

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **CONCLUSIONS, DISCUSSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

This chapter presents (1) conclusions and discussions, (2) implications from the study and (3) recommendations for further research.

#### **5.1 CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSIONS**

The results of the study can be summarized as follows:

##### **5.1.1 The perception of /v/**

The perceptual results of /v/ in the present study reveal that the subjects had some difficulty in discriminating the /f-/v/ contrast as two distinct phonemes. As Brown (2000) pointed out, L<sub>2</sub> speakers whose phoneme inventories lack /v/ were able to distinguish the /f-/v/ contrast phonemically almost as well as the L<sub>1</sub> speakers. She further stated that the L<sub>2</sub> speakers could attain perception in such a contrast since there is a contrasting feature necessary to distinguish the /f-/v/ contrast in those L<sub>2</sub> phonological systems.

In her study, Brown related the discrimination of non-native sounds to the use of distinctive features in the L<sub>1</sub> phonological system. That is to say, adults' perception of non-native speech contrasts is strongly influenced by the phonological systems of their native language (Kabak and Maniwa). They claimed that the phonemic status of a foreign contrast in a speaker's L<sub>1</sub> is clearly important in influencing perception.

Obviously, /f-/v/ contrast differs in voicing quality. Almost all languages contain this phonetic feature in their phonological systems. Hence, L<sub>2</sub> speakers acquire the ability to distinguish the /f-/v/ contrast in their L<sub>1</sub> acquisition.

According to a study by Jongman et al. (2003), perception of /v/ is as good based on visual information alone as on both auditory and visual information combined, and better than on the basis of auditory information alone. As for the non-sibilant fricatives, they further state that accurate perception derives from a combination of acoustic, contextual and visual information.

The results of the present study reveal that the voicing quality which exists in both L<sub>1</sub> and L<sub>2</sub> influences the ability to discriminate /v/. As for word

positions, the voicing quality cannot help improve the ability to perceive /v/ in word-final positions.

The mean perception scores in each word position show that there was a relative degree of difficulty in perceiving /v/ according to word positions. That is to say, the subjects in the present study had the most difficulty in perceiving final /v/, followed by initial /v/ and medial /v/ ( $\bar{X} = 2.8, 3.3$  and  $3.9$  out of 4 respectively).

### 5.1.2 The production of /v/

In this study, the subjects substituted /w/ for /v/ in word-initial and medial position, whereas /f/ was sometimes produced in final position. More specifically, some consonants which exist in the Thai sound system such as /f/, /p/ and /w/ have been substituted for /v/ in different word positions. This is in agreement with other studies (Boonruang Chunsuvimol & Nantana Ronakiat, 2000; Foongfuang Kruatrachu, 1960; Hide & Van de Poel, 2002) that report /v/ distributed in different word positions was replaced by /f, p, w/ and other sounds which occur in the speakers' L<sub>1</sub> phoneme inventory.

Additionally, Nantana Ronakiat (นันทนา รณเกียรติ, 2548) indicated that the substitution between L<sub>1</sub> and L<sub>2</sub> occurs when the phonetic features of L<sub>1</sub> phones are similar to those of L<sub>2</sub> phones. So far, there has apparently been no research study which aims to figure out why such sounds as /p/ and /w/ have been used to substitute for /v/.

In terms of the mean production scores of /v/ in the present study, the results show that the subjects had great difficulty in producing initial /v/, followed by medial and final /v/ ( $\bar{X} = 1.1, 2.7$  and  $3.4$  out of 4 respectively). When analyzing the total production score of /v/, the mean score is 7.2 out of 12 which is lower than the total perception score ( $\bar{X} = 9.8$ ).

Obviously, the production scores of /v/ are said to be lower than that of the perception scores since /v/ does not exist in Thai sound system. This causes Thai speakers of English to have problems in pronouncing English /v/ as mentioned earlier.

### 5.1.3 The correlation between perception and production of /v/

This research study aimed at exploring whether there is a correlation between the perception and production of /v/. Hence, the findings will be discussed in terms of individual perception and production, and the overall perception and production in each word position.

The mean perception scores of the /v/ of individual subjects showed that all subjects had less difficulty in perceiving /v/ than in producing it. For the purpose of analyzing the results, the 10 subjects were divided into 3 groups.

In the first group, there are 5 subjects whose perception scores are higher than the total mean score ( $\bar{X} = 9.8$ ) but their production scores are lower than the total mean score ( $\bar{X} = 7.2$ ). In this group, the subjects' performance on /v/ perception is far better than that of the production.

As for the second group, there are 3 subjects whose scores in both perception and production tests are slightly lower than the total mean scores in both tests. Obviously, the subjects' perception scores in this group are slightly higher than their production scores. This reveals that the subjects' performance on perception in this group is slightly better than their production.

In the third group, there are 2 subjects whose both perception and production scores are higher than the total mean scores. This means that the subjects in this group have high proficiency level both in the perception and production of English /v/.

## 5.2 IMPLICATIONS FROM THE STUDY

As we have seen so far, the subjects had more difficulty in producing /v/ than in perceiving it. Thus, teachers of English should take this into consideration. They should pay much attention to make students be aware of producing each particular sound which does not exist in the students' L<sub>1</sub> sound system.

Apisara Sritulanon (2007) suggested that the problematic sounds for Thai speakers of English are such sounds as /v/, /z/, /tʃ/, /ʃ/, /ʒ/, /dʒ/, /θ/, /ð/ and so forth. As for the L<sub>2</sub> sounds in which their contrasting features do not occur in the Thai phonological system, for example, /θ/ and /ð/, we need the contrasting feature to

perceive each particular sound. Likewise, these sounds should be practiced both in perceiving and producing.

Griffiths (2005) indicated that some people might think that pronunciation has a second priority from other language skills and they thus put emphasis only on grammar and lexis. Teachers of English should help raise students' awareness towards the importance of learning pronunciation since good pronunciation enhances understanding and leads to success in communication. Gower et al (1995) claimed that the first step in teaching pronunciation is to help the students recognize the importance of pronunciation. Thus, it may be useful to do some awareness-raising activities.

By means of teaching individual sounds, Gower et al suggested that the teachers should know that each sound differs depending on how they are formed in the mouth, throat and nose and whether they are 'voiced' (when the vocal chords are used – as when we hum) or 'voiceless' (when the vocal chords are not used – as when we whisper). As for English consonants, some are voiced and some are voiceless. When we teach the /v/, we should know that it is a 'voiced' fricative. Moreover, they proposed that in order to teach such individual sounds as /p, b, f, v, w, θ/ teachers can *mouth the word*; this involves exaggerated movements of the lips, teeth and tongue so that the students can see clearly what is happening. However, this technique can only be applied to the consonants produced at the front of the mouth.

Harmer (1992) claimed that pronunciation is a language skill that language learners need and teachers must be sure that their students can be understood when they are speaking. In addition, Lightbown & Spada (1999) and Harmer (1992) concisely stated that the key factor to language learning is "motivation". The teacher thus should create a cooperative learning atmosphere to help build students' motivation.

On the other hand, a competitive learning atmosphere may demotivate almost all the students. Lado (1957), cited in Carruthers (2006), claimed that obviously not all learners will encounter the same difficulties in pronunciation. Hence, the teachers should take this into consideration. The teachers' correction of students' mistakes is quite important as well. Needless to say, "choral repetition" and "choral correction" in

teaching pronunciation are far better than individual practice. Students may find choral correction more relaxing and it helps motivate students as well.

Additionally, Ohata (2004) suggested that the tasks for ESL/EFL teachers in teaching pronunciation should not be limited to eliminating all traces of a foreign accent from the students' speech. But rather, instead of expecting "precise accuracy" through the monotonous pronunciation drills or repetition, more emphasis should be placed on raising the communicative value of the students' pronunciation, so that what they produce would be more comprehensible to others.

### **5.3 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH**

This research study is restricted to investigating only one problematic sound (v) for Thai speakers of English. As noted earlier, there are many nonnative English consonants. Thus, it will be beneficial for teaching and learning pronunciation if future research will be able to examine abilities to perceive and produce other problematic sounds, for example, /z/, /θ/, /ð/ and so forth. Additionally, the subjects of the study were limited only to ten M.4 students in the Art program at Chitralada School. Hence, it would be more generalizable for the findings if future research is able to investigate students from many schools with different levels and increased the sample size of the subjects.