

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSIONS, DISCUSSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter presents (1) a summary of the study, (2) a summary of the findings, (3) discussions, (4) conclusions, and (5) recommendations for further research.

5.1 SUMMARY OF THE STUDY

5.1.1 Objectives of the Study

This study is undertaken to investigate learners' preferences in language learning and their teachers' perceptions of those preferences at the College of Dramatic Arts which operates in Thai context only. It is expected that the findings may help teachers initiate or select some new ideas and techniques to suit their learners' learning style.

5.1.2 Subjects, Materials, and Procedures

Using non-probability sample designs, this study was done with 100 M.6 students (86 females and 14 males) of the College of Dramatic Arts in the academic year 2006, as well as six English teachers of the college.

With the great help of Professor Billy Carlon, Professor Usana Wongnarkpet, and Professor Oranut Tatti, two slightly different types of instruments, which included 25 questions with responses ranked on four scales ranging from 1 (strongly dislike), 2 (dislike a little), 4 (like a little) to 5 (strongly like), were developed, modified and finalized for this study (Appendix A and B). In the learners' version, learners' learning styles and preferences were asked whereas in the teacher's version, teachers' perceptions of learners' preferences were investigated.

Before distribution, the instruments were rechecked in terms of appropriateness and comprehensibility by these three professors. In addition, they were pre-tested with 50 samples to test reliability coefficients (Cronbach's alpha), and it was found that reliability was higher than 0.80 which enables the researcher to conduct statistical analysis of the entire questionnaire.

Thus, the instruments, form I and form II, were distributed to the teachers and learners respectively, collected and checked by Prof. Oranut Tatti. The researcher rechecked their completion and cross-checked some data to verify the information. Then, they were sorted according to the groups and encoded for manipulation and analysis.

In this regard, SPSS/PC version 10 was used to manipulate the data collected. Descriptive statistics (frequency) and independent sample t-test were used to describe the data and test the hypothesis.

5.2 SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS

The results of the study can be summarized as follows:

5.2.1 There were 107 subjects. 6% were female English teachers of the college. The other 94% were M.6 students of the College of Dramatic Arts in the academic year 2006, and 14% out of 94% were male students.

5.2.2 In general students' preferences in language learning and their teachers' perceptions of those preferences show no statistically significant difference. There are just 5 out of 25 items, which are items no. 2, 6, 9, 11, and 14 that show significant differences.

5.2.3 Regarding the top five ranks of learners' likes in language learning and their teachers' perceptions of those likes, it was found that the top five items that have the highest means in learners' likes were items 5: Doing instructor-directed activities (Top 1); 10: Working in small groups (maximum 5 students) (Top 2); 16: Doing listening activities (tape/teacher speaking) (Top 3); 9: Participating in language games and songs (Top 4); and 4: Taking notes in a notebook during class and 12: Listening to others using English in class (Top 5). Those that possessed the highest means in teachers' perceptions of their learners' likes were items 9: Participating in language games and songs (Top 1); 11: Working in pairs (Top 2); 2: Going to class on time and 10: Working in small groups (maximum 5 students) (Top 3); 7: Participating in class discussions and 15: Doing written exercises, e.g., gap filling, sentence correction, matching (Top 4); and 3: Sitting in front so I can hear the teacher, 5: Doing instructor-

directed activities, 6: Preferring a teacher who calls on us to answer, and 17: Looking up new words in a dictionary (Top 5).

5.2.4 The top five items that had the lowest means in learners' dislikes were items 8: Giving individual oral presentations (Top 1); 21: Working independently instead of in groups (Top 2); 22: Looking over my notes after class (Top 3); 18: Always skipping a word that I don't know (Top 4); and 23: Preparing for exams step by step, not the night before (Top 5). Those that showed the lowest means in teachers' perceptions of their learners' dislikes were items 13: Talking to classmates in English in class (Top 1); 1: Studying the lesson before going to class (Top 2); 14: Self-correcting when realizing that I made a mistake in speaking, 18: Always skipping a word that I don't know and 23: Preparing for exams step by step, not the night before (Top 3); 22: Looking over my notes after class (Top 4); and 8: Giving individual oral presentations and 21: Working independently instead of in groups (Top 5). As is clearly seen, both groups share some similarities in items 8, 18, 21, 22, and 23.

5.2.5 The teachers' ranking of the items was more or less the same as those of the learners. When comparing their mean scores, the teachers' mean score (3.24) was slightly higher than the learners' (3.06).

5.2.6 Based on the "independent-sample t-test," the hypothesis is accepted. Therefore, simply stated, learners' preferences in language learning and their teachers' perceptions of those preferences are not significantly different.

5.3 DISCUSSION

This section concerns the assumption and the contradiction between the previous studies and this study.

5.3.1 This study assumed that the expected outcomes of the learners' preferences in language learning and their teachers' perceptions of those preferences at the College of Dramatic Arts would be significantly different. However, according to the independent-sample t-test, it was found that these two sets of ranking mostly match each other, except in a few items. Thus, it can be noted that on the whole, there is no

significant difference between learners' preferences in language learning and their teachers' perceptions of those preferences.

5.3.2 As such, the findings are not consonant with those of previous researchers whose works have been reviewed in Chapter 2, especially Barkhuisen, Kern, Kumaravadivelu, Nunan, Spratt and Block. Contrary to this research finding, most studies done in the area indicate that there are considerably different views between learners and their teachers, and these differences have been noted in relation to their preferences, needs, and their language learning.

5.3.3 More interestingly, the study found that teachers seem to overestimate their learners' preferences and tend towards more positive views when compared to their learners who tend towards negative ones.

5.3.4 What is different in these findings is that other studies generally indicate that teachers prefer communicative activities more than learners do. In this study, the learners and teachers rated and responded more or less the same. Furthermore, they likely share the same perspectives in terms of likes and dislikes.

5.3.5 While the present study focused on learners and teachers at the College of Dramatic Art, I do agree with Edge (1996, p. 18) that it has implications for other EFL contexts in other schools, colleges and universities as well. Information from this kind of survey is crucial for teachers to develop teaching methods which are appropriate to their learners and their contexts. Efficient and effective language teaching and learning can only be achieved when teachers are aware of their learners' preferences including needs, capabilities, and potentials.

5.3.6 "The more we know about the learner's personal approaches and personal concepts, the better and more productive our interactions will be." (Kumaravadivelu, 1991, p. 107). Therefore, we as teachers should be aware of our students' perceptions and beliefs about language learning in order to help facilitate desired learning outcomes in the classroom. As suggested by Bada and Okan (2000), there is a need for closer cooperation between students and teachers. It is crucial to bear in mind that learners already critically evaluate what they do (Breen, 1989).

5.4 CONCLUSIONS

The following conclusions can be drawn from the discussion above:

5.4.1 Analyses of the research question “learners' preferences in language learning and their teachers' perceptions of those preferences at the College of Dramatic Arts” is interesting, as the results indicate that although there is some difference between learners' preferences and teachers' awareness of those preferences in language learning, the overall difference is not statistically significant.

5.4.2 Contrary to others' findings, this may imply that the current language teaching and learning at the College of Dramatic Art is satisfying and acceptable. Though there are some slight differences in a few items, neither conflict nor big differences between teachers and their learners in terms of preferences in language learning appear. However, learning language in the college may yield much better learning outcomes if those few discrepancies are deleted.

5.4.3 Teachers' perceptions of their learners' preferences which include needs, capabilities, and potentials, are important for achieving efficient and effective language teaching and learning.

5.4.4 Teachers can use various strategies to build learners choices into their lessons. Teachers and students can also have a conversation and discuss alternatives, in order to lead to more learner involvement and to more positive attitudes towards language learning. As teachers, we should regularly observe our students' reactions and consider their preferences to promote a more inclusive climate which will help enhance learning.

5.4.5 On the whole, besides the conclusions mentioned above, the present study gives a comprehensive picture of the learners' preferences in one college only. This subjective analysis is of importance since it is, by nature, context specific. To sum up, I believe the findings of this study make a contribution to the college as well as to the importance of having learner-centered approaches in Teaching English as a Foreign Language.

5.5 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

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

5.4.1 A comparative study using learners in other levels to crosscheck and ascertain the findings is suggested.

5.4.2 Replications of this study should be conducted annually to ascertain current problems and needs, and to collect up-to-date information relevant to future improvements.

5.4.3 Further studies should be conducted in other Thai schools and universities where English language is taught in both Thai and international contexts.