

## Chapter V

### Social variation of the T(r) and the E(r)

This chapter is concerned with the variation of (r) in Thai and (r) in English spoken by Thais as related to three social factors: sex, job level and English language background of the speakers. Social variation of the T(r) is dealt with in 5.1. and that of the E(r) in 5.2.

#### 5.1 Social variation of the T(r)

Tables 5.1 - 5.3 and the corresponding figures, Figures 5.1 - 5.3 illustrate the frequency of T(r) variants in the prevocalic and postconsonantal positions by the three respective social variables.

##### 5.1.1 Variation of the T(r) by sex

As Table 5.1 and Figure 5.1 show, in the prevocalic position, both male and female speakers pronounce [l] extensively and the rate of [l] is approximately equal for both sex groups. They both have a low frequency of the prestigious [r]. Female speakers pronounce [r] twice as much as male but the latter use [ɹ] three times more than the former. The males' combined percentage of [r] and [ɹ],

Table 5.1 - Frequency of T(r) variants by sex

Prevocalic T(r)

	Male		Female	
[r]	2.1%	45	4.5%	98
[ɹ]	8.9%	191	3.0%	67
[l]	89.0%	1,906	92.5%	2,021
Total	100%	2,142	100%	2,186

Postconsonantal T(r)

	Male		Female	
[r]	1.9%	24	5.0%	40
[ɹ]	8.1%	104	7.2%	59
[l]	8.0%	102	12.0%	97
[∅]	82.0%	1,049	75.8%	615
Total	100%	1,279	100%	811

$\chi^2$  (prevocalic) = 82.1 df=2 p<0.01

$\chi^2$  (postconsonantal) = 25.8 df=3 p<0.01

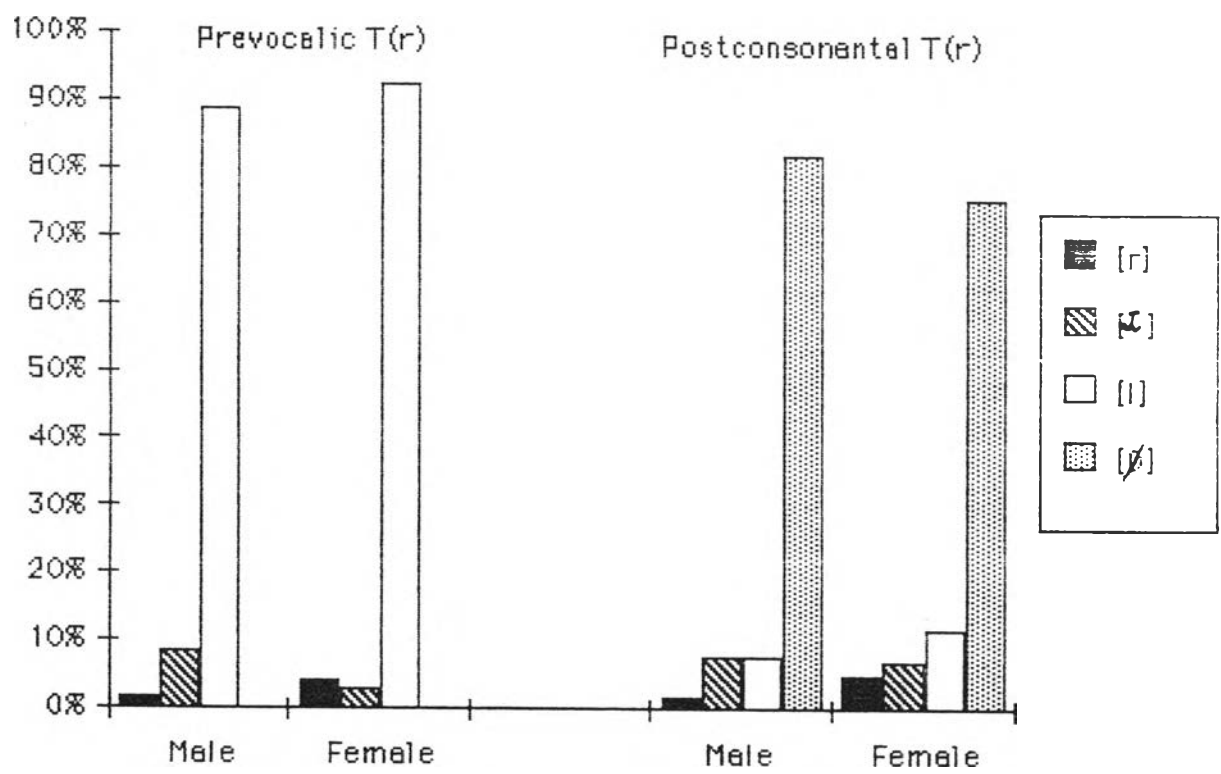


Figure 5.1 - Frequency of T(r) variants by sex

the r-coloured variants, is greater than the females' (11% as against 7.5%). While the males make greater use of [ɹ] than [r], the females show a reversed higher rate of [r] than [ɹ]. The males' pattern of variation follows the general tendency as presented in 4.7.1, i.e. [l] > [ɹ] > [r]. The females' is different, however, i.e. [l] > [r] > [ɹ].

In clusters, both sex groups use r-lessness extensively and the females use it less often than the males. The former still use [r] more frequently than the latter. The use of [ɹ] is approximately equal. The female speakers' pattern of cluster T(r) variation agrees with the general norm, i.e. [∅] > [l] > [ɹ] > [r], as identified in 4.7.2. The males, however, produce a different pattern, [∅] > [ɹ] / [l] > [r]. Their rate of [ɹ] and [l] is equal.

The differences in the use of T(r) variants between male and female speakers are in both cases statistically significant. The data support the hypothesis that females use the prestigious T(r) variant more than males. On the other hand, however, male speakers have a higher rate of [ɹ], and r-coloured variants, in the prevocalic position than female.

### 5.1.2 Variation of the T(r) by job level

As can be seen from Table 5.2 and Figure 5.2, each job level has a high frequency of prevocalic [l] and [ø] in clusters. In the prevocalic position, the speakers of the managerial group (Job level I) are distinct from those in the other job levels. They make greater use of the prestigious [r]. Their rate of the stigmatized [l] is much lower. In addition, they pronounce [ɹ] much more frequently than the others.

The two middle status groups share an identical pattern of prevocalic T(r) usage. Their rate of [r] and [ɹ] is equally minimal. Their T(r) pattern, [l]>[ɹ]/[r], thus deviates from the norm.

The lowest status speakers show a similar pattern to the highest job level. They have a higher frequency of [ɹ] than [r]. Their use of [r] is equal to the two middle ranking job levels but their rate of [ɹ] is greater. The combined percentages of [r] and [ɹ], the r-coloured variants, of each job level would show that the lowest job level use the two variants more than the two middle job levels (Job level I-18.7%, Job level II-5%, Job level III-4.2% and Job level IV-9.3%).

Table 5.2 - Frequency of T(r) variants by job level

Prevocalic T(r)

	Job level I		Job level II		Job level III		Job level IV	
[r]	6.2%	67	2.6%	29	2.0%	22	2.5%	25
[ɹ]	12.5%	137	2.4%	27	2.2%	24	6.8%	70
[l]	81.3%	886	95.0%	1,071	95.8%	1,042	90.7%	928
Total	100%	1,090	100%	1,127	100%	1,088	100%	1,023

Postconsonantal T(r)

	Job level I		Job level II		Job level III		Job level IV	
[r]	3.3%	19	4.6%	22	1.8%	9	2.7%	14
[ɹ]	9.4%	55	4.2%	20	7.5%	37	9.5%	51
[l]	12.9%	75	8.6%	41	11.1%	55	5.2%	28
[∅]	74.4%	434	82.6%	393	79.6%	394	82.6%	443
Total	100%	583	100%	476	100%	495	100%	536

 $\chi^2$  (prevocalic) = 161.3 df=6 p<0.01

 $\chi^2$  (postconsonantal) = 40.4 df=9 p<0.01

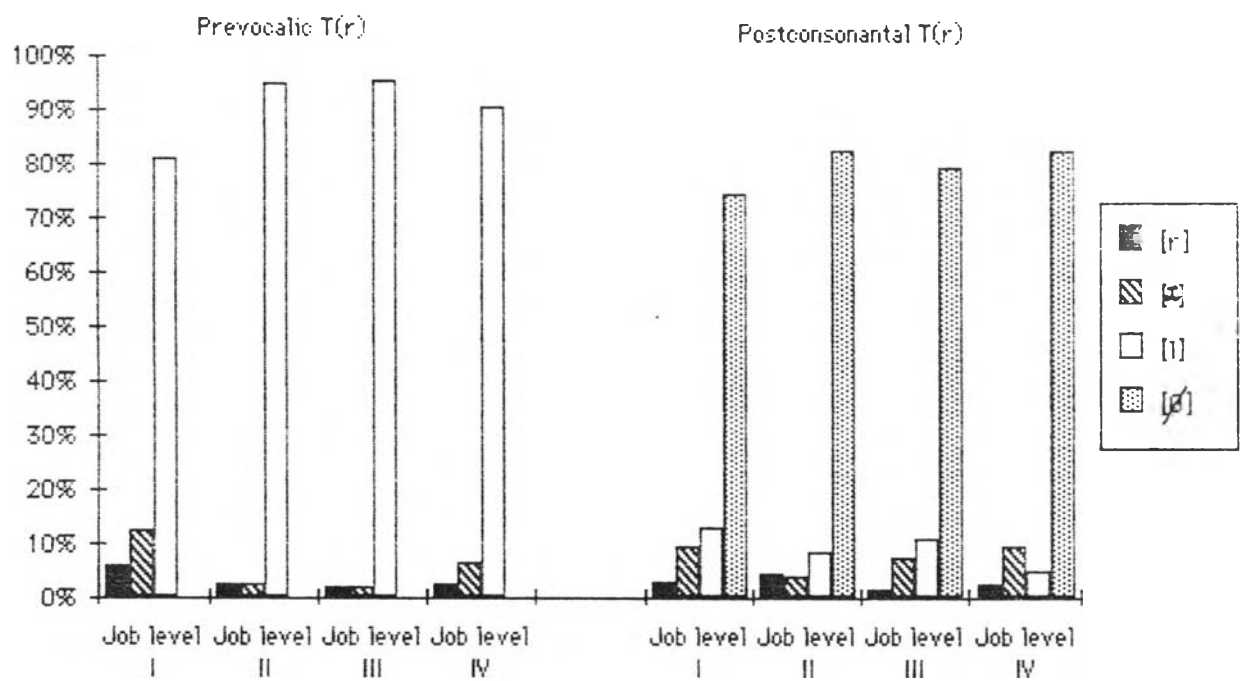


Figure 5.2 - Frequency of T(r) variants by job level

In clusters, the supervisory (Job level II) and the semi-skilled (Job level IV) speakers make greater use of the prestigious [r] than the managerial (Job level I) and the skilled (Job level III), respectively. In addition, the semi-skilled are equal to the managerial in the use of [ɹ]. Their rate of [ɹ] is greater than the two middle status groups. The managerial speakers have the lowest rate of r-reduction and the highest rate of [l].

The pattern of T(r) variation of Job level I and Job level III conforms to the general norm. The pattern of Job level III is identical to its prevocalic variation, with an equal use of [ɹ] and [r] trailing behind [l]. The lowest job level has yet to offer another pattern. They use [ɹ] more often than [l] and [r]. In short, the patterns of the supervisory and the semi-skilled speakers are the two groups that depart from the norm, as can be seen from the following schematic representations:

Job level II: [∅]>[l]>[ɹ]/[r]

Job level IV: [∅]>[ɹ]>[l]>[r]

When the postconsonantal r-coloured variants [r] and [ɹ] of each group are combined, the score of the lowest job level is clearly identified to that of the highest job level: Job level I-12.7%, Job level II-8.8%, Job level III-9.3% and Job level IV-12.2%. The data presented seem to



suggest that there exists a kind of hypercorrection on the part of the lowest job level.

The notion of hypercorrection has been a topic of interest among sociolinguists. Various views on hypercorrection has been proposed by different scholars. Labov (1960:88) uses hypercorrection in the sense that "the lower middle class speakers go beyond the highest status group in their tendency to use the forms considered correct and appropriate for formal style". Hypercorrection in this sense corresponds to what Wolfram and Fasold (1974:87-88) call "statistical hypercorrection". Wolfram and Fasold differentiate two types of hypercorrection: statistical hypercorrection and structural hypercorrection. They explain that in the former case, the structural placement of forms follows that of the more prestigious groups, but the relative frequency of the forms exceeds the norms of the more prestigious social group. Statistical hypercorrection results when the lower middle class wants to attain upper middle class status, and so strives to emulate the upper middle class and attain equal status. According to Wolfram and Fasold, this striving makes it very conscious of the external reference group with which it has contact but by which it is not completely accepted. The linguistic insecurity of this position is reflected in the fact that this group uses

frequency levels higher than the more secure upper middle class when speech is in primary focus.

On the other hand, structural hypercorrection results when an overtly favoured feature is not thoroughly under the control of the speaker. He realizes that the feature is socially prestigious but is not aware of all the linguistic constraints on its use. This second type of hypercorrection is what Beebe (1974) and Treyakul (1986) refer to when they discuss the use of [r] for (l) in Thai by their informants. Beebe (1974:355) defines "hypercorrection" as "an instance where an individual believes a linguistic rule has applied in a case where it has not actually applied".

In the present study, hypercorrection refers to the situation in which lower status speakers use the prestigious variant or an in-between status variant more frequently than higher status speakers. This is an extension of the concept of statistical hypercorrection. In particular, it applies to the use of [r] by the lowest job level who wish to attain upper status. [r] is not the prestigious T(r) variant but it is in English. In Thai, it is less prestigious but still preferable to [l]. The semi-skilled speakers, working in an English speaking environment, may be aware of this fact and thus transfer

it directly from English into Thai. As a result, their use of [ɹ] is higher than the two middle status. Using [ɹ] to replace a portion of [l] helps them move closer towards the highest status position.

The differences in the use of T(r) variants among the four job levels are statistically significant in both prevocalic position and in clusters. However, the data do not totally support the hypothesis that speakers of a higher job level use more prestigious T(r) variant than those of a lower job level. The strongest generalization that can be made here is that the highest status speakers have a higher rate of the r-coloured variants than each of the three lower job levels.

### 5.1.3 Variation of the T(r) by English language

As can be seen from Table 5.3 and Figure 5.3, all the three types of English language background have the same general pattern of prevocalic T(r) usage. Besides, they are on the same par in the use of each prevocalic T(r) variant, each of which is equal to the average of all speakers (Table 4.7). The speakers who have been more exposed to spoken English do not show any difference in the use of [ɹ], the standard E(r), from any other groups when speaking Thai. There are no statistical differences in the use of prevocalic T(r). This is evidence that [ɹ] has become the norm of the subjects, regardless of their exposure to English. For the speakers most exposed to English, it could be possible that this has always been their pattern of T(r) usage before and after their residence abroad. The data of the prevocalic position do not support the hypothesis that speakers with more English language background would use more prestigious T(r) variant than those with less English language background.

A different pattern of T (r) usage emerges in the postconsonantal position. Though each group has r-deletion in the highest frequency, none of their variation patterns conform to the general norm. The speakers with an extensive English language background

Table 5.3 - Frequency of T(r) variants by  
English language background

Prevocalic T(r)

English language background						
	Type I		Type II		Type III	
[r]	3.4%	28	3.5%	65	3.1%	50
[ɹ]	5.9%	49	6.6%	122	5.3%	87
[l]	90.7%	754	89.9%	1,669	91.6%	1,504
Total	100%	831	100%	1,856	100%	1,641

Postconsonantal T(r)

	Type I		Type II		Type III	
[r]	4.5%	22	2.6%	22	2.6%	20
[ɹ]	14.2%	69	2.6%	22	9.3%	72
[l]	11.6%	56	10.1%	84	7.6%	59
[∅]	69.7%	338	84.6%	704	80.5%	622
Total	100%	485	100%	832	100%	773

$\chi^2$  (prevocalic) = 2.9 df=4 ns.

$\chi^2$  (postconsonantal) = 74.1 df=6 p<0.01

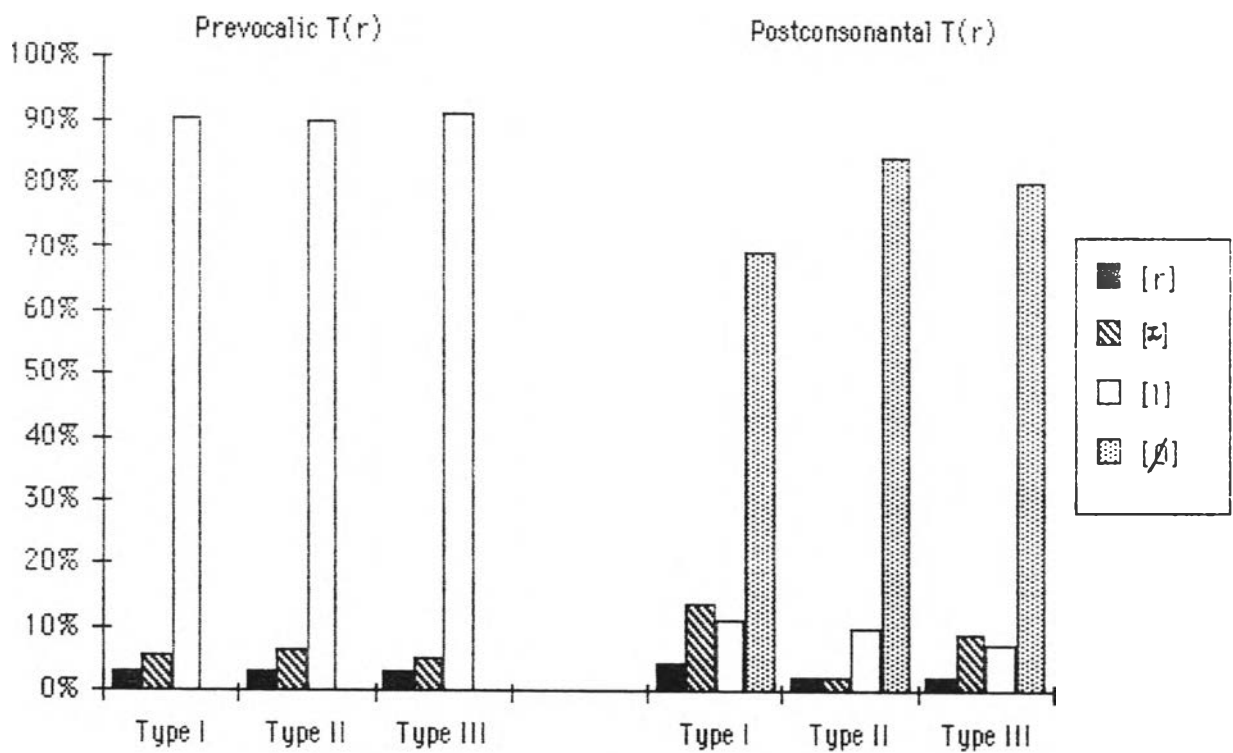


Figure 5.3 - Frequency of T(r) variants by English language background

(Type I) and the speakers with the least English exposure (Type III) have a higher rate of [ɹ] than [l]. On the other hand, the job experienced group has an equal rate of [ɹ] and [l].

In terms of frequency of the variants, the speakers most exposed to English show supremacy over the other two groups. They have a higher rate of [r], [ɹ] and [l]. At the same time, they become the least [∅] users (69.7%). Their performance is all the more interesting since their use of r-reduction is 10% less than the average rate of [∅] of all the subjects (4.5.1). Due to their extensive English exposure, they resort to [ɹ] for the T(r) as their first choice, ahead of [l]. As a result, the transfer of the standard E(r), [ɹ], into Thai is most obvious in Type I group.

The job experienced speakers (Type II) make an equal use of [ɹ] and [r]. They also pronounce r-lessness most extensively. Their pattern of postconsonantal T(r) is the same as that of the supervisory job level discussed in 5.1.2.

When compared to the job experienced speakers, the subjects with the least English speaking experience

(Type III) have an equal rate of [r] but a lower frequency of r-deletion. Their use of [ɹ] is three times greater than the job-experienced. Their choice of [ɹ] for T(r) clusters can be the result of borrowing of the prestigious E(r) variant which they use when speaking English at work. Although being relatively new to the job, they are more aware of the social value associated with each variant. Their pattern of T(r) usage moves them closer to Type I.

Thus, none of the three types of English language background have their T(r) cluster patterns identified with the norm. The pattern of Type I and Type III is [∅]>[ɹ]>[l]>[r], and that of Type II is [∅]>[l]>[ɹ]/[r].

The difference in the use of postconsonantal T(r) variants as related to English language background is statistically significant. However, the data do not totally support the hypothesis that speakers with more English language background would use more prestigious T(r) variant than those with less English language background. The strongest generalization that can be made is that speakers with extensive English background use more prestigious T(r) variant than each of the groups with less English exposure.



In sum, the pattern of T(r) variation varies when each social factor is taken into consideration. It is not always as neat as the general norm shared by all subjects. The analysis results show that each social variable is related to the T(r) variation. The results also reveal that hypercorrection and borrowing of [a] variant from English play a role in T(r) variation.

## 5.2 Social variation of the E(r)

The social variation of the T(r) has been presented in 5.1 and the social variation of the E(r) will now be presented.

### 5.2.1 Variation of the E(r) by sex

As can be seen from Table 5.4 and Figure 5.4. in the prevocalic position. both sex groups show the same pattern of E(r) variation with a higher rate of [ɹ] than [l], followed by [r]. The females use [ɹ] and [r] more frequently than the males. Conversely the former pronounce [l] less frequently than the latter.

In clusters, both sex groups show the same pattern too, with a higher rate of [ɹ] than r-lessness, followed by [l] and [r]. However, the males' use of [ɹ] is lower than the females'. Conversely the former make a greater use of r-reduction than the latter.

The differences of E(r) usage between males and females are statistically significant in each case. Therefore, the hypothesis that the female subjects use more prestigious E(r) variants than the male is supported.

Table 5.4 - Frequency of E(r) variants by sex

Prevocalic E(r)

	Male		Female	
[r]	1.7%	12	4.1%	33
[ɹ]	61.2%	430	67.5%	543
[l]	37.1%	260	28.4%	228
Total	100%	702	100%	804

Postconsonantal E(r)

	Male		Female	
[r]	0.9%	5	0.6%	3
[ɹ]	42.1%	237	56.0%	269
[l]	17.4%	98	13.3%	64
[∅]	39.6%	223	30.1%	145
Total	100%	563	110%	481

$\chi^2$  (prevocalic) = 18 df=2 p<0.01

$\chi^2$  (postconsonantal) = 19.8 df=3 p<0.01

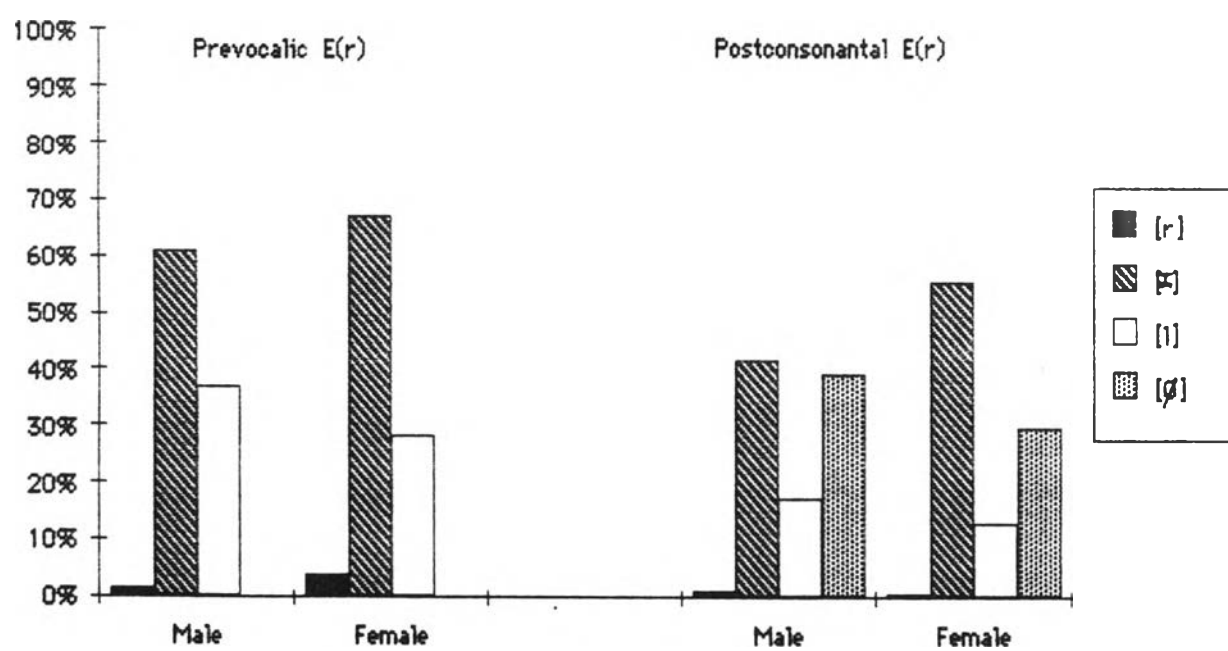


Figure 5.4 - Frequency of E(r) variants by sex

### 5.2.2 Variation of the E(r) by job level

As shown in Table 5.5 and Figure 5.5, the pattern of prevocalic E(r) is the same for all the job levels. The rate of each variant is different, however. That is, there is a tendency for the frequency of [ɹ] to decrease from the highest to the lowest job level. Conversely there is a progressive increase in the frequency of the stigmatized [l] from the highest to the lowest job level.

In clusters, the frequency in the use of [ɹ] also gradually decreases from the highest to the lowest job level. Conversely there is also a progressive increase in the use of the stigmatized [ø] from the highest to the lowest job level. The frequencies of [l] in clusters are relatively equal among the four job levels. Both the patterns and frequency of E(r) variant of the two middle job levels are the same. The pattern of the lowest job level is different from the others. Their use of [ø] accounts for more than half of all the occurrences in the postconsonantal position. As a consequence, their rate of [ɹ] is much lower than the stigmatized r-lessness.

The differences in the use of E(r) variants among the four groups of speakers are statistically significant in each case. The data support the hypothesis that

Table 5.5 - Frequency of E(r) variants by job level

Prevocalic E(r)

	Job level I		Job level II		Job level III		Job level IV	
[r]	2.0%	10	5.9%	20	2.5%	9	2.0%	6
[ɹ]	81.4%	416	56.8%	192	58.6%	208	51.9%	157
[l]	16.6%	85	37.3%	126	38.9%	138	46.0%	139
Total	100%	511	100%	338	100%	355	100%	302

Postconsonantal E(r)

	Job level I		Job level II		Job level III		Job level IV	
[r]	2.2%	8	-	-	-	-	-	-
[ɹ]	56.7%	211	49.2%	131	49.0%	99	31.9%	65
[l]	14.5%	54	17.7%	47	14.4%	29	15.6%	32
[∅]	26.6%	99	33.1%	88	36.6%	74	52.5%	107
Total	100%	372	100%	266	100%	202	100%	204

 $\chi^2$  (prevocalic) = 110.9 df=6 p<0.01

 $\chi^2$  (postconsonantal) = 43.1 df=6 p<0.01

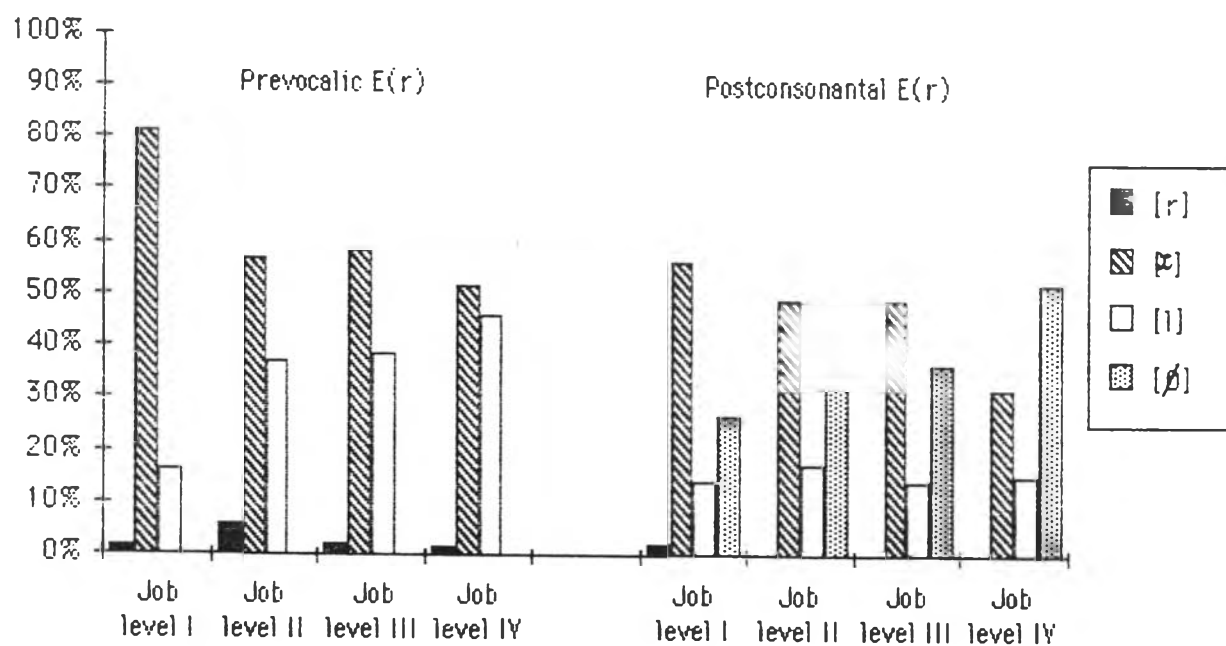


Figure 5.5 - Frequency of E(r) variants by job level

speakers of a higher job level use more standard E(r) variant than those of a lower job level.

The data presented in Table 5.5 and Figure 5.5 also show that the two middle job levels share a lot of similarities. Their percentages in the use of [J] and [l] in both positions and [ø] in clusters are closer to each other than to either their higher or lower job level. Their patterns and frequencies of E(r) variants tend to suggest that they belong to one same group distinct from the highest and the lowest job level.

### 5.2.3 Variation of the E(r) by English language background

In Table 5.6 and Figure 5.6, a much higher percentage of [J] is associated with the speakers with an extensive English language background in both positions. On the other hand, for the employees who started to speak English at workplace, irrespective of the number of years of work experience, their frequency of [J] is virtually equal in both positions, i.e. slightly more than half in the prevocalic position and less than half in clusters. In Table 5.6 and Figure 5.6, the stigmatized E(r) variants of the respective position show a similar gradient pattern. The percentage of the prevocalic [l] and postconsonantal [ø] gradually increases from the subjects with an extensive



Table 5.6 - Frequency of E(r) variants by  
English language background

Prevocalic E(r)

English language background						
	Type I		Type II		Type III	
[r]	0.3%	1	6.1%	37	1.4%	7
[ɹ]	87.4%	348	55.9%	338	57.1%	287
[l]	12.3%	49	38.0%	230	41.5%	209
Total	100%	398	100%	605	100%	503

Postconsonantal E(r)

	Type I		Type II		Type III	
[r]	1.8%	5	0.7%	3	-	-
[ɹ]	67.4%	186	41.4%	181	42.0%	139
[l]	10.5%	29	22.4%	98	10.6%	35
[∅]	20.3%	56	35.5%	155	47.4%	157
Total	100%	276	100%	437	100%	331

$\chi^2$  (prevocalic) = 146.3 df=4 p<0.01

$\chi^2$  (postconsonantal) = 82.2 df=4 p<0.01

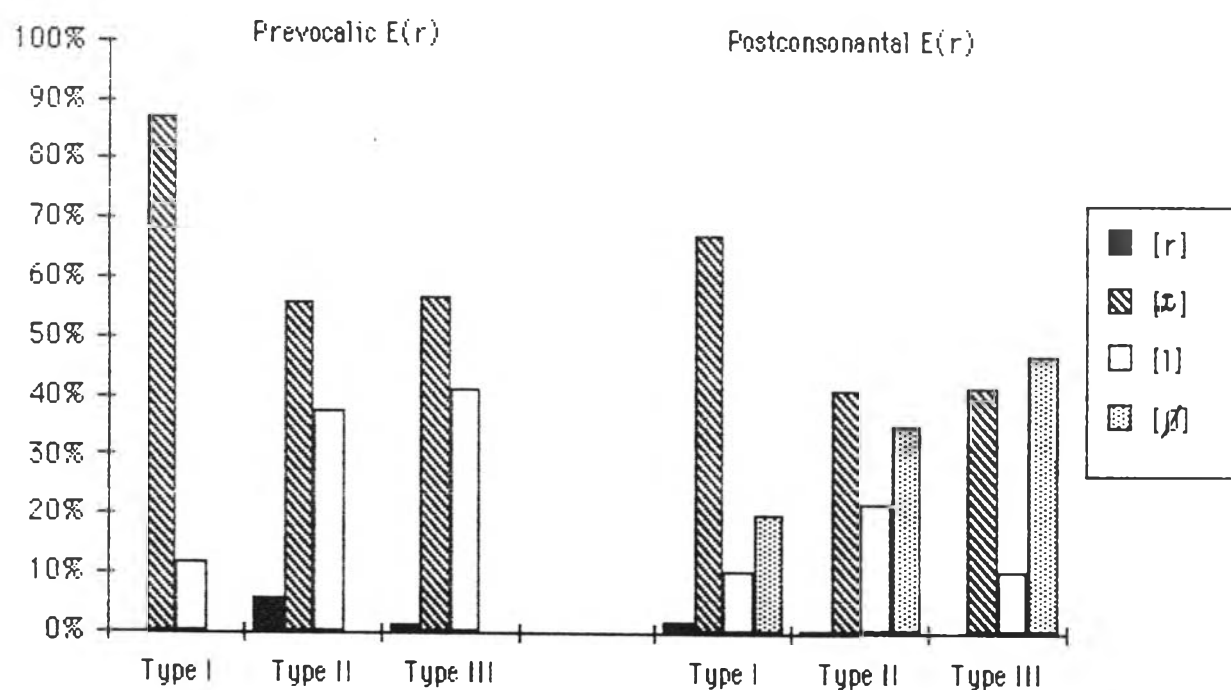


Figure 5.6 - Frequency of E(r) variants by English language background



English language background (Type I) to the least exposed to English (Type III).

The pattern of E(r) variation in the prevocalic position of all the three types is the same with a greater use of [ɹ] than [l]. The speakers with least exposure to English show a slightly higher rate of [ɹ] than the job experienced, however.

In clusters, the pattern of the speakers least exposed to English departs from that of the other two types. Their rate of [ø] exceeds [ɹ]. With regard to the other two groups, their patterns conform to the general norm but the difference between [ɹ] and [ø] of the job-experienced speakers is much smaller than those with extensive English exposure.

The differences in the use of E(r) variants among the three groups of English language background are in both cases statistically significant. Since the frequencies of [ɹ] of the two groups of less English language exposure in both positions are approximately equal, the data do not totally support the hypothesis that the speakers with more English language background use more standard E(r) variants than those with less English language background. The strongest generalization is that

speakers with extensive English background make a greater use of standard E(r) than those with less English exposure.

To conclude, the patterns of E(r) variation are related to each social factor. Most of the hypotheses are confirmed by the data. It is noticed that speakers of the lower job level and speakers with less English exposure tend to use more stigmatized prevocalic [l] and [ø] in clusters than other social groups. Moreover, the findings seem to suggest that the two middle job levels are not from each other. Likewise, the two groups of subjects with less English exposure are similar as far as their E(r) variation patterns are concerned.

### 5.3 Summary

In general, the variation patterns of the T(r) and E(r) of most subject groups are similar to what have been presented in Chapter 4. That is, in Thai the most common variants used are [l] in the prevocalic position and [ø] in clusters. [r] which is the prestigious T(r) variant occurs least frequently. In English, the prestigious [ɹ] occurs most frequently in both positions of occurrence.

The findings reveal that in nearly all cases, each selected social variable has an effect on the T(r) and E(r) variations. In Thai, female speakers have a higher rate of prestigious T(r) variant than male. Speakers of the highest job level use r-coloured T(r) variants more frequently than those in the lower job level. Speakers with extensive English language background make greater use of [r] in clusters than the other two groups with less English language background. There are no differences in the use of the T(r) in the prevocalic position among the three types of English language background, however.

In English, female speakers have a higher rate of [ɹ] than male. Speakers of a higher job level use [ɹ] more frequently than those in a lower job level. Speakers with extensive English language background make a greater

use of [ɹ] than the other two groups with less English language background. As far as the rate of the prestigious T(r) and E(r) variants is concerned, the two middle job levels belong to the same group. Likewise, there is no difference between the two groups of speakers with less English language background.

The data analysis show that most social groups make great use of [ɹ] in English but in Thai [ɹ] trails far behind prevocalic [l] and [ø] in clusters. On the other hand, most of the social groups do not use the stigmatized [l] and [ø] in English as frequently as they do in Thai. Comparisons of variations of the T(r) and E(r) as related to each social factor will be presented in the next chapter (7.1-7.3).