

Chapter III

Research methodology

This chapter deals with the research methodology used in this study.

3.1 Subjects and place of data collection

The subjects in this study consist of 58 Bangkok Thai speakers of Thai nationality who are employees of three first class hotels in Bangkok. They have been residing in Bangkok for no less than ten years and they do not speak any other dialects or minority languages at their place of residence. Their work involves face-to-face interaction with hotel guests. Thus most of them are drawn from three departments: food and beverage, front office and house keeping. Table 3.1 shows distribution of the subjects by sex and four job levels. After interviews with the subjects (see 3.3), information on their job positions and English speaking experiences were obtained. In Table 3.2, the subjects are classified by sex, job level and English language background. Their actual job positions classified by job level and hotel department are presented in Table 3.2.

Table 3.1 - Distribution of subjects by sex
and job level

Job level	Male		Female		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
I: Professional and managerial	8	27.6%	7	24.1%	15	25.9%
II: Supervisory	7	24.1%	7	24.1%	14	24.1%
III: Skilled	7	24.1%	7	24.1%	14	24.1%
IV: Semi-skilled	7	24.1%	8	27.6%	15	25.9%
Total	29	100%	29	100%	58	100%

Table 3.2-Distribution of subjects by sex, job level and English language background

Type of English language background	Male				Female				Total
	Job level*				Job level				
	I	II	III	IV	I	II	III	IV	
I-Extensive	2	1	1	-	5	1	2	-	12
II-Job-experienced	6	5	3	1	2	5	1	-	23
III-Beginner	-	1	3	6	-	1	4	8	23
Total	8	7	7	7	7	7	7	8	58

*Note: Job level I: Professional and managerial

Job level II: Supervisory

Job level III: Skilled

Job level IV: Semi-skilled

Table 3.3 - Subjects' positions by job level
and hotel department

Job level	Hotel department			
	Food & beverage	Front office	House- keeping	Others
I	Beverage manager	Business centre manager	Assistant executive housekeeper	Assistant manager
	Catering sales manager	Assistant front office manager		Room sales manager
	Catering sales executive			
	Room service manager			
	Banquet sales manager			

Table 3.3 (continued) - Subjects' positions
by job level and hotel department

Job level	Hotel department			
	Food & beverage	Front office	House- keeping	Others
I	Food and beverage outlet manager			
II	Assistant food and beverage manager	Reception supervisor Guest relation supervisor Reception shift leader	Assistant Housekeeper Senior butler Floor supervisor Housekeeping training coordinator	Assistant chief security

Table 3.3 (continued) - Subjects' positions
by job level and hotel department

Job	Hotel department			
level	Food & beverage	Front office	House- keeping	Others
III	Captain	Front office cashier Front office reservations clerk Receptionist Guest relation officer	Floor butler Floor steward	
IV	Waiter & waitress	Baggage attendant	Room attendant Room boy Room maid	

Three hotels were chosen as places of data collection. They are:

<u>Name of the hotel</u>	<u>Address</u>
1. The Regent of Bangkok	155 Rajadamri Road, Bangkok
2. Dusit Thani Hotel	946 Rama IV Road, Bangkok
3. Grand Hyatt Erawan Bangkok	494 Rajadamri Road. Bangkok

The three hotels were purposely selected on these criteria: they belong to "Group 1", as classified by Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) on the basis of room rate structure. By "Group 1" is meant those hotels whose daily room rate is 3,000 baht and over. According to TAT (Feb., 1992), the minimum daily rate for the Regent of Bangkok, Dusit Thani and Grand Hyatt Erawan Bangkok was 5,082 baht, 5,767 baht and 4,500 baht, respectively, well above the TAT set criteria. They are all business hotels of international standard and world renown. The Regent of Bangkok, for example, was in 1992 ranked by Institutional Investor the ninth best hotel of the world. Due to the fact that they are of high reputation, the standard of service is expected to be excellent in every possible aspect, including their local employees' ability to speak English.

3.2 Data collection instruments

3.2.1 a Sony Walkman Professional stereo cassette-corder (WM-D3) with an external stereo microphone.

3.2.2 60-minute cassette tapes; each tape was used to record one informant.

3.3 Data collection procedures

Contacts were made and permission sought from the managements of the hotels for data collection. When the permission was granted, an appointment was made with the training or personnel manager who would arrange time for the researcher to interview subjects. The subjects were selected by the manager on the basis of particular qualifications as specified in 3.1. In terms of research methodology, the sampling technique used in this study is called purposive sampling. According to Bailey (1978:83), in purposive sampling "the researcher uses his or her own judgment about which respondents to choose, and picks only those who best meet the purposes of the study."

Each subject was individually interviewed by the researcher in Thai for about 15 minutes. Then a research assistant, a "farang" or Westener native speaker of English, an expatriate university lecturer, interviewed

the same person in English for the same length of time, during which the researcher would leave the scene so that the subject might feel more at ease to express him/herself in English with no other Thai present. A native speaker of English was employed as the interviewer so as to simulate subjects' face-to-face communication with foreigners in their real-life work situations.

The subjects were not informed of the real purpose of the study but were instead told that the interview was aimed at finding out their background in English language learning since their childhood. The conversation topics were mainly concerned with the subject's biographical information (e.g. name, age, place of birth, place of residence, marital status), educational background, languages acquired, English learning experience, work experience and their ambitions or plans for the future. Like Beebe's (1980:381), there was no attempt to elicit specific words or sounds either in Thai or in English. Thus, the number of tokens for each phonological variable vary with the speaker.

The tape-recorded interviews were conducted in the training room of the hotel or in some cases, in the training manager's office when the training room was not available. No other person was present during the

interviews. The data collection was conducted in March and April, 1992.

3.4 Problems found in data collection

3.4.1 The problem of getting permission for data collection

In the earliest stage of locating places of data collection, a number of leading "group 1" hotels in Bangkok, including the three selected, were contacted and asked for permission to collect data from their employees but some of them refused for various reasons. Eventually the three hotels were the only ones willing to offer cooperation.

3.4.2 The problem of subjects

Altogether 74 employees supplied by the hotels were interviewed but a number of them had to be left out from the study for different reasons. Some employees were not qualified subjects because they spoke dialects or a minority language (Chinese) at their residence and some had been in Bangkok for less than ten years, the minimum length of time required in this study. Some were non-direct guest contact hotel employees, e.g. a typist. Some were not included in the study simply because they were not able to carry on with a conversation in English.

Most of those rejected were semi-skilled or Level IV employees, however. In sum. seventy-four subjects were interviewed, sixteen rejected, leaving fifty-eight subjects distributed as shown in Table 3.3 above.

3.5 Data processing

The first ten minutes of each subject's recorded conversation in Thai as well as in English were transcribed into written texts of the respective language, and all the Thai and English words with the T(r) and E(r) variables occurring in the prevocalic and postconsonantal position were underlined (see extracts in Appendix A). With regard to the (r) in English loanwords in Thai, only those with an entry in the Royal Thai Academy's Dictionary (1982) were included for analysis. Thus, the word /maiø khr:ø fo:nø/ ไมโครโฟน "microphone", for example, with an entry in the dictionary, was included in the study but the word /pro:ø kræmø/ โปรแกรม "programme" was not. The (r) in proper nouns of Thai origin used in English conversational context, e.g. Benjarong (the name of a restaurant in Dusit Thani Hotel) and Rita (a Thai person's name), were discarded from the study.

3.6 Data analysis

The following steps were taken in the analysis of the data:

3.6.1 Tally the frequency of each variant of (r) in Thai and (r) in English spoken by the subjects, to find out the total number of identified occurrences of each variant in the Thai and English texts.

3.6.2 Tally the frequency of each variant of (r) in Thai and (r) in English by three separate social variables: sex, job level and English language background to see whether or not each single social variable would have any relationship with the variants of each phonological variable.

3.6.3 Tally the frequency of each variant of (r) in Thai and (r) in English by one social variable controlling for the other two social variables. This is to find out whether or not the social variable would have any relationship with the use of variants when the other two social variables are controlled.

3.6.4 In each tally above (3.6.1 - 3.6.3), calculate the percentage of each variant of the Thai (r) and English (r). This step is to reduce all the figures to percentages to make the comparisons much easier.

3.6.5 In each study case above (3.6.1 - 3.6.3), apply the chi-square test (χ^2) to find out whether or not

the social variable(s) concerned has any significant relationship with the phonological variables at the one per cent level of significance ($p < 0.01$). The formula of χ^2 is

$$\chi^2 = \frac{\sum (O - E)^2}{E}$$

(Butler 1985:112-123; Blalock 1981:279-292). For further details of the chi-square, see Appendix E.

3.6.6 Compare the percentage of each variant of the T(r) and the E(r) by three separate social variables: sex, job level and English language background to find out whether or not the T(r) and E(r) variants have the same or different variation pattern.

3.6.7 Compare the percentage of each variant of the T(r) and E(r) by three combined social variables to find out whether or not the T(r) and E(r) variants have the same or different variation pattern under such conditions.

3.6.8 In each comparison (3.6.6 - 3.6.7), calculate the Spearman rank correlation (r_s) of each T(r) variant and its English counterpart in the prevocalic and postconsonantal position to see if there is any significant relationship between each pair of variants at the one per cent level of significance ($p < 0.01$). The

so-called Spearman rank correlation (r_s) is defined as

$$r_s = 1 - \frac{6\sum d^2}{N(N^2-1)}$$

(Butler 1985:137-145). For further details of Spearman rank correlation, see Appendix C.