ABSTRACT

I.D. No.: 5729401

Key Words: PRONUNCIATION, WORD-FINAL CONSONANT, INTELLIGIBILITY, INTERLANGUAGE, NATIVE, NON-NATIVE

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Dissertation Title: A STUDY OF INTERLANGUAGE WORD-FINAL CONSONANT PRONUNCIATION BY VIETNAMESE LEARNERS AND THE DEGREE OF INTELLIGIBILITY AS JUDGED BY NATIVE AND NON-NATIVE ENGLISH SPEAKERS

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This research investigates word-final consonants pronounced by Vietnamese learners and the degree of intelligibility as evaluated by native and non-native English speakers. Both the quantitative approach and the qualitative approach were used. There were two groups of students and thirty-five judges of the intelligibility. This research had two smaller studies. Research instruments of the production study were the English language experience questionnaire, the wordlist reading, the text reading, and the picture description. The current research adapted Nguyen and Brouha’s (1998) framework and Sato’s (1984) to analyze the data. In the perception study, research tools were the non-native English speaker background questionnaire, the native English speaker background questionnaire, and the intelligibility test. Moreover, Dang’s (2018) framework was adapted to become an analysis framework of this study.

The findings showed that regarding the single word-final consonants, the final consonant /s/ was pronounced the best, followed by the word-final consonant /ʃ/. The final consonants /v, ð, z, ðʒ, p, l, d, lp, vz, nts, ldz, nd, sk/ were problematic. Regarding the
single word-final consonants, the students’ pronunciation was categorized into targets and variations. Among these variations, the substitution was the most common, followed by devoicing and deletion. As to the word-final clusters, the informants’ production was classified into targets and modification strategies. The informants omitted one or two consonants (not all consonants) the most frequently and the reduction was the most common followed by omission plus devoicing and substitution of all consonants. Furthermore, in respect of the single word-final consonants, there were the most targets in the wordlist reading, followed by the picture description and by the text reading. With reference to the word-final clusters, the wordlist reading had the most targets, followed by the text reading, and by the picture description.

There were similarities and differences in word-final consonant production between the L-group and the H-group. The similarities were in production categories and in problematic final consonants which were /ʒ, ʤ, d, ð, v, l, p, ldz, vz, lp, nd/. Moreover, these two groups had the word-final consonant /s/, which was performed the best. As regards production tasks, both groups had similarities in rank order of tasks based on targets as to the single final consonants and the final clusters. However, there were some differences in the number of tokens of production categories between these two groups. With reference to the production tasks, the L-group was different from the H-group in the number of targets in the same task.

In respect of the intelligibility, the Vietnamese listeners gave the most targets in both groups compared to other listeners. More importantly, the judges from native and the non-native English speaking countries recognized more word-final consonants in the H-group than those in the L-group. In addition, the research had some implications for teaching and learning pronunciation, material design, and curriculum design. Finally, it mentioned few limitations and suggested some future areas of research.