

FOREIGN LANGUAGES AND VIETNAMESE

AN INVESTIGATION INTO THE EFFECTIVENESS OF DYNED LEARNING TOWARD PRONUNCIATION IMPROVEMENT FOR HIGH QUALITY ENGLISH CLASSES OF FIRST YEAR STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT: This research attempts to investigate the effectiveness of DynED learning toward pronunciation improvement. Based on the discussion, a number of recommendations and notices are suggested for teachers and students during teaching and learning DynED to improve students' pronunciation. To answer the research problem, the data was collected from the experimental study with more than 120 first year students and semi - structured interviews with 12 of these students, from high quality classes of English Department at University of Foreign Language Studies - The University of Danang, which was analyzed both quantitatively and qualitatively. The study was conducted with the expected result that DynED could improve students' pronunciation as well as other skills for young students of English Faculty, University of Foreign Language Studies - The University of Danang, Vietnam.

KEY WORDS: DynED; pronunciation improvement; record manager; experimental study; recommendations; high quality classes.

RECEIVED: MARCH, 17th, 2022.

EDITED: JUNE, 10th, 2022.

1. Introduction

Teaching - learning English in Vietnam is often limited because of lack of an environment or an opportunity to practice communication and interaction. One of the solutions to this problem is the information technology application, namely, using highly interactive software. The DynED software was chosen to use at the University of Foreign Language Studies, Danang University. This is the software designed by the US co-orporation of DynED Corporation with many useful practices and lessons, including many electronic curricula, including the New Dynamic English Dynamic English curriculum that is being used for the high - quality training system. Since the introduction of 2013, students' skills have made significant strides. However, the software application is limited to a number of classes. This topic is the English learning experience using New Dynamic English curriculum on the DynED foundation, particularly focusing on teachers' contents and activities during class face- to - face teaching in the classes in order to support the improvement of pronunciation of students in UFLS in Vietnam.

2. Literature review

2.1. Blended Learning method

The method of teaching (Blended Learning) is the method of “mixed methodology” between teaching and learning traditional teaching with the students on their own computer learning. According to Hamdan et al (2013), the process and contents of the class are associated with the software summarized as follows:

- *In the face - to - face class with the teachers:*

Learners are guided, supported to study; to practice ; to provide words - structure; to organize - interactive and interactive activities; assignment of articles

Learning and watching students' practice.

- *At home with DynED- software*

Students learn with software and interact with software, receive feedback - live answers and practice language skills. The electronic curriculum is designed to improve words faster, sound

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pronunciation, listen - say, smart responses to adjust, fix errors and practice themselves. DynED software features the ability to monitor the expertise and results of students; to support students learning pronunciation, vocabulary, contact with the environment; monitor the learning activities through the network; to support the teaching hours.

It can be seen clearly that the classroom combines a lot of defects in the traditional teaching model. For example, in the traditional model, teachers often focus a lot on lectures at class and almost have very little time to respond, fix assignments assigned to students. In fact, with the teaching English curriculum integrated with many skills and practice, teachers will no longer have enough time to further analyze exercises or interactive exercises. Therefore, the traditional method takes time but learners are still hard to be proficient in foreign languages, limited access to foreign languages.

In short, the environment one teacher with many students is very popular in Vietnam, and the teaching - learning method combines (blended learning) has been doing a job that has been not easy to implement: the study of students is the center and teachers with self - learning software.

2.2. Characteristics of English programming in DynED software

The philosophy of DynED is built based on the science of receiving and processing the brain's information. To develop the language of speaking naturally, learning with the students forced to practice and repeat many times, along with images, multimedia sounds, while restricting text display. This process follows the pedagogical orientation path with emphasis on repetition, simulation and practice as a essential process when learning languages (Lightbown & Spada, 2006). This gives students at the UFLS learn how to remember automatically and develop long - term memory and develop their speech skills as quickly as possible. DynED software has many different programs such as New Dynamic English, First Certificate English, English by the Numbers, English for Aviation, etc.

In general, students need the direction and support of a teacher. A classroom provides important opportunities to extend and reinforce the language provided in the courseware. It also allows students to make oral presentations and participate in group and pair work. These kinds of activities are important in language learning and help to motivate students to continue on a regular basis. Few students studying on their own are able to make significant progress, and most don't know how to use their time most effectively when studying a language. Just as for a music student or an athlete, some kind of coaching is necessary.

Another important point is that language study must be frequent and intensive to show results.

The combination of classroom study with directed self-study organized around a well-designed syllabus provides, therefore, a most powerful and effective approach.

In an intensive program, students meet in a classroom situation several times a week and use the courseware for four or more hours per week, usually in sessions of about 50 minutes at a time. In less intensive programs, a student might attend a class just once a week, or every other week, and use the courseware for an additional 3 or 4 hours per week. In both cases, classroom work and courseware should be coordinated so that a student's practice relates directly to classroom activities. Suggestions about how to do this for each unit are included in this Instructor's Guide. For very low-level students, shorter, more frequent sessions are particularly effective since they are so dependent on the language models provided for them and they can easily become exhausted. For these students, meeting in a class two or three times a week for 20~30 minutes, followed up by daily sessions on the computer of 25~40 minutes can be very effective. Frequent meetings with a teacher at this stage is important because so much material is new, including the sounds and basic patterns. For higher-level students, classroom sessions and computer sessions can be longer. Students can handle much more language at a time because they have a foundation, and their language tasks can take much more time and allow for more creativity.

3. Methodology

3.1. Research questions:

1/How well do students understand the importance of studying DynED to improve their pronunciation?; 2/How does learning DynED help students improve their pronunciation?; 3/What are some of the difficulties students face while studying DynED?

3.2. Research methods:

- Empirical research: 12 freshmen from high quality classes of English Department at University of Foreign Language Studies - The University of Danang are separated into Group 1 and Group 2 to finish a pronunciation test. Group 1 will be then instructed to learn DynED everyday from 50 minutes to 1 hour within 2 months while Group 2 keeps using their own daily learning habit. Questions about the DynED' contents will be asked to check the DynED learning process of researched students. Another test of equivalent level will be taken after 2 months. Test results are compared to identify the efficiency of students' pronunciation through learning DynED.

- Questionnaires: is separated into 2 sources: 1/Efficiency of learning DynED in practicing pronunciation (only for Group 1) and 2/Survey of the students' awareness of learning DynED.

- Interview with students in the experiment to clarify the improvement of pronunciation of students through DynED learning process and students' feeling after 2 months performing the experiment.

Collected data is qualitatively and quantitatively analyzed to answer the 3 research questions mentioned above.

4. Finding and discussions

4.1. Contribution of learning DynED in pronunciation:

Theoretically, DynED is a type of online learning lessons, videos offering full support to the pronunciation, especially in visual aspects. The efficiency of learning videos in general and DynED s in particular are proven by the scientists. Lonergan (1984, pp.4-5 cited in Lustigová, 2013) pointed out that video is able to present "complete communicative situations. At their best, video presentations will be intrinsically interesting to language learners. The learner will want to watch, even if comprehension is limited." Besides providing real communication situations, video can be more motivating than other forms of material. Christopher and Ho (1996, pp.86) provide another reason why this is so; it can be entertaining by many ways such as music, images and emotions. DynED provide topics and ideas for learners to discuss.

This study surveys the potential of using DynED to improve pronunciation. Initial findings may be useful for studies on impacts of new audio-visual reference types such as DynED on learning English.

4.2. Students' awareness of learning DynED in practicing pronunciation

The survey on 120 students of the Department of English, the University of Foreign Language Studies -The University of Da Nang indicated that 92.5% students having known the term "DynED". 82.5% of students in the survey informed that they are introduced DynED s via social networks such as YouTube and Facebook. 81.3% think that DynED is more attractive compared to common audio-visual recordings in class and 78.8% believe that DynED should be included in the class curriculum as a pronunciation reference **source**.

The DynED learning duration are evenly separated among students in the survey as follows:

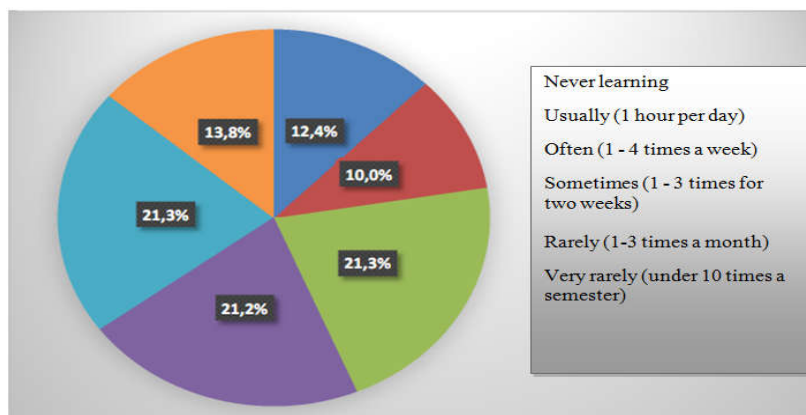


Figure 1. The DynED learning duration

In addition, there are many different considerable criterions for students to select DYNED. And it can be seen clearly from the following table:

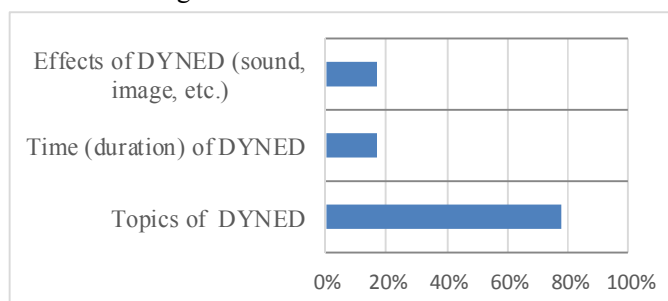


Figure 2. The most considerable criterions to select DynED

It can be seen that in Figure 2, the pronunciation (77.5%) is the most considerable criterion for students to select DynED s. Following is DynED effects including sound and image (18.5%) and duration is also considerable criteria for students but with a low proportion (18.2% respectively). Topics of DynED is the highest selection for students for approximately 80%. This may be explained as DynED is not characterized by their special effects but DynED matching the students's concerns.

4.3. Effectiveness of Learning DynED

Table 1. The last test results between Group 1 and Group 2

Group 1				Group 2			
Students	Placement Test	Final Test	Variance	Students	Placement Test	Final Test	Variance
1	13	22	+9	7	12	21	+9
2	9	19	+10	8	20	14	-6
3	4	14	+10	9	8	13	+5
4	16	22	+6	10	10	19	+9
5	18	19	+1	11	12	8	-4
6	16	20	+4	12	15	16	+1

Table 1 indicates that the last test results of both groups are generally increased compared to the first test results. Particularly, the greatest increase is 10 more correct answers for group 1 and 9 more

for group 2 compared to the first test results. This is reasonable as all students are practicing language at school and after school. However, the improvement of group 1 is greater than which of group 2. In group 1, all students have improved results with an average of 6.67 more correct answers compared to the first test results; while group 2's results are unevenly distributed: 4 students have their result increased and 2 decreased, with an average of 2.33 more correct answers per student compared to the first test results. This indicates that learning DynED helped improve the pronunciation of students in the experiment.

Besides, students in the experiment were asked for their feelings about the efficiency of learning DYNED in practicing pronunciation. The feedbacks are shown in Table 2 below:

Table 2. *Group 1's feedback on the efficiency of learning DynED*

Feedback	% Students
Very useful (help gain vocabulary and expressions from native speakers)	26.7%
Very useful (help gain pronunciation and intonation from native speakers)	50.0%
Useful (help improve pronunciation and speaking in class tests)	16.7%
Treated as an entertaining means sometimes where pronunciation is not focused on during watching	6.6%

Table 2 indicates that 50% of the students thought that learning DynED is very useful because it helps gain pronunciation and intonation from native speakers. For 26.7% of the students, learning DynED is very useful because it helps gain vocabulary and expressions from native speakers. However, 6.6% of the students pointed out the disadvantage of learning DynED that DynED is sometimes treated as an entertaining means where pronunciation is not focused on during watching.

During the experiment, almost students thought that learning DynED is a long-term process with certain advantages and disadvantages. Such disadvantages will be discussed in the next part of this study.

4.4. Difficulties encountered by students during learning DynED:

Table. *Difficulties encountered by students during learning DynED:*

Difficulties	% students
<i>Common Questions</i>	
Hard content of DYNED	11,0%
Fast speed of DynED	11,3%
New words and expressions	16,3%
Inability to recognize words in naturally fast speech of DynED	15,0%
DYNED lasting for too long with boring information	25,1%
Inability to recognize some accents	21,3%
<i>Specific Questions</i>	
Unmotivated for learning DynED	33,3%
Insufficient time	83.3%
Inefficient method	0%
Inappropriate DynED	33.3%

In common questions, totally 46.4% of the students found DynED lasting for too long with boring information 25.1% as inability to recognize some accents 21.3% and this also accounted for the highest proportion. Following is new words and expressions with 16.3%, inability to recognize words

in naturally fast speech - 15.0%, and inability to understand the DynED's contents accounting for the lowest proportion - 11.0%.

In specific questions, 83.3% of Group 1 found that they had insufficient time for DynED, 33.3% found hard to find appropriate DYNED to watch, 33.3% found no motivation to watch DynED, and 16.7% found that they have no efficient method to gain optimal results from learning DynED. This indicates that students should spend more time on practice and be more proactive in learning DynED. Besides, in the course of application of learning DynED to improve the pronunciation, teachers should instruct, motivate and train their students to overcome the above problems.

4.5. Recommendation for learning DynED in practicing pronunciation:

- *Teachers:* Besides recordings in the curriculum, teachers may use DynED as a new material to enhance the students' pronunciation. The introduction of DynED with interesting contents matching the students' level will be more effective in motivating students' approach to DynED to improve their pronunciation. Moreover, teachers may let their students discuss the DynED' topics to motivate them in study as well as improve their speaking and listening.

- *Students:* Students should spend more time learning DynED in general. Pronunciation is as important as other and needs frequent practice. This requires the responsibility and awareness from each student. The self-motivation in learning DynED is also an effective method which can be applied in learning DynED to improve the pronunciation.

5. Conclusion

This study suggests that frequently learning DynED can improve the students' pronunciation. The experiment encountered many difficulties in controlling the quantity of DynED of students in the experiment (one or two lessons of DynED per day), testing the students' comprehension after learning DynED and motivating them to keep in line with the schedule, so the obtained results are only relative. However, the initial empirical experiment obtained encouraging results. This will be the premise for other empirical experiments to test the efficiency of learning DynED in improving pronunciation in a larger scale in the future and challenges next studies to provide optimal solution to the control of students' participation in the experiments.

It will be more effective in inspiring students to approach DynED to enhance their pronunciation if DynED is introduced with fascinating contents that fit the level of the students. In addition, teachers might consider allowing their pupils to discuss the DynED' subjects in order to encourage them to study and to help them improve their listening and speaking skills.

The implementation of a new teaching technique is the same as having the proper teaching and teaching activities in the suitable class in order to achieve the intended level of success. This article can be used as a resource for completing teaching time for educators who are responsible for classes in coordination methods, specifically DynED.

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**Khảo sát hiệu quả của phần mềm DynED
trong việc cải thiện phát âm cho sinh viên năm nhất hệ chất lượng cao**

Tóm tắt: Nghiên cứu này nỗ lực khảo sát hiệu quả của việc học DynED đối với việc cải thiện phát âm. Dựa trên cuộc thảo luận, một số khuyến nghị và lưu ý được đề xuất cho giáo viên và học sinh trong quá trình dạy và học DynED để cải thiện khả năng phát âm của học sinh. Để giải đáp vấn đề nghiên cứu, dữ liệu được thu thập từ nghiên cứu thực nghiệm với hơn 120 sinh viên năm thứ nhất và phỏng vấn bán cấu trúc với 12 sinh viên trong số này, đến từ các lớp chất lượng cao Khoa tiếng Anh Trường Đại học Ngoại ngữ - Đại học Đà Nẵng. Số liệu được phân tích theo phương pháp định lượng và định tính. Nghiên cứu được thực hiện với kết quả kì vọng rằng DynED có thể cải thiện khả năng phát âm của sinh viên cũng như các kĩ năng khác cho sinh viên trẻ Khoa tiếng Anh, Trường Đại học Ngoại ngữ, Đại học Đà Nẵng.

Từ khóa: DynED; cải thiện phát âm; nghiên cứu thử nghiệm; khuyến nghị; lớp học chất lượng cao.