

## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **1.1 BACKGROUND**

One of the significant reasons why Thai students study English is because it is in the school curriculum. The school curricula in Thailand mostly concentrates on grammar-based instruction. Therefore, the teachers do not have to be able to speak the target language well. According to <http://www.thailandqa.com/forum/showthread.php?t=4817>, an unnamed Thai English teacher at a Ranong school in southern Thailand said that most of her colleagues could not speak English, they basically followed English textbooks while teaching in Thai.

As mentioned above, Thai students of English lack language role model, which causes pronunciation problems. Moreover, according to “Learner English” (Swan and Smith, 1987, p.252-253), the phonological systems of Thai and English are significantly different. For example, English has more fricatives than Thai: /θ/, /ð/, /v/, /z/, /ʃ/ and /ʒ/. Therefore, it is difficult for Thai students to produce these sounds. Thai students usually pronounce words with /v/ instead of /f/, and words with /z/ instead of /s/ or voiceless. The intonation and stress were also problems of Thai students (Wei & Zhou, 2002). Pratsaneeya Jarusan (1997) also stated Thai students’ have pronunciation problems in ‘Word Stress’. Ratchanee Mano-im (1999) pointed out that Thai students had problems in articulating final consonants and consonant clusters. For the two consonant clusters, besides speaking the correct pronunciation, they produce four variant types: deleted one of two sounds, replaced one or both sounds, deleted one sound and replaced the other, and inserted an extra sound. Krittika Panseetong (1996) mentioned that Thai students had problems in pronouncing diphthongs: /ij/, /ei/, /əʊ/.

#### **1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

According to <http://gotoknow.org/blog/yahoo/63109>, Thai students prefer to learn speaking with native speakers. One of them said some Thai teachers teach wrong pronunciation. She wishes that the teachers would pronounce the right sound.

As mentioned in <http://www.gsbi.org/building-schools.html>, Thai children were learning English from a book without the benefit of hearing it spoken correctly. Their English teachers know some English, but struggle with pronunciation, syntax and idioms.

Krittika Panseetong (1996) identified that Thai English teachers did not adequately practice standard English pronunciation. Therefore, they were not confident to correct students' pronunciation or show them how to produce the right one.

As stated in [http://www.petersonreading.com/petersonreading\\_com/visitors.asp](http://www.petersonreading.com/petersonreading_com/visitors.asp), Ginny and Ed Manomat are English tutors from Bangkok, Thailand. Ginny first came to the U.S. in 1981 after studying English for 15 years in Thailand. She had been taught to speak English with a Thai pronunciation. Though "English speaking" Thais could communicate with each other, they could not communicate with English speaking foreigners.

Nowadays, a communicative approach has more influence on the teaching of English by Thai teachers. Additionally, the list of teacher 'qualities' ranked by preferences mentioned in "The Practice of English Language Teaching", Harmer (1992) showed that teaching good pronunciation and speaking good English are ranked 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> respectively. It implies that oral English is one of a teacher's necessary qualities. In <http://www.readingmatrix.com/articles/singhal/index.html>, Garrigues (1999) pointed out in the topic of "Overcoming Pronunciation Problems of English Teachers in Asia" that the foundation of effective spoken communication is good pronunciation. The end result of conflicting sound differences is often ambiguity and miscommunication (e.g. "long way" vs. "wrong way"). In the same website, Woo (1999) stated in the topic of "Non-Native Speakers Should and Can Teach Pronunciation" that pronunciation is the key element of English language teaching and learning and it has to be taught from the beginning and throughout the learning process. Non-native teachers of English should prepare themselves to be confident and effective pronunciation teachers.

Therefore, the question is whether Thai English teachers perceive pronunciation difficulties in English.

### 1.3 OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

The main purpose of this study is to analyze Thai English teachers' self-perception of pronunciation difficulties in English, particularly the top ten problematic sounds of consonants and vowels.

The subsidiary purpose is to raise Thai English teachers' awareness of standard pronunciation by crosschecking with native and ESL teachers.

### 1.4 DEFINITION OF TERMS

Definitions of the terms of this study are the following:

AmE: refers to American pronunciation

BrE: refers to British pronunciation

ESL: refers to English as a Second Language

Interlanguage: refers to an emerging linguistic system that has been developed by a learner of a second language who has not become fully proficient yet but is only approximating the target language; preserving some features of their first language in speaking or writing the target language and creating innovations. It can fossilize in any of its developmental stages. The learner creates an interlanguage using different learning strategies such as language transfer, overgeneralisation and simplification.

(Retrieved December 18, 2006 from <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Interlanguage>)

IPA: refers to the International Phonetic Alphabet. A system of special signs, used to represent the sounds made in speech.

Pronunciation:	refers to American or British pronunciation/accents which is a standard pronunciation focused on consonants and vowels.
Segmental feature:	refers to consonant and vowel sounds.
Suprasegmental feature:	refers to word stress, sentence stress, rhythm and intonation.
Thai English Teachers:	refers to Thai nationals who teach English as a subject at the undergraduate level.
Tinglish:	refers to speaking English with a Thai pronunciation.

## 1.5 SYMBOLS OF THE STUDY

/ /	represents phonetic transcription
[ ]	represents the variants of phonetic transcription produced by Thai speakers/students (Various symbols as used in the IPA)

## 1.6 BASIC ASSUMPTIONS

In this study, it is assumed that Thai English Teachers, who are non-native speakers, have problems in producing sounds in both consonants and vowels.

## 1.7 SCOPES OF THE STUDY

This study will be conducted with nine Thai English teachers of the Business English Program at Suan Dusit Rajabhat University.

## 1.8 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

1.8.1 This study will analyze Thai English teachers' self-perception of pronunciation difficulties in English, particularly the top ten problematic sounds of consonants and vowels.

1.8.2 This study may pave the way towards further research dealing with how teachers can improve their problematic sounds in order to enhance their teaching performance and raise their qualities and also those of their students'.

## **1.9 ORGANIZATION OF THE STUDY**

The analysis of Thai English teachers' self-perception of pronunciation difficulties in English in this paper is divided into five chapters.

1.9.1 Chapter 1 describes the background of the study, statement of the problems, objectives of the study, definition of terms, symbols of the study, basic assumption, scope of the study, significance of the study, limitation of the study, and recommendations for further study.

1.9.2 Chapter 2 describes the theory of second language learning as an aspect of pronunciation, the concept of teaching pronunciation, and relevant research.

1.9.3 Chapter 3 describes the methodology of this research: subjects, materials, data collection, and data analysis.

1.9.4 Chapter 4 describes the findings of the study in three parts: general information, self-assessment, and reading aloud

1.9.5 Chapter 5 provides a summary of the study, summary of the findings, discussion of findings, and recommendations for further research.

1.9.6 Appendices show the phonetic transcription of consonants and vowels as well as materials used in the study.

## **1.10 LIMITATION OF THE STUDY**

1.10.1 The sample size is small. Therefore, the findings in this study describe the English pronunciation difficulties from the points of view of this Thai English teacher group only.

1.10.2 The assessment by native teachers is through recordings which may have some problems in sound quality.

## **1.11 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY**

This analysis was conducted in small groups. Therefore,

1.11.1 A larger number of subjects for in future research is encouraged in order to investigate whether the same outcome will be found.

1.11.2 An analysis of Thai English Teachers' Self-perception of Pronunciation Difficulties in English" at kindergarten, primary, secondary or high school level is also recommended to investigate whether the same outcomes will be found.