are well aware of the variety of English accents.

As seen above, teachers' beliefs seemed to guide both their thoughts and behavior in their daily professional lives. Thus, the investigating of both teachers' beliefs and their teaching practices must be deemed as crucial for understanding and improving pronunciation instruction. Accordingly, the present study sheds light on the status quo of pronunciation instruction in Thailand, particularly in primary education, by exploring Thai EFL teachers' beliefs and their reported practices about

English pronunciation instruction. It sought to address the following research questions:

1) What beliefs do Thai EFL teachers hold regarding English pronunciation instruction?

2) What teaching practices do they implement in the English pronunciation classrooms?

3) What are their perceived difficulties in English pronunciation instruction?

Methodology

Participants and Setting

The study was conducted in Thai public elementary schools from 13 school clusters. The participants were Thai EFL teachers whose native language (L1) was Thai. They taught English to Thai students in the sixth grade of each school at the time of the study (see Table 1). Sixty Thai EFL teachers participated in the first part of the study (questionnaire survey) and nine out of 60 participants participated in the second part of the study (semi-structured interview). Both participants and setting were selected by using convenience sampling. According to Dörnyei (2007), the rationale behind the use of this sampling technique is that when the target participants meet certain criteria, including willingness to participate, availability and accessibility, it enables the researcher to gain insights into the participants' beliefs and their reported practices even though the topic may involve personal issues which may be difficult to investigate. In addition, considering the ethical issues, the use of pseudonyms (T1, T2…T9) was applied in this study to specify the participants while retaining anonymity.

Table 1. Participants' Demographic Data (N=60)

Demographics	Detail	Number of Participants
Gender	Male	6
	Female	54
Education	Bachelor's degree	44
	Master's degree	16
Self-Assessed	Excellent	1

Speaking	Good	25
Proficiency	Fair	34

Research Instruments

The present study employed a mixed method which was a sequential design. That is, the quantitative phase preceded the qualitative phase. The researcher employed a questionnaire survey as the quantitative tool to gather data about teachers' beliefs, including their broad understanding of pronunciation instruction, followed by semi-structured interviews as the qualitative tool. In this regard, the semi-structured interview questions were based on the questionnaire survey to gain deeper insight into their pronunciation teaching practices and ferret out their beliefs in more detail. The combination of both quantitative and qualitative methods could reduce bias from using a single method and could be used to crosscheck the emerging findings (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Thus, this methods triangulation increased the overall credibility and validity of the study.

The questionnaire survey consisted of two sections: open-ended and closed-ended questions. The open-ended section focused on the participants' definition of pronunciation and their exemplary aspects of what pronunciation instruction should be like. The closed-ended section comprised 30 statement items which were adapted and anchored in previous studies and theoretical frameworks regarding teachers' beliefs and practices about pronunciation instruction (e.g., Alsofyani & Algethami, 2017; Foote et al., 2011; Breitkreutz et al., 2001) to elicit teachers' beliefs.

The main topics of teachers' beliefs in the statement items were: (i) confidence in teaching pronunciation, (ii) beliefs about the importance of pronunciation skill in ELT, (iii) beliefs about the importance of English pronunciation instruction, and (iv) beliefs about benefits of learning English pronunciation. The semi-structured interview questions were based on the questionnaire items but focused more on teachers' pronunciation practices.

Item-Objective Congruence (IOC) testing was conducted to assess content validity of the questionnaire items and the interview questions. Both the questionnaire items and the interview questions were verified by three experts in the field of English language teaching. The IOC score was 0.67 and 1 which was considered acceptable. In addition, Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient was also used to measure the reliability of the questionnaire survey and indicated a relatively high degree of internal consistency across items ($\alpha = 0.87$).

Data Collection Procedures and Analyses

Prior to the main study, a pilot study was conducted with four participants, who shared the same qualifications as the participants in the main study, to identify unanticipated problems and flaws in the research instruments. It was found that the participants were not familiar with some jargon used in some questionnaire items and interview questions. Consequently, such items were removed from both research instruments.

The questionnaire survey was administered to 60 teacher participants from Thai public elementary schools (13 school clusters). The questionnaire items were in Thai. The teacher participants were required to respond to the questionnaire survey within approximately one to two months before the researcher collected the questionnaire responses. The questionnaire data were summarized, analyzed, and interpreted by using statistical calculation, namely, the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS).

Following the questionnaire survey, nine teacher participants volunteered to participate in the interview sessions. Thus, the researcher contacted these teacher participants to arrange time and place for the face-to-face semi-structured interviews. All the teacher participants were asked to sign a consent form prior to the interview session and permission was also obtained from their schools. The interview session was conducted in Thai since they were more comfortable and confident to express their thoughts in their L1. Each session took

approximately one hour. During the interview session, audio-recording and fieldnotes were used.

The audio-recorded data were initially transcribed verbatim in Thai and translated into English. All the translated data were verified by the study advisor and native speakers, checking for meaning equivalence across both languages. The data were analyzed by using the thematic analysis framework of Braun & Clarke (2006). The researcher listened to the audio recordings and read the interview data in its entirety repeatedly. The data were then subdivided, and major themes were selected. The initial codes were applied based on the scheme, and later the data were segmented into broader themes which addressed the research questions.

Results

The findings derived from the questionnaire survey and the semi-structured interviews were presented following the research questions, assessing teachers' beliefs regarding pronunciation instruction, their reported practices regarding pronunciation instruction, and their perceived difficulties during pronunciation instruction.

Teachers' Beliefs about Pronunciation Instruction

Referring to the open-ended section of the questionnaire survey, the teacher participants defined pronunciation instruction as the teaching of word (segmentals) articulation. They believed that good pronunciation should follow the native-speaker likeness model, that is, NS was the role model for themselves, their students, and instructional media.

The data derived from the closed-ended section of the questionnaire survey and the semi-structured interview revealed that the teacher participants expressed confidence in integrating and teaching pronunciation in their classrooms, for instance, in diagnosing students' pronunciation issues. They believed that NNS could be good pronunciation teachers as well. Additionally, most of them were confident in their educational background and

background knowledge of teaching. However, during the interview sessions, a few teacher participants expressed a lack of confidence in their qualifications and training in pronunciation teaching, which was mirrored in their concern about their teaching. Moreover, the teacher participants agreed that additional pronunciation training was still necessary. As T9 stated:

> At present, I can teach English because of my experience, but I think more training will help me feel more confident.

The teacher participants believed that pronunciation played an essential part in ELT. They believed that pronunciation should be emphasized in their lessons since it was on par with other English skills. In this respect, they prioritized correct pronunciation rather than NS accent. Besides, they believed that pronunciation was crucial in English communication since it could help the students improve their intelligibility as well as their language comprehension. As a result, if they prioritized pronunciation, it would increase the students' ability to communicate effectively. Furthermore, apart from ELT, the teacher participants concurred that pronunciation was essential for learning as well. Based on the questionnaire data, they believed that pronunciation could be a tool for the students to succeed in learning English since it could improve other English skills like vocabulary. In addition, they emphasized that they informed the students about the benefits of learning pronunciation. When doing so, they pointed out how mispronunciation could cause communication breakdown.

Teachers' Reported Practices about Pronunciation Instruction

All the teacher participants integrated pronunciation into their classrooms. They did not have a separate pronunciation syllabus which meant the pronunciation section in their lessons relied on their decisions. They generally taught pronunciation by giving corrective feedback. Pronunciation was taught implicitly rather than

explicitly. Most of the teacher participants relied on active listening and imitation from available resources – mainly the teachers plus other NS audio and visual aids (the intuitive-imitative approach). Only some of them used phonics together with active listening and imitation (the analytics-linguistic approach). These approaches and methods were used in tandem with pronunciation activities, such as songs, games, minimal pairs, flashcards, and role-playing. They also employed another interesting technique, which was using English with the students both inside and outside classrooms. That is, during the lessons, they used English when explaining simple topics or topics that their students already understood, and for giving simple directions, for example, "Get into groups of three" or giving permission, for example, "Yes, please do". They also used English when they met their students outside the classroom, for instance, T4 reported during the interview that when she asked her students "What is your next subject?" the students would immediately reply with the subject in English.

With regard to pronunciation teaching strategies, the teacher participants employed two main models: intelligibility and native-speaker likeness. The majority of them employed the intelligibility model, which aimed at achieving a comfortably comprehensible pronunciation. This model was selected since they believed it was the most realistic and suitable model considering Thai EFL context. However, some teacher participants asserted that they also employed the native-likeness model simultaneously since their ultimate goal remained attaining a NS accent. In this regard, this was attempted in the case where the students could achieve the goal of intelligibility and desired to go further, as T3 explained:

> Accent is important, but pronunciation is the most important. If students have correct pronunciation, accent can be practiced later. And if they cannot attain the accent, it is a matter of no concern. But teachers should also

introduce accents when teaching pronunciation.

The other teachers employed purely the native-likeness model, mainly focusing on attaining a NS accent. They believed that accent was the main hurdle for students who could not communicate effectively. Furthermore, it should be noted that all the teacher participants believed that since they were the primary pronunciation model for the students, they had to sound like NS as much as possible. Besides, all methods and pronunciation activities were influenced by NS as well.

Teachers' Perceived Difficulties in Pronunciation Instruction

The teacher participants mentioned two main concerns with regard to pronunciation teaching challenges, which were teacher pronunciation skills and limitations in instruction related to time and curriculum. They found that the best pronunciation teachers were still NS. If there were NS teachers at their schools, they believed that the students would be familiar with NS accents and have more chances to use English with real NS which could contribute to improving the students' pronunciation as well as accent. They expressed their misgivings that they might mispronounce words and could not use as much as English as they should, and the students might not receive adequate pronunciation lessons as they should. Nevertheless, since it was impossible to hire NS teachers at their schools, an alternative would be teachers who graduated with an English major. They believed that these teachers had more in-depth knowledge on the topic of pronunciation and had 'more to give'. As T2 remarked:

> It's a lot better if we have English teachers who earn a bachelor's degree in English. I can't give my students 100% because I'm not an expert. They have more to give. They can use more English with students when they teach.

In addition, they asserted that additional pronunciation training would help boost their confidence in teaching. Another major problem was a scarcity of teachers – not only for English but in all subjects. Consequently, the teacher participants were assigned to teach not only English to sixth-grade students but also other class levels, including teaching other subjects as well.

Another concern was the instruction framework. The teacher participants stated that the scope of the achievement tests, particularly the national exam, was too narrow. This meant they were restricted to focus on skills which would be tested in the exams while some skills, such as pronunciation, had to be excluded. Moreover, the class period for English was limited. They could not include everything – teaching, activities, assignment, quizzes, and exam preparation in a 50-minute class. Consequently, due to time constraints, they had to cut out some activities, and skills like pronunciation were not emphasized as much as they should. As T1 explained:

> One hour is not enough, even two hours might not be enough. Sometimes I have to cut out some part of the lesson. I wish I had more time to teach and get students to practice stimulus-based conversation in every class.

Besides, teaching English only two to three times per week was insufficient for the students to master English, specifically pronunciation. In addition, the class hours often had to be truncated owing to school activities.

Discussions

This study is among the few attempts to investigate pronunciation instruction in an EFL context through the lens of teachers' beliefs and/or practices. While prior research has centered on undergraduate education in various EFL contexts, this study targeted pronunciation in elementary education settings specifically in Thailand. The findings could provide new insights into Thai EFL teachers' beliefs and reported practices regarding pronunciation instruction at the elementary level (sixth grade) in Thai public schools.

The teacher participants attached importance to pronunciation in ELT and had positive attitudes toward this skill. They believed that pronunciation was crucial in both teaching and learning, seeing that students also needed this skill to be successful in learning English. Besides, they perceived pronunciation skills to be as essential as other English skills since they were well aware of the benefits of learning pronunciation. That is, they believed pronunciation could improve overall language comprehension and enhance effective communication. Consequently, they believed that they should integrate and emphasize pronunciation practice in their class, along with other English skills. Moreover, most of them seemed to be confident in their qualifications as well as their teaching for the sixth-grade students, that is, having the pedagogical background to teach pronunciation and being able to teach pronunciation, to integrate pronunciation into English lessons, and to diagnose learners' pronunciation difficulties. However, they still expressed a desire for more pronunciation training opportunities albeit most of them felt confident and comfortable teaching pronunciation, which was consistent with the findings in the study of Buss (2015).

Furthermore, the teacher participants believed that good pronunciation instruction should be based on a native-likeness model even though, in practice, most of them employed an intelligibility model. In this respect, this native-likeness notion should be applied in all aspects of teaching, including models for teachers and students, instruction, and instructional media. As has been seen, the intelligibility model was selected because they believed it was the most realistic model with the most realistic goal of learning pronunciation – for their students to have functional forms of pronunciation. This is in a similar vein with the study of Coskun (2011) which also revealed that even though the lingua franca status of English (ELF) was widely accepted, NS norms remained as the teaching model. The findings, as such,

reiterate one important point about the extent to which ELF should be implemented in Thai EFL classrooms.

Additionally, in contrast to the study of Alsofyani & Algethami (2017) which found that EFL teachers believed that NS did not necessarily need to be the best pronunciation approach for teachers and models, the teacher participants still believed that NS were the best pronunciation teachers. Although they agreed NNS could also be good pronunciation teachers, they wished NS were pronunciation teachers for their students. Thus, they believed that teachers were required to achieve native-like pronunciation as much as possible to set a good example for the students. Owning to such belief, they also asserted that they were not confident in their own pronunciation which manifested in their self-assessed speaking proficiency. Most of them believed they had only a fair command of spoken English. This suggests that apart from additional pronunciation training, pronunciation instruction by NNS teachers should be more widely introduced to raise awareness among Thai teachers that they and other NNS teachers could also be good models for their students, and good pronunciation teachers.

The teacher participants did not have a separate pronunciation syllabus, which meant pronunciation was mainly taught implicitly through corrective feedback and active listening and imitation (an intuitive-imitative approach). However, according to Khamkhien (2010), it is suggested that explicit pronunciation is also necessary to facilitate students' acquisition of pronunciation. In this regard, explicit instruction could enhance students' sensitivity to pronunciation features such as stress patterns. Furthermore, the teacher participants employed many audio-visual aids, such as songs, video clips and cartoons and many activities, such as games and role-playing which were considered to be very effective techniques by enhancing the students' engagement in learning pronunciation. Another effective technique was using and encouraging students to use English both inside and outside classrooms. Nevertheless, the study might not be in line with the current trend in the use of modern technology tools for pronunciation teaching and

learning found in research studies (e.g., Pennington & Rogerson-Revell, 2019; Wongsuriya, 2020), such as mobile applications, interactive websites, and resources on social media platforms (e.g., Twitter, TikTok and Facebook).

There were two main teaching challenges, which stemmed from issues concerning either teachers' limitations or the instruction itself. In terms of the first difficulty - regarding teachers - the teacher participants believed that the best pronunciation teacher should be a NS as mentioned above. The research study of Levis et al. (2017) also showed that not only EFL teachers but also EFL students, showed a significant preference for NS for pronunciation teachers since they believed that listening to NNS teachers may result in worse pronunciation while NS pronunciation and speaking skills were more trustworthy for them. In addition, it was found that teachers who graduated with an English major would be their second-best choice because those teachers would have more theoretical knowledge of pronunciation with better teaching techniques and pronunciation proficiency. Based on this point, it reinforces that some of the teacher participants who are English teachers have not graduated with an English major. As a result, some of them were still not confident in their own pronunciation as well as in their teaching. In other words, their lack of qualifications and prior training seems to lessen their self-efficacy to some extent. Furthermore, it was found that teacher shortages still prevailed – not only in English but in other key subjects as well. Consequently, since they were assigned to teach English in other classes and to teach other subjects as a class teacher, they could not fully devote themselves to their subject (English) and their classes (sixth grade). Simply put, such teacher workloads impact the teacher participants' teaching effectiveness, which may result in the students' poor performance in English skills as found in the study of Dueraman & Tunsakul (2018).

With reference to instruction, it was found that the achievement tests, particularly the national tests, were narrower in content than what the teacher participants taught in class. As a result, they had

no alternative but to emphasize the skills which would be evaluated in the exams. Conversely, if they prioritized pronunciation and marginalized grammar, the assessment results would be not as good as they should be. It should be noted that the English scores from the national exam like O-NET impact the schools as well since such scores are used as an indicator for the schools' quality. Moreover, pronunciation has been neglected because it is not explicitly prescribed in the national curriculum, as evident by the teacher participants' unsystematic approach to teaching pronunciation.

Another major issue found is time limitation. As much as the teacher participants would like to focus more on the skill area of pronunciation, the time spent on pronunciation skill had to be decreased since they were obliged to prioritize the content of the exams instead. Also, they could not employ activities or instructional media as much as they intended to because of the time constraints. In other words, it is unavoidable that pronunciation becomes marginalized, especially in the English classes of sixth-grade students who are required to take the national exams, considering the results are used as their knowledge assessment as well as their school quality measurement, as mentioned above.

Pedagogical Implications

It can be seen that district schools, as in this study's context, still have a shortage of teachers for all subjects and this issue is even more acute when teaching credentials are taken into account. This lack of sufficient, qualified teachers could threaten students' ability to learn, which has a direct impact on their achievement and reduces teachers' effectiveness and quality. As a result, more qualified teachers who meet the education, experience, and certification requirements should be recruited to teach in the fields in which they specialize. For example, in this context, English teachers should be those who have graduated with an English major or English teaching major, and/or appropriate training. Also, they should be responsible to teach only English instead of being assigned to teach classes that they do not have basic knowledge in, just for the sake of filling the school's schedules. This would ensure that they

would have more time to devote to their own class and subject as well as give more time for professional development.

Furthermore, universities would need courses dedicated to pronunciation pedagogy, or at least integrate pronunciation pedagogy into the teaching of other skills, as teacher preparation programs for the teaching of pronunciation. Additional training and/or workshops to expand knowledge of pronunciation pedagogy would also be required, especially for those who have already graduated from their education programs with either a limited or no focus on pronunciation instruction. This would enhance the teachers' knowledge and strengthen their confidence in believing that NNS teachers could also be good pronunciation teachers. In this regard, the teacher preparation programs or training should also introduce the notion of World Englishes, or the varieties of English used in different sociolinguistic contexts, which could raise awareness that NS are not the sole legitimate variety of English. With such focused education and requisite training in pronunciation pedagogy, teachers could integrate both implicit and explicit pronunciation instruction, employ a wide range of teaching techniques as appropriate for pronunciation teaching in NNS settings and, more importantly, aim for correct pronunciation, not accent reduction.

With respect to curriculum, the class time allocated to English should be either longer or more often. This would give teachers more time to integrate more beneficial activities and practices in class which, at the same time, would give students more time to use English. If teachers were given more time, without having to worry about the time constraints, pronunciation skills could be more emphasized and addressed in class like other skills. Moreover, unlike other English skills assessed in the exams, pronunciation appears to be only partially taught in EFL English classes, and the integration into lessons is heavily reliant on the teachers' decisions. As a result, curriculum design is required whereby curriculum developers should work closely with teachers at all levels of curriculum development to explicitly designate pronunciation skills in the English

subject since teachers need a systematic approach for pronunciation instruction; for instance, specifying guidelines on when and how to integrate/teach pronunciation, how much time should be spent (hours/week or credits/semester), and what pronunciation foci (target features) should be targeted to accentuate the importance of this skill so that teachers would prioritize this skill more. It should be noted that the neglect of pronunciation will prevail if teachers do not feel they are obligated to do so when following the national curriculum.

Conclusion

The present study has added useful insights into Thai EFL teachers' beliefs and their reported practices regarding pronunciation instruction which shed light on the status quo of pronunciation teaching and learning in Thailand, specifically at the elementary level (sixth grade) in public schools. This research was conducted in the hope that it would enhance the awareness of teachers, educators, curriculum developers and related educational personnel concerning the importance of pronunciation in elementary education and how pronunciation plays a crucial role in learners' L2 development. It is worth noting that if pronunciation continues to be taken for granted, it might have long-term consequences for the student language learning process (Seyedabadi et al., 2015). In addition, this investigation of EFL teachers' beliefs and their reported practice can increase understanding of what teachers need from teacher educators, materials and curriculum, and researchers.

It is stated that teachers' beliefs can determine their teaching practices in the classroom (Pajares, 1992; Xu, 2012). Thus, by exploring Thai EFL teachers' pedagogic beliefs, we, as EFL teachers and researchers, can discover what EFL teachers in the Thai context consider to be the most effective means of teaching pronunciation whilst their reported practices could demonstrate what they believe to be promising teaching practices, given their knowledge about pronunciation pedagogy, their experience as learners and the conditions under which they are assigned to teach within a particular context and curriculum (Asadi & Abdi, 2015). These could result in outputs of teaching which also have an effect on the outputs

of learning. With this insight, we, as EFL teachers, could improve the education provided, specifically employing pronunciation pedagogy provided in teacher preparation programs, and offering to current practicing teachers who are still in some doubt about how to teach pronunciation for students in the elementary level appropriate approaches and strategies for teaching.

Limitations and Future Studies

The number of participants in this study (which was 60 EFL Thai teachers) was limited, and respondents might not represent all Thai EFL teachers in other educational levels and other EFL teachers in different contexts. Certainly, as this is a study of one EFL environment, it cannot be assumed that the teachers' beliefs and their pronunciation teaching practices discovered in this context necessarily represent what is happening in other contexts. Therefore, it is recommended that future research studies could be conducted in different contexts and levels of education, for instance, in the ESL context or other EFL contexts in postsecondary programs up to the level of a bachelor's degree. In addition, since the findings were derived from a one-sided perspective which was the teachers' beliefs, data obtained from students could confirm the teachers' practices in their classrooms. That is, researchers could also explore EFL teachers' beliefs and practices in conjunction with perceptions and learning outcomes of EFL students, to view the extent to which teachers' beliefs and practices have an impact on learners and their learning outcomes of pronunciation. Furthermore, it is recommended that what teachers do in their authentic classroom contexts concerning pronunciation teaching practices could be the starting point for more research, be it ESL or EFL contexts. Without the addition of observed practice, beliefs that are implicit or underlying may remain hidden from view. Therefore, additional research methods like observation could be employed to help provide more in-depth data on teachers' actual practices regarding pronunciation instruction.

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