rEFLections
Vol 25, No.2, July – December 2018

Thai EFL Learners' Self-perceived Pronunciation Competence and their Instructor-rated Performance

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Article information
Article History:
Received: April 21, 2018
Accepted: July 17, 2018
Available online: December 29, 2018

Keywords:
Self-perception
Anxiety
Attitude
Personality

Abstract
This paper reports on case study examining relationships between English-as-a-Foreign-Language (EFL) students' self-perceived pronunciation ability and their performance in an advanced pronunciation course at a Northeastern university in Thailand. The participants were 10 students randomly selected from a pool of 29 students enrolled in the course. The data came from classroom observations, students' interviews and instructor's interviews. The findings show that self-perception plays an important role in their pronunciation learning. In some cases, it was related to sociolinguistic factors, especially anxiety. The informants' personality was another important factor related to their language learning behavior and learning outcome.

INTRODUCTION

Previous research suggests that language learners' self-perception, including emotional stability, personality and attitude towards oneself, is predicted to have some correlation with their different learning behaviors, learning strategies, and language performance both inside and outside the classroom (Bergil, 2016; Carrio-Pastor & Mestre, 2013; Masgoret & Gardner, 2003; MacIntyre, Baker, Clement, & Conrad, 2001; MacIntyre & Charos, 1996; Cohen & Norst, 1989; Oxford & Nyikos, 1989; Clement, 1987; Young, 1986).

Sociolinguistic factors in language learning

Anxiety, motivation, willingness to communicate, attitude, personality, and beliefs are some of the factors extensively explored in the literature. Anxiety is a person's internal state that can influence learners' language learning. Ellis (1994) claims that anxiety is an important factor contributing to learning at varying degrees in different learners. MacIntyre and Charos (1996) conducted a study on 92 Anglophone students in Ottawa, Canada, to examine the participants' anxiety in a French-as-a-second-language course. Through a survey questionnaire, the authors found that "people who feel less anxious appear to be more disposed to interacting with members of the second language community" (p. 19). They concluded that anxiety was negatively correlated with the students' opportunity to learn. Furthermore, the authors also found that other factors are correlated with students' language learning. The students who had high level of motivation were more likely to use the foreign language. It showed that those who had greater motivation had more opportunity to learn a new language than those who

had a lower level of motivation. Also, the students who had a higher level of willingness to communicate reported themselves using the language more than those who had a lower level of such factor. In addition, the authors have found that attitude was influenced by the learners' anxiety. Whenever the learners felt highly anxious, they would have some negative perception of themselves. Such negative perception led them to be less motivated to study. In another study, Cohen and Norst (1989) examined learners' diaries and observed that English-speaking adult learners of a foreign language became less anxious about their performance in the target language when their respective instructors were supportive, kind, and patient. This suggests that instructors play a role in reducing learners' anxiety. In terms of relationship between learners' anxiety and their actual performance, Young (1986) found that American English-speaking students of foreign languages became anxious while being interviewed as part of their oral proficiency test, but such anxiety, though negatively correlated with the test results, was not a significant predictor of the test results. That is, he claimed that the increase in the participants' anxiety did not predict a decrease in the test scores. This finding suggests that when learners are anxious, it does not always mean they would perform poorly.

Another factor, motivation, has been shown to have some relationship with students' language learning behavior. Gardner (1985) claims in his socio-educational model that motivation is related to the students' integrativeness and attitudes toward learning situations. Integrative motivation stems from the desire to learn and understand languages or cultures for the purpose of interaction (Gardner, 1985; Gardner & Lambert, 1972). Both integrativeness and attitudes toward language learning are correlated with motivation. It means that the students who have a high level of integrativeness and positive attitude would have a higher level of motivation than the students who have a lower level of such variables. To examine motivation, Carrio-Pastor and Mestre (2013) conducted a study on 40 EFL university students in Spain. They divided the students into two groups. The first group followed pre-determined lessons while the second was engaged in planning and designing activities in which the students were personally interested. A questionnaire-based survey at the end of the semester showed that the second group was more motivated to learn English than the first group was. While the study did not have any implication in terms of learning outcome, it suggests that keeping students interested in learning English by offering activities based on their interests gave a positive effect on learners' motivation. Likewise, Clement, Dornyei and Noels (1994) conducted research on 301 secondary-school students registering in 11 different schools in Budapest, Hungary, to investigate their motivation in language learning. The students took a questionnaire to evaluate themselves about their motivation to learn English toward language classes. Their instructors also completed questionnaires with 7-point scales to evaluate the students in terms of how active and motivated they were in class. Then, the authors matched the students' responses and their instructors' evaluations of the students. They found that the students reported being highly motivated as a result of their instructors' teaching behaviors and classroom activities. The finding shows that instructors and classroom atmosphere were correlated with students' motivation to study English. Moreover, the authors claims that the level of motivation correlates with the learners' foreign language development. That is, students who were highly motivated were more likely to participate in activities, had more opportunity to practice their language skills.

Another factor explored is willingness to communicate. Willingness to communicate (WTC) refers to how much a student feels willing to communicate with people in a language. Willingness to communicate is contributed by learners' personalities and anxiety (MacIntyre, 1994). Introverted students who have a higher level of anxiety are unwilling to communicate. Burgoon (1976) suggests that alienation, the state of being isolated from the group, plays a role in generating unwillingness to communicate. Also, willingness to communicate can be produced or reduced by classroom activities. It means that the students who are unwilling to communicate in their native language would be more likely to lack willingness and opportunity to learn a new language than do students who have positive WTC. Survey research based on students' perceived willingness to communicate has showed that the degree of willingness to communicate in class depends on the nature of activities as well as the social relationships between the students and their interlocutors. In particular, it has been found that students would be more willing to talk in activities they like with people they know (Bergil, 2016; MacIntyre et al, 2001).

In terms of attitude, Ellis (1994) claims that learner attitudes have some relationship with the level of L2 proficiency achievement; if students are positive, they would be more likely to learn a language better than ones who are negative. Spolsky (1989) also suggests that a positive attitude is crucial to the learners' language learning because it leads the learners to more opportunity to use the L2 language in interactional situation. The learners who have positive attitude towards language learning would have more motivation to learn the L2 than those who have negative viewpoints. However, the learners' attitudes are affected by their different language learning experiences. Ellis (1994) claims that the learners who begin with the positive attitude toward language learning, but later experience inadequate learning opportunity will become more negative. Also, instructors and people speaking foreign languages influence students' attitude towards language learning (Gardner, 1985). Students would have a positive attitude if they encounter positive experiences and nice interlocutors. Research has also found that a positive attitude is related to willingness to communicate. Yashima, Zenuk-Nishide and Shimizu (2004), for example, conducted a study on 60 Japanese students studying English in the United States. The participants completed a questionnaire investigating variables affecting the learners' WTC level in L2 communicative behavior. The finding shows that the amount of time that the students used English to communicate with their friends at the school and their host family correlated with their satisfaction and positive views. This means that the more positive the students are, the more willing to use L2 they become. There was no evidence, however, that attitudes affect language proficiency. Clement (1987) conducted research to investigate a relationship between language status and individual differences in attitudes towards language learning. The participants were 293 Francophone students studying at a Canadian university. They took a questionnaire about attitude and motivation and were interviewed to examine in their English oral proficiency. Based on the findings, the author claimed that attitude neither had an important role in influencing on language outcome and nor was it influenced by language status, but the students' self-confidence was most strongly associated with proficiency.

Learners' personality is also related to learners' language learning achievement (Ellis, 1994). Personality can be identified as of two basic types: introversion and extraversion. Extraverted

students are more likely to interact with others speaking the target language, while introverted students are more likely to be with themselves than interacting with other speakers. Eysenck and Chan (1982) observe that "extraverts are sociable, like parties, have many friends and need excitement; they are sensation-seekers and risk-takers, like practical jokes and are lively and active. Conversely, introverts are quiet, prefer reading to meeting people, have few but close friends and usually avoid excitement" (p. 154). This shows that extraverted students would have more interactional opportunity than those who are introverted. This means the extraverted learners would communicate, especially oral communication, more frequently with fellow L2 speakers than their introverted counterparts would. However, this does not mean that introverted learners would always be at a disadvantage. Learners with these two personality traits have two different positive ways to learn language. Some previous studies claim that personality traits correlate with learners' learning strategies or styles (Allport, 1937). In Ehrman and Oxford (1990), extraverts decided to use social strategies which require cooperation with others while introverts preferred reading and writing, which could be done alone, unlike speaking and listening. The findings indicate that personality trait differences play an important role in influencing the student's styles in language learning. MacIntyre and Thivierge (1995) conducted a study on ninety-five university students taking philosophy and communication classes, to investigate relationships between speaker personality traits and reactions to audiences. The participants were asked to take the questionnaire rating themselves in public speaking. The findings show that introverted participants were less willing and had more fear to speak publicly. In L2 communicative contexts, extraverted learners are more likely than introverted learners to use the target language to interact with the native speakers because they are more sociable, while the introverts do better in academic contexts (Saville-Troike, 2012).

Another sociolinguistic factor--belief about language learning—also correlates with individuals' learning and performance. Ellis (1994) claims that learners' belief is related to their learning behavior. For example, if learners believe that in order to understand the L2, they have to translate that language to L1, they would then focus on learning vocabulary and grammar rules. In contrast, if they believe that learning the L2 is to understand the way it is used, they would rather focus on seeking an opportunity to interact with native speakers (Ellis, 1994). However, learners' belief is not necessarily related to their actual learning behavior. Tanaka and Ellis (2003) conducted a questionnaire-based study on 166 Japanese students who took a fifteen-week studying-abroad program at a private university in the United States. They found that while learners perceived themselves in a more positive light. That is, their belief in self-efficacy and confident in English speaking increased after they were abroad. However, there was no relationship between their belief changes and their English speaking proficiency. This implies that even though the learners changed their belief about language learning, their learning behavior did not necessarily change. Also, belief about language learning is related to learners' gender. Bernat and Lloyd (2007) conducted a survey study on 155 female and 107 male EFL students at an Australian university. Major findings were that female students were more likely to believe that those who knew more than one language were intelligent; both female and male participants believed that speaking English was not easier than understanding it, and male respondents were more likely to believe that reading and writing was easier than understanding a foreign language. In terms of their beliefs about the nature of language

learning, male respondents were more likely to believe that learning English had to take place in an English speaking country. To all respondents, learning requires both the learning of its grammar, words and culture. Moreover, they did not believe that learning a foreign language is learning how to translate from L1 to L2. In terms of strategies, male respondents were more likely to believe that being shy in speaking English was not acceptable, but practicing a lot from various sources should be performed. Female respondents were more likely to agree that making mistakes was allowed. Also, both genders agreed that English would provide them advantages in having desirable occupations.

All previous studies mentioned above have shown relationships between the sociolinguistic factors and students' language learning about their belief, attitudes, motivation, and personality which influences their processes in learning a language and their achievement in doing so. However, most of the studies mentioned earlier were large-scale, questionnaire-based surveys. To complement these studies, this research aimed to provide a more nuanced analysis of qualitative data from various data-collection methods: student interviews, instructor interviews and classroom observation. The research question guiding this study is: "Is there any relationship between English major students' self-perception of their pronunciation skills and their performance? If so, what is it?"

METHOD

Participants

Ten participants were randomly selected from a total of 29 students enrolled in an advanced pronunciation course. Of these, nine were female students and one was a male student. To maintain their anonymity we refer to them as Students A, B, C, D. E, F, G, H, I, and J.

The Course

The course in which pronunciation activities were observed was an elective, advanced pronunciation course. Students need to pass two prerequisites: a phonetics and a basic speaking and listening course before they could register for this one. It provided activities in which the students could use their oral communication skills, such as, storytelling, singing English songs, speech delivery and broadcasting. The activities provided in the class were group, pair and individual tasks. It met twice per week for 15 weeks. Each class meeting lasted 2 hours.

Data-collection procedures

We collected data from student interviews, instructor interviews, the instructor's evaluation of the student performance, and classroom observations. First, the first and second author conducted four classroom observations for 4 weeks (16 hours in total) in order to observe the informants' activities and the classroom atmosphere. Their interaction with their classmates, participation in activities, their pronunciation in small and large groups and the instructor's

comments were noted. After we finished our observations, the first author conducted semi-structured interviews with the participants individually and privately. In the interviews, each participant was asked questions related to their self-perception. Examples of the questions were: "What do you think about your pronunciation skills?", and "Are you anxious when you speak English or say English words?" Some of the questions were based on MacIntyre and Charos (1996). After that, the first author interviewed the instructor to obtain her evaluations of the students' pronunciation skill, which we later examined. The data from the instructor was used as a measure of students' performance and compared with the students' self-perception.

Data analysis

First, we looked for themes in each corpus of data: the observation notes, student interviews, and instructor interviews. Then, we compared the themes in order to determine whether students' self-perception matched their performance as rated by the instructor. Then, we looked for cases where the student's perception matches and did not match their graded performance. After that, we described the characteristics of such matches and mismatches and explained them in terms of potential reasons, such as, attitudes, motivation, willingness to communication and also cultural aspects, where appropriate.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

As mentioned earlier, we used three data-collection methods: classroom observation, student interviews, and instructor interviews. This section discusses the findings by the method used.

1. Classroom observations

The instructor used a mix of English and Thai throughout the entire class. We noticed that the instructor and students were very well acquainted. The instructor and the students bantered extensively. Thus, by and large the atmosphere was relatively relaxing. Anyway, when the instructor spoke English, most of the students were quiet and did not respond when the instructor asked a question. A few of them sometimes tried to reply with short sentences in English, especially in response to Yes/ No questions. Some students did not understand what the instructor said, as we could see that they asked their friend sitting next to them what the utterance meant. On the other hand, when the instructor switched to Thai, the class became livelier. The students seemed more active in participating in instructor-student conversations. They answered questions more often regardless of whether or not the questions were related to the lesson. Students sitting in the first two rows were more engaged in conversations with the instructor than those sitting at the back. In addition, the students mostly used Thai to reply to the instructors' English questions.

For the most part, like the rest of the class, the participants sat next to those from the same class year. That is, junior students sat together and senior students sat together. Moreover, within the same class year, the students chose to sit with the ones whom they knew or who were in the same circle of friends. They did not change the position of where they sat even

though no one appeared to have overtly claimed a particular spot. Those who sat in the front rows still sat at the same positions. Similarly, those sitting at the back rows did not change to the front or any other positions. In this course, there were two seating patterns: the traditional instructor-fronted and circular seating arrangements depending on the activities. Nevertheless, no matter wherever they sat, they all had opportunity to practice their English speaking skills with their instructor because the instructor walked around the room and talked to every single student in every class meeting observed.

This course provided the students with various types of pronunciation activities: poem delivery, singing, storytelling and documentary in both group and individual work. Students seemed to perform better in ones than others. For instance, one of the students observed could do well on poem reciting, but not on singing. Another student could do well on poem reciting, but not on storytelling. However, some students could do all activities well. For the most part, all students actively participated in all activities. When the instructor let them practice their own poems and songs, they practiced them very seriously. Some of them helped one another to pronounce words correctly. For example, Student A always asked a friend sitting beside her how to pronounce words containing /r/. This suggested that she saw herself as struggling with this particular sound. The interesting thing is that Student A always sat next to this particular friend, who was not a participant in this study, and relied heavily on this student. The observations show that she did try very hard to improve her pronunciation.

However, when they participated in group activities, they tried to be in the same group with their close friends, and they only talked with their members in the group, not with other students in other groups. The instructor walked around the room to see how they practiced and helped them work on their pronunciation. Only a few students did not continue practicing when they finished practicing with the instructor. However, most of them seemed to enjoy the fact that they could bring their own pronunciation material matching the genre used in each lesson.

In general, eight out of 10 participants showed great enthusiasm in class activities. When asked to practice reciting poems, reading aloud documentary scripts, or even singing, they actively did so. Only two participants, Students D and I, appeared to be distracted at times. Student I tended to occupy herself with a cell phone when the rest of the students were practicing. Student D occasionally zoned out or stepped out of the classroom for no clear reason. When they both practiced, they often did it alone, not consulting a neighboring student or the instructor.

Most students were excited and nervous when the instructor asked them to perform in front of the class. Sometimes, the instructor tried to encourage the students to not be shy by asking for volunteers, however, throughout the observation period, none of them volunteered without being prompted. Some students, such as Student C, could not remember the texts in their poems or songs. They felt so nervous that their hands were visibly shaking. They smiled and laughed out of awkwardness when they could not remember certain words or how to say them correctly. For individual tasks, most of them read the poems softly and some struggled with pronunciation problems with interdental fricatives, liquids, and fricatives. They could not

pronounce interdental fricatives accurately. Some of them could not distinguish between /r/ and /l/. Sometimes, they put /r/ and /l/ in the words which did not contain such sounds. For example, they pronounced /wɔːrk/ in the word walk /wɔːk/. Some put final intrusive /s/ in the words not containing such sound, for example, they pronounced /tɔːks/ in the word talk /tɔːk/. Moreover, some students struggled with other sounds. In addition, some students were monotonous when they read poems. However, the instructor tried to solve this problem by modeling for them. Then they repeated after her and tried to mimic her pronunciation. In most class meetings, each student got to practice his or her material of choice simultaneously as the instructor walked around the classroom to help every one of them. Working with individual students seemed to help each student correct their pronunciation problems at least to the degree that we could observe—where the students were able to mimic most of the instructor's modeled pronunciation.

In sum, although most students had pronunciation problems with challenging sounds like /r/, /l/, /s/, and /ð/, many of them were enthusiastic about working on their pronunciation after the instructors' feedback. It is also found that most of them enjoyed the activities provided in the classes although they did not always do well on all of them. The ones based on the materials they contributed themselves seemed to be particularly enjoyable and thus very engaging.

2. Student interviews

This section reports on key findings from the interviews with the students. Recall that the interviews aimed to explore the students' beliefs about their own pronunciation ability as well as their challenges, if any. The following are key observations based on recurring themes in the interviews.

2.1 Motivation. All but one informant reported that their main motivation to take this course was that they would like to improve their pronunciation skills. Some of them such as Student A added that she would like to increase her self-confidence. Several of them complained of their fear of making mistakes when speaking English, especially in front of their peers. Thus, they hoped that this course would help them overcome their fear. However, when it comes to class activities, Students B, E, F, and G were motivated enough to sometimes volunteer to perform in front of the class. The rest of them said they never did because of that fear. However, they said they participated in class activities following what the instructor told them to do. This was consistent with classroom observation findings. It seems then that their motivation to take this course was only strong enough to keep them actively engaged in course activities as long as the students were not a focus of a lot of people's attention. Several also reported that having the instructor working with them individually helped them to address the problems.

2.2 Fear of making mistakes. All informants made a general statement that they were self-conscious when speaking English. Recall that this course did not require them to speak the language for the sake of spontaneous communication. Rather it aimed to hone their pronunciation skills. The course thus did not demand the students to speak English in

meaningful, communicative contexts. Most activities were monologues. However, some of them dreaded performing a monologue in front of the class claiming they did not feel comfortable being stared at by their classmates. They were afraid that the classmates would judge them negatively. However, none of them reported that their classmates actually gave them any negative criticisms. Take the case of Student A, who was extremely timid, as an example. She stated, "Even if there was only the instructor, and no other students were around, I would still be anxious". Thus, such fear may not have been warranted by any real threat from the classmates' action. It appeared to be they simply did not want to be at the center of the attention, and the fear itself was from their lack of self-confidence when speaking English.

2.3 Willingness to communicate. The scope of WTC observed in this study was only at the level of performing monologues in various genres as required by this course. It was not a two-way communication in the target language. However, it was observed that the participants were willing to take part in activities, to improve their pronunciation, to mimic the instructor's or model pronunciation, and to give feedback to their classmates when asked. However, most of them were not willing to volunteer to perform for the class without being asked. Students A, C, H explicitly stated that they were shy but willing take part in activities because they wanted to improve their English. When asked if they used English outside the classroom, most of them said they rarely used it. It is interesting to note, however, that Students B and E said they felt more comfortable using English with foreigners than with their Thai instructors or peers. This shows that they were only willing to communicate with a certain group of interlocutors. Furthermore, all participants preferred certain activities to others. For instance, Student H, who saw herself as not confident and disliked public speaking, preferred a news reporting activity to a story-telling one. She even thought she did the best on news reporting because she only had to read aloud a script, unlike in more demanding ones such as story-telling and giving a public speech. Storytelling was the activity she did not like because she had to do role plays at which she was not good. It appears then that their willingness to use English depends on the nature of the task and the demand it placed on the students in addition to fact interlocutors play a role in their willingness to communicate, as discussed earlier.

2.4 Perceptions of pronunciation skills. All informants rated their proficiency at least at the pre-intermediate level. Most rated themselves as intermediate-level students except Student J who saw herself as good. This suggests that they were not too negative about their abilities. However, when further asked about their performance and feelings about pronunciation or class activities, they quickly turned to criticize themselves of having fear of making mistakes as discussed earlier. We are left to wonder why students who regard themselves to be at an intermediate level were afraid to perform public speaking even in a classroom context where they were well-acquainted with their classmates.

The student interview findings show relationship between students' perception of their pronunciation and performance. As mentioned before, self-perception can influence students' learning behavior (Bergil, 2016; Carrio-Pastor & Mestre, 2013; Masgoret & Gardner, 2003; MacItyre et al, 2001; MacIntyre & Charos, 1996; Cohen & Norst, 1989; Oxford & Nyikos, 1989; Clement, 1987; Young, 1986). For instance, student J who perceived herself at the good level of pronunciation had a lot of enthusiasm to learn. She mostly engaged herself the activities

and usually practiced her pronunciation. She would likely have more opportunity to improve her English skills. On the other hand, the participants like student C, who had negative perspectives towards their proficiency would be less enthusiastic about learning. They would not be likely to volunteer to perform activities. Moreover, as anxiety and personality play an important role in language learning (MacIntyre & Charos, 1996; Cohen & Norst, 1986), introverted learners, such as Students A and C, refused to ever volunteer in class, and anxiety reduced their self-confidence when performing in high pressure situation. Student A, explicitly stated, "I always felt anxious when performing in front of the class".

In addition, anxiety and personality lead to the degree of willingness to communicate. We see from the interviews that several students were introvert but their sense of responsibility as a student prevailed when they still engaged in class's activities, "Even I did not like speaking English, I liked the activities provided in classes", said Student C. However, such participation seemed to be mediated by the fact that the students thought the activities were interesting. So, despite the introvert students' unwillingness to volunteer to perform as a model for others, they were still willing (and enjoyed) activities which did not put them on the spot. This is consistent with the findings by Bergil (2016) and MacIntyre et al, (2001). In contrast, the extroverted learners would more likely engage the activities and had high level of willingness to communication. For example, Student G often volunteered to perform in front of the classes and had a high level of self-confidence. Nevertheless, most of the participants were not motivated to practice the skills beyond the classroom.

Instructor reflections and evaluation

Based on the interviews with the instructor, two types of instructor reflections on students' learning behavior emerged: positive and negative. Embedded within each group, are also the instructor's remarks on the students' actual linguistic abilities.

Positive learning behavior. Six students (Students B, D, F, G, H, J) received overall positive reflections. The instructor reported that these students followed instructions and engaged themselves in classroom activities or assignments. They showed interest by asking questions or trying to respond to instructor questions in class. They seemed to take pronunciation practice very seriously. When the instructor walked around the class to help each student, they took the opportunity to ask her for help or get feedback on their pronunciation. They had different pronunciation problems at varying degrees to deal with. Although some of them struggled to correct themselves after the instructor's feedback, they did not seem to be discouraged. Take Student H as an example. She saw herself as a shy person. But according to the instructor's reflections, she put a lot of effort in correcting her pronunciation errors. The instructor also appreciated the fact that these students, despite their complaint of the lack of self confidence and their refusal to volunteer without being asked first, they were willing to perform in front of the class without any hesitation when asked.

Negative learning behavior. The instructor gave students (Students A, C, E, I) overall negative reflections. This group showed less enthusiasm than did the other group when partaking in

class activities. She said that these students never raised their hands to ask questions as she was going over the materials with the entire class. The instructor further observed that they were not proactive in trying to solve their pronunciation problems. They rarely sought help by asking the instructor when she walked around the class to help individual students. Rather they tended to wait until she spotted an error in their pronunciation and gave them feedback. Once she gave them a modeled pronunciation, they would practice it with her. Once she moved to another student, they started doing something else as well. The instructor was concerned about Student I in particular because she was usually late for class. She usually came unprepared, with no handouts, and very few classmates were interested to work with her in pair or group activities. This was consistent with the classroom observation findings. However, this group too contained students with mixed abilities. Student I herself had a lot of potential, as the instructor said. She was just not well engaged and willing to develop her skills. In a similar case, Student E also has a lot of potential, but she showed very little effort to develop her skills. She was not very enthusiastic about class activities and only joined them just to get them over and done with. In case of Student A, it is interesting to note that in our classroom observations, she always relied on a friend sitting next to her and seemed to try hard. However, the instructor saw that as a negative behavior. The teacher revealed in the interview that Student A depended too much on one friend and was not trying to work with other students. The instructor thought that it was in her best interest to try working with others, so she would not become too dependent on one classmate.

To put the findings discussed so far in perspective, we summarized the students' self perception, the instructor's reflections, and the instructor's evaluation of the participants' pronunciation based on class assignments available at the time of the research. For the purpose of this study, we arbitrarily classified the participants' pronunciation skills as following grades: A = Excellent (90-100), B = Good (80-89), C = Above average (70-79), D = Average (60-69), E = Below average (50-59) and F = Poor (0-49).

Table 1
Instructor's evaluation of the participants' pronunciation proficiency

Participants	Self-perceptions	Instructor's reflections	Actual performance evaluations
Student A	Positive	Negative	63.71
Student B	Positive	Positive	67.80
Student C	Negative	Negative	58.86
Student D	Negative	Positive	76.51
Student E	Positive	Negative	66.57
Student F	Positive	Positive	78.64
Student G	Positive	Positive	75.50
Student H	Negative	Positive	75.79
Student I	Positive	Negative	62.57
Student J	Positive	Positive	80.80

Note. The students' self-perceptions were based on their overall perception of their learning behavior and performance.

Taken together the instructor's interview findings and Table 1 above show the difference between the students' self-perceived ability and the instructors' evaluation of their skills even though most of them perceived themselves roughly at the same level. The participants can be classified into two groups: (a) those whose self-perceptions are consistent with the instructor's perception and evaluation: Students B, C, F, G, and J, and (b) those whose self-perceptions are not consistent with the instructor's evaluation. In addition, the participants in (b) can be subcategorized as two groups: (b1) the participants' self-perception is positive but the instructor's evaluation is negative: Students A, E, and I, and (b2) the participants' self-perception is negative but the instructor's evaluation is positive: Students D and H. These phenomena show that self-perception can be related to their actual performance in some cases. The phenomenon (a) does not surprise us because it shows that the participants accurately evaluate their proficiencies and can use them properly. These students came to know the level of proficiency they roughly had. Given that they were third and fourth-year students and had been in the program for a while, their ability to assess their own strengths and limitations was not at all a surprise.

However, it can be implied that their self-perception is related to their learning behavior. When they perceived themselves in a positive light, they behaved in ways that are consistent with positive thinking. However, when they perceived themselves negatively, they performed poorly in this course, as confirmed by the instructors' comments and evaluation.

What we observe in (b1) in cases of Students A, E, and J should be of concern to any teacher. This is a case where the students have a positive view about themselves but are judged negatively by the teacher. This deserves further scrutiny. In case of Student A, who was very shy and tried hard to take part in class activities, what she and the instructor agreed upon was that she struggled with pronunciation. That was part of the reason she received a negative review on her proficiency, which was also confirmed by the score she received from the teacher. It placed her at the Average level. However, the teacher and Student A disagreed on how she should behave in class. While she thought it was appropriate for her to rely for help from a classmate. The teacher thought it was not the right learning strategy. As for Student E, she did know she had a lot of potential to do well, but refused to be active in class despite the fact that she claimed she had lived to the USA for a few months and used English comfortably with foreigners. It is not a surprise that that the teacher, who focused on her participation in activities and assignments gave her a negative review for her lack of enthusiasm in class. It can be concluded then that mismatches in students' perception of their behavior and performance are not necessarily based on what they actually do in class—the context in which the instructor assessed their behavior. Another point to make about the mismatch between students' self perceptions and their actual performance (indicated by the class score) is that anxiety could have played a role in decreasing their confidence when performing (MacIntyre & Charos, 1996). And that could be explain why they did not do well on graded tasks. Also, some of the scores were affected by their partners' performance in pair activities. In contrast, (b2) might be related to their self-humbling, which is common in Thai society (Kanjanasorn, 2015). These students may have thought it was not socially appropriate to brag about themselves. Another possibility is that they truly underestimated their own ability, which could have come from the lack of confidence. Overall, the findings for (b) do not show any relationship between their

self-perception and their learning output. Taken together, the findings show that in any case here we see a relatively responsible group of students who put a lot of effort in class participation despite their anxiety, lack of confidence, different reasons for taking the course, different expectations from this course, and lastly different views about themselves as learners.

CONCLUSION

This small-scale study investigated relationships between students' self-perceptions and their pronunciation performances over a period of 16 class hours. It has identified the different relationships between their perception and performances evaluated by their instructor. Like students' general performances, it was also related to sociolinguistic factors such as anxiety, motivation, willingness to communicate, attitude, personality and belief. As shown in the findings, self-perception is related to students' pronunciation ability in some cases. However, in some cases, their self-perception and performance evaluation scores were positively correlated. In addition, sociolinguistic factors, especially anxiety and personality could affect their learning behavior and opportunity to learn. This study's findings suggest that students may perceive themselves differently from what they can do. However, because of the time constraints, we cannot investigate whether the students would change views about themselves and their learning behavior over time. This should be a fruitful research agenda for an ethnographic style research on learners' beliefs, classroom behavior, and their performance.

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