

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSIONS, DISCUSSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter presents (1) summary of the study (2) a summary of the findings (3) discussions of the use of phrasal verbs by Thai MA TEFL students of Thammasat University (4) conclusions and (5) recommendations for further research.

5.1 SUMMARY OF THE STUDY

Previous research suggested that ESL/EFL learners had difficulty in dealing with phrasal verbs and tended to avoid using such structures. This study explored the use of phrasal verbs by Thai MA TEFL students of Thammasat University in relation to their proficiency levels: advanced, and intermediate. This study was conducted based on the following objectives and research methodology:

5.1.1 Objectives of the Study

Central to this study, the first objective was to investigate whether Thai MA TEFL students at Thammasat University avoid using English phrasal verbs. The study also aimed to investigate whether the levels of proficiency of the students under study play an important role in avoidance of English phrasal verbs.

5.1.2 Subjects, Materials, and Procedures

The subjects were thirty-nine (39) Thai first and second year MA TEFL students of Thammasat University. All subjects were considered EFL learners as they have limited exposure to English outside the classroom. The subjects were divided into two groups according to their English proficiency level determined by their TU-GET scores. Nine (9) students who got TU-GET scores 690 or higher were assigned to the better group; whereas thirty (30) students who got TU-GET scores less than 690 were assigned to the lower group. Then, all subjects took the multiple-choice test in which 17 target phrasal verbs were selected from previous studies. After that, the test was manually scored and analyzed in term of mean and standard deviation of the test scores from the total population of subjects and from the better and lower

groups as well as the correlation between the TU-GET scores and phrasal verbs test scores.

5.2 SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS

The results of the study can be summarized as follows:

5.2.1 From the phrasal verb test scores of the total population of subjects, it can be concluded the Thai MA TEFL students have a tendency to use phrasal verbs over one-word equivalents in spoken language. However, as the target phrasal verbs in this study were selected from those that native speakers preferred to use in spoken communication (Schmitt and Siyanova, 2007), it shows that the Thai MA TEFL students do not have as strong a preference as the native speakers have.

5.2.2 There is no significant difference between the phrasal verb test scores of the better group and the lower group. Thus, the level of proficiency of the students under this study does not affect the avoidance of phrasal verbs

5.2.3 There is no significant correlation between the subjects' TU-GET scores and phrasal verb test scores. This means that, generally speaking, the use of phrasal verbs by the learners under this study did not depend mainly on their proficiency level.

5.3 DISCUSSIONS

Over all, the EFL learners in this study preferred to use phrasal verbs over one-word equivalents in informal spoken language, at least in the contextualized situation as provided in the test items. In addition, the level of proficiency of the learners under this study did not play an important role in the avoidance of phrasal verbs. To clarify interpretations of the results, the detailed discussion is divided into two parts based on the two research questions and described as follows:

5.3.1 Research Question 1: Thai EFL learners avoid using phrasal verbs.

Previous studies have found that ESL/EFL learners tended to avoid using phrasal verbs when phrasal verb structure did not exist in their first language

(Dagut & Laufer, 1985; Laufer & Eliasson, 1993, as cited in Liao & Fukuya, 2002, p. 74-77; Liao & Fukuya, 2002). The findings of this study, however, show that the Thai EFL learners prefer to use phrasal verbs over one-word equivalents in informal spoken language, even though they do not have as strong a preference as the native-speakers have. This is interesting and surprising as it had been expected that the learners in this study would tend to use one-word equivalents more than phrasal verbs due to the lack of phrasal verbs in Thai, which is their first language.

From the work of Schmitt and Siyanova (2007), there is no evidence to show that the amount of exposure to native-speaking environments affects the likelihood of using phrasal verbs. Liao and Fukuya (2002), on the other hand, point out that the amount of contact with the second language might be a possible factor in learner's development from avoidance to non-avoidance. According to personal information from the subjects of this study, it was found that the majority of the subjects had the opportunity to use English every day in their work. Thus, to some extent it seems true that the learners' preference to use phrasal verbs over single-word verbs may be a result of the exposure to second language environments.

However, from the total answers (663), in 189 or 28.15% cases the subjects preferred to use alternative one-word equivalents. Therefore, it is possible to say that these subjects in their production employ avoidance strategy and prefer to use one-word equivalents instead. According to the result in which the majority of cases (62.59%) subjects prefer to use phrasal verbs, it can be inferred that the subjects have knowledge of phrasal verbs. Thus, it may be that these subjects overuse phrasal verbs because they fail to be aware of the register or appropriateness of phrasal verbs vs. one-word verbs. In fact, this may not be a problem in term of semantics, but it can make learners sound unnatural in speech (Side, 1990; Celce-Murcia and Larsen-Freeman, 1999).

5.3.2 Research Question 2: Proficiency levels of the subjects under the study play an important role in avoidance of phrasal verbs.

To investigate whether the subjects' proficiency level has an effect on the avoidance of phrasal verbs, the data was analyzed in terms of the comparison between the phrasal verb test scores of the better group and those of the lower group,

as well as the correlation between TU-GET scores and phrasal verb test scores. The results indicate that, generally speaking, there was no significant difference between the test scores of the better group and those of the lower group. In addition, no significant correlation was apparent between TU-GET scores and phrasal verb test scores. Thus, in general, the proficiency level of subjects in the study did not play an important role in avoidance of phrasal verbs. In other words, subjects' preference to use phrasal verbs did not mainly depend on their proficiency.

The aforementioned results do not follow the findings of the previous study conducted by Liao and Fukuya (2002). In the work of Liao and Fukuya, it was found that the intermediate learners produced phrasal verbs much less frequently than both the advanced learners and the native speakers did. As a result, the proficiency level played a role in avoidance phrasal verbs.

However, due to time and resource limitations, TU-GET scores of the MA TEFL subjects were used to be a measurement of the subjects' proficiency level. As previously mentioned, this study aimed to investigate the use of phrasal verbs in *spoken* language; it is unclear whether TU-GET, which is a formal and academic test, can be used as an appropriate measurement determining subjects' proficiency under this study. Thus, further work using other different proficiency level measurements needs to be done to examine the correlation between proficiency level and the avoidance of phrasal verbs.

5.4 CONCLUSIONS

The following conclusions can be drawn from the above discussions:

5.4.1 Thai EFL learners, specifically MA TEFL students at Thammasat University, avoid using the phrasal verbs in informal spoken language. Even though the learners under the study have a tendency to use phrasal verbs much more frequently than one-word equivalents in informal spoken language, they are less likely to use phrasal verbs than native speakers. In addition, it is assumed that these EFL learners tend to use phrasal verbs in spoken language as a result of the amount of contact in second language i.e. they normally use English in their work place, whereas

in some cases learners fail to use phrasal verbs where it is more appropriate than one-word verbs because of their lack of awareness of register.

5.4.2 Generally speaking, learners' proficiency level under the study did not play an important role in avoidance of phrasal verbs. In other words, the preference of the learners to use phrasal verbs did not mainly depend on their proficiency level. However, it is noteworthy that this is probably true when TU-GET scores are used to determine their proficiency level.

5.5 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Based on the findings and conclusions of this study, the following recommendations are made for further research:

5.5.1 As mentioned in the previous chapters, no research has been done to study the avoidance of English phrasal verbs of Thai EFL learners. Further investigation and experimentation into the area of avoidance of phrasal verbs among Thai EFL learners in all levels, e.g. primary, secondary, college and university students, and even professionals, is strongly recommended, so that the results can lead to the stronger conclusions and the implications for classroom and material development.

5.5.2 The research instrument and data collection are extremely important because they can significantly affect the results of the study. For instance, the time allocation for the subjects to complete the test should be appropriate to the length of the test. When the study aims to investigate the avoidance of phrasal verbs in spoken language, providing too much time will allow learners to think much longer than they normally do when speaking. Moreover, further research might investigate causes of avoidance by asking the subjects to specify the reason they prefer to use phrasal verbs or one-word verbs in each items.

5.5.3 To confirm the findings that proficiency level does not play an important role in avoidance of phrasal verbs, it is recommended that further research be undertaken by using a different proficiency test as a determination of proficiency level. Using a different proficiency test may affect the results of the research.