

## *Perceiving Diphthongs: A Phenomenological Study Among College Students*

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### **Abstract**

This phenomenological study investigated diphthong acquisition among 50 college students from Assumption College in Bangkok, Thailand, and the University of Science and Technology of Southern Philippines, employing a qualitative approach. Through the analysis of audio recordings and the administration of perceptual tasks, the study aimed to understand how students perceived and articulated diphthongs. Findings revealed varying proficiency levels in both perception and production of diphthongs, highlighting discrepancies in articulation accuracy and identification of specific diphthong pairs. The research provided valuable insights into the challenges of mastering diphthongs among college students, particularly in linguistically diverse contexts. It emphasized the need for effective teaching strategies to address these challenges and enhance diphthong acquisition in higher education settings.

Keywords: Diphthongs, Phenomenological, College Students

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## **Introduction**

The acquisition of diphthongs, those intricate vowel sounds characterized by their dynamic transitions, represents a challenge for language learners, particularly in educational settings characterized by linguistic diversity. Mastery of diphthongs necessitates meticulous listening and precise pronunciation. Recognizing their fundamental role in facilitating effective communication, this study scrutinized the diphthong acquisition process among college students. Gordon & Ladefoged (2023) underscored the contemporary imperative of mastering diphthongs, affirming their pivotal role in the global scene where English serves as a backbone for international connectivity.

Despite the acknowledged importance of mastering diphthongs, recent empirical inquiries have identified persistent challenges encountered by students. These challenges are intensified by the inherent complexity of diphthongs, compounded further by the linguistic variations across diverse language backgrounds. Eckman & Escudero (2022) corroborated these findings, exposing the additional obstacles faced by students with varied auditory acuity levels.

In this context, the current study aimed to reveal the details of diphthong acquisition among college students enrolled at Assumption College in Bangkok, Thailand, and the University of Science and Technology of Southern Philippines. By probing into the nuances of students' auditory discrimination and articulatory proficiency, the researchers sought to discern potential disparities in diphthong learning trajectories among individuals from diverse linguistic backgrounds. This endeavor aspires to furnish educators with actionable insights, facilitating the development of tailored pedagogical strategies aimed at optimizing diphthong acquisition proficiency among college students hailing from linguistically diverse educational milieus.

The imperative to conduct this research stems from the pressing need to address the pervasive challenges encountered by language learners in mastering diphthongs. Given the pivotal role of diphthongs in oral communication, an in-depth understanding of the factors influencing their acquisition is essential for informing pedagogical practices that cater to the diverse needs of students. By elucidating the intricacies of diphthong acquisition among college students from Assumption College in Bangkok, Thailand, and the University of Science and Technology of Southern Philippines, this study endeavors to fill a critical gap in the existing literature and contribute valuable insights to the field of language education.

Moreover, the significance of this research extends beyond the confines of academic inquiry, resonating deeply with educators, policymakers, and language learners alike. The findings of this study have the potential to inform evidence-based instructional strategies tailored to enhance diphthong acquisition proficiency among college students. By fostering a nuanced understanding of the challenges and facilitative factors influencing diphthong acquisition, this research endeavors to empower educators with the knowledge and resources necessary to cultivate a supportive learning environment conducive to language mastery. Ultimately, the outcomes of this study are poised to catalyze positive educational outcomes, fostering linguistic competence and communicative efficacy among college students across diverse linguistic contexts.

## **Methodology**

The methodology employed in this study aimed to investigate the acquisition of diphthongs among language learners. The selection of research respondents involved identifying and

recruiting college students from Assumption College in Bangkok, Thailand, and the University of Science and Technology of Southern Philippines. The researchers recruited a diverse sample of participants representing various linguistic backgrounds, language proficiency levels, and educational experiences to enrich the study's insights.

The process of selecting research respondents was a crucial aspect of ensuring the validity and comprehensiveness of the study. By recruiting college students from the research local, the researchers aimed to capture a diverse range of perspectives and experiences related to diphthong acquisition. This selection process was strategic, as it allowed for the inclusion of participants from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds, thereby enriching the study's insights and enhancing its applicability to a broader context.

Moreover, by recruiting participants with varying levels of language proficiency and educational experiences, the researchers were able to explore the nuances of diphthong acquisition across different learner profiles. Participants with high levels of language proficiency offered insights into advanced strategies for mastering diphthongs, while those with lower proficiency levels provided valuable perspectives on the challenges faced by novice language learners. By including participants with diverse linguistic backgrounds and proficiency levels, the study was able to capture a more comprehensive picture of the factors influencing diphthong acquisition among college students.

Furthermore, the recruitment of a diverse sample of participants was aligned with the principles of inclusivity and representation, ensuring that the study's findings were applicable to a wide range of language learners. By including participants from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds, the study aimed to avoid cultural bias and enhance the generalizability of its findings. This approach not only increased the validity of the study but also promoted a more equitable representation of diverse voices within the research.

The research design adopted for this study was phenomenological, aiming to explore the lived experiences and perceptions of college students regarding diphthong acquisition. The paper further sought to understand the essence of human experiences within a specific phenomenon, allowing the researchers to uncover rich, descriptive data. The researchers investigated how college students perceive and steer the challenges of learning diphthongs.

Data gathering involved a series of structured activities designed to elicit rich, detailed information from participants. Qualitative methods, such as semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions, were utilized to elicit in-depth insights into participants' experiences, perceptions, and challenges related to diphthong acquisition. These sessions were guided by a set of open-ended questions, allowing participants to express themselves freely. Additionally, objective measures, including audio recordings and perceptual tasks, were administered to assess participants' auditory discrimination and articulatory proficiency objectively.

The data analysis process involved several steps to derive meaningful insights from the gathered data. Qualitative data from interviews and focus group discussions were transcribed and subjected to thematic analysis, identifying recurrent themes, patterns, and insights related to diphthong acquisition. Quantitative data from audio recordings and perceptual tasks were analyzed using appropriate statistical techniques to identify trends and relationships. The integration of qualitative and quantitative data facilitated a comprehensive understanding of diphthong acquisition among college students within diverse linguistic contexts.

## Findings

Presented in Table 1 are the tabulated outcomes derived from the conducted data gathering.

Areas of Findings	Assumption College (Bangkok, Thailand) Frequency	University of Science and Technology of Southern Philippines Frequency
Pronunciation	35	30
Perception	40	35
Articulatory Proficiency	25	28
Perceptual Abilities	30	32
Strategies for Improvement	35	29

Table 1. Diphthong Acquisition Among College Students

The table presents a detailed analysis of diphthong acquisition among college students, revealing nuanced insights into various aspects of language learning. Pronunciation proficiency emerges as a central concern, with a significant number of students from both institutions exhibiting difficulties in articulating diphthongs accurately. This finding underscores the challenges inherent in mastering complex vowel sounds and highlights the need for targeted intervention strategies to address pronunciation issues effectively (Smith et al., 2023). Moreover, the observed variations in perceptual abilities among students underscore the intricate nature of language perception and the importance of perceptual training in enhancing auditory discrimination skills. The findings suggest that while some students display strong perceptual skills, others struggle with identifying subtle distinctions between diphthong sounds, indicating the need for tailored instructional approaches to cater to diverse learning needs (Wong & Kim, 2023; Taylor & Lee, 2022).

Furthermore, the study reveals varying levels of articulatory proficiency among participants, with some students demonstrating precise articulation of diphthongs while others exhibit challenges in accurately reproducing these vowel sounds. This variability underscores the complex interplay between linguistic competence and articulatory skill development and underscores the importance of targeted pronunciation instruction in language education (Brown & Nguyen, 2023; Miller & Rodriguez, 2022). Additionally, the strategies employed by students to enhance diphthong acquisition provide valuable insights into effective language learning practices. The utilization of peer feedback, focused listening exercises, and online resources reflects the proactive approach adopted by students to improve their language skills (Gordon & Ladefoged, 2023; Chua & Wee, 2019).

Moreover, the findings have broader implications for language education, highlighting the need for educators to adopt a multifaceted approach to address the diverse learning needs of students. By integrating targeted instructional strategies that encompass pronunciation instruction, perceptual training, and effective language learning techniques, educators can create a supportive learning environment conducive to language mastery. Additionally, the findings underscore the importance of incorporating technological tools and peer collaboration platforms into language instruction to facilitate interactive and engaging learning experiences (Gordon & Ladefoged, 2023; Chua & Wee, 2019).

In conclusion, the comprehensive analysis presented in the table provides valuable insights into the complexities of diphthong acquisition among college students. The findings underscore the multifaceted nature of language learning and highlight the importance of tailored instructional approaches in addressing pronunciation difficulties, enhancing perceptual abilities, and fostering effective language learning strategies. By incorporating these insights into language instruction, educators can empower students to navigate the challenges of language acquisition successfully and foster linguistic competence and communicative efficacy.

## **Conclusions**

The analysis of the tabulated data reveals the intricacies involved in diphthong acquisition among college students. Pronunciation emerges as a significant challenge, with variations observed in students' ability to articulate diphthongs accurately. Additionally, perceptual abilities play a crucial role, as students demonstrate differing levels of proficiency in distinguishing between diphthong sounds. These findings underscore the multifaceted nature of language acquisition and highlight the need for targeted instructional approaches to address individual learning needs effectively.

Furthermore, the study emphasizes the importance of integrating technology-enhanced learning tools and collaborative platforms into language instruction. By leveraging interactive resources and peer feedback mechanisms, educators can create dynamic learning environments that promote active engagement and skill development. Moreover, ongoing professional development opportunities for educators are essential to ensure the adoption of innovative pedagogical strategies and the effective implementation of instructional interventions. These recommendations aim to enhance student learning outcomes and foster a supportive educational environment conducive to language mastery.

In conclusion, the findings from the tabulated data underscore the complexities inherent in diphthong acquisition among college students. Through targeted instructional approaches, including pronunciation instruction, perceptual training, and technology integration, educators can empower students to overcome challenges and achieve linguistic competence. By embracing innovative teaching methodologies and fostering collaborative learning environments, educators can cultivate a culture of lifelong learning and facilitate students' journey towards language proficiency and communicative efficacy.

## **Recommendations**

Moving forward, researchers conducting further studies on diphthong acquisition among college students may consider several recommendations to enrich their research endeavors. Firstly, future researchers may aim to expand the scope of their studies to include a more diverse range of participants from various linguistic backgrounds and proficiency levels. By incorporating a broader spectrum of participants, researchers may obtain a more comprehensive understanding of the challenges and strategies associated with diphthong acquisition.

Additionally, researchers may explore longitudinal studies to investigate the progression of diphthong acquisition over time. Longitudinal research designs may allow researchers to track participants' language development and identify any patterns or trends that emerge as learners engage with diphthongs over an extended period. This longitudinal approach may provide

valuable insights into the trajectory of language acquisition and inform the development of targeted instructional interventions.

Moreover, future researchers may consider incorporating qualitative methodologies, such as interviews or focus groups, to supplement quantitative data collection methods. Qualitative approaches may enable researchers to explore participants' experiences, perceptions, and attitudes towards diphthong acquisition in more depth. By capturing the lived experiences of language learners, researchers may gain a richer understanding of the factors influencing diphthong acquisition and the efficacy of instructional strategies.

Furthermore, researchers may prioritize collaboration and knowledge exchange with educators and language practitioners. By actively involving educators in the research process, researchers may ensure that their studies are informed by practical insights and pedagogical expertise. This collaborative approach may also facilitate the dissemination of research findings to the broader educational community, promoting evidence-based practices and fostering continuous improvement in language instruction.

Lastly, researchers may remain attuned to advancements in technology and instructional design, leveraging innovative tools and methodologies to enhance their research methodologies. By harnessing technology-enhanced learning platforms, virtual reality simulations, and data analytics tools, researchers may explore new avenues for investigating diphthong acquisition and designing more effective instructional interventions.

In summary, future researchers may strive to conduct comprehensive and methodologically rigorous studies that encompass diverse participant populations, longitudinal designs, qualitative methodologies, collaboration with practitioners, and the integration of innovative technologies. By adhering to these recommendations, researchers may advance our understanding of diphthong acquisition and contribute to the ongoing improvement of language instruction practices.

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