

Title : THE IMPLICATION OF MINIMAL PAIRS TO IMPROVE  
PRONUNCIATION OF ENGLISH CONSONANT  
SOUNDS THAT ARE PROBLEMATIC TO GRADE 2  
STUDENTS AT PHICHIT INTER SCHOOL

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**Abstract**

The purpose of this study was to investigate the effectiveness of the use of minimal pairs to teach pronunciation of English consonant sounds that are problematic to Grade 2 students at Phichit Inter School. The participants were 40 Grade 2 students in the academic year 2006 at Pichit Inter School: 20 were in the experimental group in which instruction included the use of minimal pairs, and 20 were in the control group in which instruction followed the manual of the core course, namely 'Target Student Course'. The instrument used to collect the data were eight sets of minimal pairs and a test. The two groups were taught by the same teacher for two weeks; four periods per week. The study employed percentage, arithmetic mean values, standard deviation, and Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) for data analysis.

The findings of the study were as follows:

1. The minimal pair technique enabled students in the experimental group to gain better pronunciation in English than those in the control group. The statistic results obtained from ANOVA indicated that there was a significant difference between the scores obtained by students in the experimental group and those by students in the control group ( $F = 5.88, p < .05$ )

2. For students with high proficiency, those in the experimental group had significantly higher scores than those in the control group ( $F = 15.93, p < .001$ ).

Nonetheless, for students with low proficiency, there was no significant difference

between students in both groups.

1. Based on six target consonant sounds studied; /r/, /v/, /z/, /ʃ/, /ð/, and /θ/, the results showed that /v/ and /θ/ sounds were more problematic to pronounce than the rest. Most participants replaced those two consonant sounds with the closest sound in their native pronunciation.

However, the overall results of the study showed that the minimal pair technique can be applied in teaching pronunciation more effectively, and it helped to improve the students' productive skill.

