CHAPTER TWO
REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This chapter reviews the literature in main areas of perception and production of English /v/ along with a summary: (1) The definition of "good pronunciation", (2) The concept of English /v/, and (3) Relevant Research.

2.1 DEFINITION OF GOOD PRONUNCIATION

According to http://www.yourdictionary.com/pronunciation, **"pronunciation"** can be defined as the act or manner of pronouncing syllables, words, and phrases with regard to the production of sounds and the placing of stress, intonation and so on.

Based on http://www.antimoon.com/how/pronuncgood.htm, there are three levels of English pronunciation as shown below:

Level 1: People often do not understand what you want to say since you use the wrong sounds in English words.

Level 2: People understand what you want to say, but it is unpleasant to listen to you.

Level 3: People understand you, and your English is pleasant to listen to.

Level 3 will be called *good pronunciation*. Since there are many regional kinds of English, the author further stated that good pronunciation is not perfect American or British accent but the accent must be close to the standard American or British English.

A key factor to good pronunciation is "practice". It will lead an L_2 speaker to pronounce English words as well as sentences fluently. If students have inadequate pronunciation skills, their ability to communicate is said to be limited.

As stated by Derwing (2003), pronunciation plays some important roles in ESL learners' communication difficulties. The research of Derwing claims that almost all the subjects strongly believed that it is important to speak English like native speakers. Good pronunciation plays an important role not only in communication, but also in creating first impression between L_1 and L_2 speakers.

Having good pronunciation will make native speakers enjoy talking to non–native speakers. Additionally, pronouncing each sound correctly is not said to be

enough for English pronunciation. L_2 speakers should have good or understandable pronunciation in other areas as well. In order to be understood by L_1 speakers, non–native speakers should practice performance both in the segmental as well as the suprasegmental features of English, for instance, consonants, vowels, rhythm, linking, intonation and stress.

2.2 CONCEPT OF ENGLISH /V/

According to Roach (2003), 'fricatives' are produced when air escapes through a small passage and makes a hissing sound. English /v/ is **the voiced labiodental fricative**. As for its place of articulation, he further stated that 'labiodental' means the lower lip is in contact with the upper teeth. Although /v/ is a familiar sound to most European listeners, it is cross–linguistically a fairly uncommon sound, being only a quarter as frequent as [w].

The absence of /v/ occurs in such East Asian languages as Mandarin and Japanese. Thus, speakers of these languages tend to pronounce [v] as [b]. Moreover, Chinese and Japanese speakers of English tend to fail in distinguish the English words "very" and "berry" (Carruthers, 2006; Ohata, 2004). As for South East Asian languages such as Thai, Boonruang Chunsuvimol and Nantana Ronakiat (2001) suggested that Thai speakers of English tend to substitute /w/ for /v/ in word–initial position as in the words "vast" and "very".

The importance features of the voiced labiodental fricative are as shown below:

- Its manner of articulation is fricative, which means it is produced by constricting air flow through a narrow channel at the place of articulation, causing turbulence.
- Its place of articulation is labiodental which means that it is articulated with the lower lips and the upper teeth.
- Its phonation type is voiced, which means the vocal cords are vibrating when it is pronounced.
- It is an oral consonant, which means air is allowed to escape through the mouth.

- It is a central consonant, which means it is produced by allowing the airstream to flow over the middle of the tongue, rather than the sides.
- The airstream mechanism is pulmonic egressive, which means it is articulated by pushing the air out of the lungs and through the vocal tract, rather than from the glottis or the mouth.

Additionally, Tiffany and Carrel (1987) explained that the [v] is the cognate of [f]; thus, it may be described as a voiced nonsyllabic, anterior or as a voiced labiodental fricative. They further stated that in common with other voiced cognates [v] is a more lax and less strident sound than [f].

As for variation in production of English /v/, they claimed that when [v] is in a final position or when it is followed by an unvoiced sound, the voicing is often reduced or absent. Where [v] is in a relatively weak position, for example, as an initiating consonant for an unstressed syllable, the friction noise may be less strong than when the syllable is stressed.

Tiffany and Carrel (1987) also stated that L_2 speakers of English may occasionally pronounce [v] as a voiced bilabial [β] (as in Spanish, the bilabial [β] is common) or they may produce a less voiced variant close to, or identical with, English [f].

2.3 RELEVANT RESEARCH

According to "Regional Differences in Aural Perception of English Phonemes amongst First Year Students in Bansomdej Teacher Training College, Dhonburi", Chaleoy Potibut (1964) investigated the perception of English phonemes by 324 first year students at Bansomdej Teacher Training College. The main purpose of this study was to explore the differences in the perception of target phonemes among the subjects of this study. The subjects were selected from the regions of their hometown, Central, North, South and Northeastern Thailand. The result revealed that the subjects had problems discriminating between /f/–/v/ contrast in the word–initial position. Hence, the study illustrated that Thai speakers performed poorly in distinguishing the contrast of /f/–/v/.

Tippawan Janyasuparb (ทิพย์วรรณ จรรยาสุภาพ, 2524) studied “An Analysis of English Pronunciation of English Major Students at High Certificate of Education Level” with 100 subjects randomly drawn from 4 colleges in the Bangkok Metropolis area. The researcher concluded that the errors were found in both segmental features: vowels and consonants, and suprasegmental features: stress and intonation. As for the production of /v/, she stated that some Thai speakers of English tend to substitute /w/ in initial position as in the words “vast” and “very”. Moreover, some researchers have investigated where L_2 speakers have difficulties producing non–native sounds. Thus L_2 speakers seem to substitute their own native sounds (Bada, 2001; Lado, 1957; Mulford, 1987; Ohata, 2004; นันทนา รณเกียรติ , 2548).

Boonruang Chunsuvimol and Nantana Ronakiat (2000) studied the stylistic variation of (f) and (v) in the English of Thai speakers. The studied aimed at examining phonetic realizations and stylistic variations of (f) and (v) among Thai university students. The phonological variables were analyzed both in word–initial position and word–final position. The study covered an informal style of conversation and a formal style of reading text, as well as a very formal style of minimal pairs.

The subjects in this study were 21 female English majoring students at the Faculty of Liberal Arts, Thammasat University. With respect to (v) in the initial position, the results revealed that (v) has 3 variants: [v], [w] and [f], noting that [v] is more realized than [w] and [f]. Regarding (v) in the final position, the results showed that this phoneme has 5 variants: [v], [f], [b], [p] and [ø]. Additionally, they suggested that the final (v) is more realized as [f] than [v] and the remaining variants.

Wei & Zhou (2002), cited in Apisara Sritulanon (2007), investigated problems with English pronunciation among Thai students in “Insight into English Pronunciation Problems of Thai Students”. The results from their study show that Thai students had pronunciation problems with consonants and vowels. As for consonants, Thai speakers of English tend to substitute /l/ for /r/, /f/ for /v/ and /s/ for /z/. The final consonant sounds are always unaspirated and unvoiced. The researchers claimed that one possible factor that causes pronunciation problems in Thai students is due to their teachers’ Thai style English pronunciation. They further suggested that

a language teacher's pronunciation is a model for the students who imitate the teachers' pronunciation.

As stated by Boonruang Chunsuvimol and Nantana Ronakiat (2001), Thai speakers will have difficulties distinguishing /f/–/v/, in such minimal pairs as "safe" and "save", "half" and "halve". This is in accordance with what Flege and Hillenbrand (1987) stated about L_1 interference in perception of English sounds. They suggested that L_2 learners seem to perceive problematic sounds as L_1 sounds. Regarding the /f/–/v/ contrast, the main contrasting feature is "voiced". The phoneme /f/ is voiceless and /v/ is voiced.

According to "Pronunciation Difficulties of Japanese Speakers of English: Prediction Based on a Contrastive Analysis", Carruthers (2006) conducted a contrastive analysis of English and Japanese phonology which can help identify potential problems as well as challenges for Japanese speakers of English. He indicated that Learners of English encounter differences in many areas such as the distribution of allophones and phonemes, the numbers of vowels and consonants, the variety of environments in which fricatives occur, the discrimination and production of /r/ and /l/ and other English approximates, the variety of syllable structures, and prosody.

As for the segmental difficulties, he further stated that English phones which do not exist in Japanese will be an initial obstacle in producing intelligible English pronunciation. Lado (1957) also claimed that learners of an L_2 will have greater difficulty with an L_2 phoneme absent from the L_1 than an L_2 sound that is similar to an L_1 sound. Thus, Carruthers' study expected Japanese speakers of English to be challenged by the English lax vowels and the English consonants such as /v/, /θ/ and /ð/.

In his study, Carruthers found out that difficulty in perception may affect production; consequently, learners may produce the word 'thin' similarly to the English 'shin'. As for the English /v/; Japanese speakers of English may instead produce /b/, sounding 'berry' for the word 'very' (Avery & Ehrlich, 1992 and Thompson).

Ohata (2004) studied "Phonological Differences between Japanese and English: Several Potentially Problematic Areas of Pronunciation for Japanese

ESL/EFL Learners". He concisely stated in his study that L_2 pronunciation errors are often caused by the transfer of well–established L_1 sound systems. His study aimed at examining some of the characteristic phonological differences between Japanese and English in terms of comparing segmental and suprasegmental aspects of both languages. Ohata's study also discussed several problematic areas of pronunciation for Japanese learners of English as well.

In his study, Ohata (2004) claimed that there are noticeable differences in consonantal distributions between Japanese and English. He further stated that there are more consonants in English than in Japanese (Avery & Ehrlich, 1992; Kenworthy, 1987). In other words, there is a variety of fricatives and affricates which are much more widely distributed in English than in Japanese: /f/, /v/, /tʃ/, /ʃ/, /ʒ/, /dʒ/, /θ/ and /ð/ do not exist in the Japanese consonantal system.

He pointed out the same problem for Japanese speakers of English as Carruthers mentioned earlier. This hurdle comes from the lack of particular consonants in Japanese which exist in English; especially the pronunciation of labiodental fricative /v/. Ohata suggested that while Japanese has a similar voiceless counterpart of /v/, it is a bilabial fricative, not a labiodental as in English. The particular lack of /v/ causes Japanese learners to substitute the voiced bilabial stop /b/ for /v/. This strategy of substitution might cause some miscommunication between Japanese students and native speakers of English; for instance, such words as 'vanilla' and 'very' might be wrongly perceived as 'banana' and 'berry' (Ohata, 2004).

As Hide and Van de Poel (2002) pointed out in "Interlanguage Phonology: Implications for a Remedial Pronunciation course for Chinese Learners of English", Chinese does not have dental fricatives. In their study, the students substituted [s], [t] or [f] for [T], which is a very common transfer for other languages as well. They substitute [l], [d] or [v] for [D]; /thing/ is pronounced [»siN] and /this/ can sound like [»lIs]. Moreover, they suggested that for Chinese speakers of English, [f] and [v] substitutes also cause problems since it is clear that Chinese does not have any voiced fricatives. The students thus substitute differently in the syllable initial and syllable final position.

In the syllable final position, the students substitute [f] for [v]; accordingly, 'save' sounds like 'safe', as Dutch speakers of English do. As for the syllable initial

position, the learners tend to substitute [w] for [v]; for instance, ‘vine’ will sound like ‘wine’. Likewise, in bisyllabic words where [v] is initial in the second syllable, in other words, [v] is in the medial position, it is also pronounced as [w]; ‘ever’ sounds like [»ew].

Besides, their study also discussed the production of consonant clusters, noting that for word medial consonant clusters, the consonants most often deleted are [r,l,t,d,f,v] especially when these sounds occur after a vowel. For example, /older/ may sound like [odder]. For word final consonant clusters, they suggest that deletion is also used; the most frequently deleted consonants are [r,l,t,d,f,v], for example /bold/ becomes [bU].

The analysis from their study showed that the Chinese learners of English substitute [f] for [v] in the syllable final position, and [w] for [v] in the word–initial position.

Finally, the study of interlanguage phonology has widened its scope from the early contrastive analysis approach, with the idea that all errors were due to native language transfer (Flege; 1987, Hide & Van de Poel; 2002), to a more broadly based approach incorporating general linguistic theory. More recent research has taken into account developmental errors, which are not due to native language but rather to universal factors that occur both in first and second language acquisition.

From the above studies, it can be seen that L_2 speakers have problems in perceiving and producing nonnative sounds. Therefore, the problematic sounds will be perceived and produced as the speakers’ L_1 sounds.