

# Thai Language Pronunciation Problems of Chinese Overseas Students of Maejo University, Chiang Mai, Thailand

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## Abstract

This study aimed to investigate Thai pronunciation of Chinese overseas students from Guangxi Mandala in China. The participants consisted of 43 Chinese students of School of Tourism Development of Maejo University, obtained by purposive sampling. There were four series of data collection: 1) consonant pronunciation, 2) vowel pronunciation, 3) tone pronunciation, and 4) pronunciation of words with a final letter. Results of the study revealed that the research population could pronounce eight Thai consonants correctly, out of 44 Thai consonants (18.2%). The following consonants were found wrong pronunciation most: /รจว/ (58%), /thจว/ (33%), and /สจว/ (28%), respectively.

Regarding the pronunciation of 28 Thai vowels, 29% were right, while 71% were wrong. The most wrongly pronounced was สระเอะ /e/ (53%), สระโอะ /o/ (44%), and สระไอ /ay/ (30%) respectively. According to the pronunciation of tone, the participants were able to pronounce the mid tone /ˊ/ correctly for one hundred percent. However, the raising tone /ˊˊ/ was mispronounced the most. For tonal conjugation of high tone consonants, the participants mispronounced falling-rising tone as mid tone the most (11.6%). For tonal conjugation of low tone consonants, they mispronounced 1st Thai tonal mark rising-falling the most (25.6%). Regarding the pronunciation of words having a final letter, the following mistakes were found the most: /-k/ (13.2%), /-p/ (6.6%), and /-m/ (5.1%), respectively.

Results of the study could be utilized in terms of the following aspects: 1) classroom problem solving; 2) improvement of drills and form of teaching/learning

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facilitation on Thai language pronunciation/speaking skill in the following semester; and 3) basic data used for the preparation of Thai language pronunciation and listening/speaking improvement course which is a core course of Thai Language for Foreigners Curricular Program (New Curricular Program, 2018).

**Keywords:** Thai Language, Pronunciation Problems, Chinese Overseas Students

## **Introduction**

Thai Language for Foreigners (LR 032) is a General Education course having been offered to overseas students since 2007 by Faculty of Liberal Arts, Maejo University. It aims to improve the four skills of Thai language: 1) listening comprehension 2) pronunciation practice and reading for main ideas; 3) speaking about knowledge/experience and expressing opinion and 4) writing at word, sentence, and paragraph levels. At present, students enrolled in this course are overseas students of School of Tourism Development. However, Most of them are Chinese students who come from Guangxi Mandala, China.

According to the previous teaching/learning facilitation, there are several problems in using Thai language for communication, especially on speaking. It was found that the students had a problem in unclear Thai language pronunciation which resulted in misunderstanding and mistakes in writing accordingly. Therefore, identifying problems in Thai language pronunciation among these students are timely and urgent. This study aimed to investigate such problems particularly on the pronunciation of consonants, vowels, and tones. This could be a database for finding guidelines for solving pronunciation problem and developing speaking Thai among overseas students, especially Chinese ones.

## **Literature review**

Wang Feng (2001, p. 3) stated that Beijing Foreign Language University was the first university that has offered Thai as a foreign language course for 34 years but there was not much significant research relevant to learning and teaching. So, he studied about ability of 4<sup>th</sup> year Thai-majored Chinese students of Beijing Foreign Language University (Thesis title: Ability in Thai Language Usage of the 4<sup>th</sup> Year Students of the Beijing Foreign Language University) and studied it in order to know several problems found during the teaching and development of learning to be more efficient. The result revealed that ability of most of the 4<sup>th</sup> year students were in very good and good level, ranging from the most to least ability (skills):

speaking, writing, listening, and reading.

Chanika Khamphut (2002, p. ๓) studied Thai language usage of Thai-majored 4<sup>th</sup> year Chinese students at Yunnan Institute of the Nationalities (Thesis title: Studying Thai Language Usage of the Fourth Year Chinese Student Majoring in Thai Subject, Yunnan Institute of the Nationalities, People's Republic of China) The objective was to study weakness in using Thai language in aspects of speaking and writing. The result showed that they mispronounced some consonants especially final consonants, followed by initial consonants and vowel sounds while pronouncing wrong tones was not much found. As for writing, they wrote wrong initial consonants the most, followed by wrong final consonants, and wrong vowels.

Sompong Witayasakpan, Chusee Seekaew, and Hataiwan Chaiyakul (2013, p. ๓) studied about Thai as a foreign language at Faculty of Humanities, Chiang Mai University. (Research title: Thai Language of Foreign Students of Thai as a Foreign Language Program, Faculty of Humanities, Chiang Mai University). The objectives were: 1) to know ability of foreign students enrolled in the course, 2) to study about the problems and obstacles of foreign students in learning Thai, and 3) to study the problems related to managing the curriculum of the course Thai as a foreign language that affected learning Thai of foreign students. The results in the aspects of ability of using Thai language of these students could be classified into 3 groups: the first group: the most determining group, they had high level Thai language skills in all listening, speaking, reading and writing skills; the second group: the middle attentive group, they had high level of listening and speaking but middle level of reading and writing; and the third group: the least attentive, they had problems in listening, speaking, and writing (their language skills were in low level.)

### **Objective of the Study**

This study aimed to investigate Thai language pronunciation problems particularly on the pronunciation of consonants, vowels, and tones produced by overseas students.

### **Scope and Delimitation of the Study**

This study was conducted with a sample group of 43 Chinese students from Guangxi Foreign Languages University who were learning the third year at School of Tourism Development under the MOU between Maejo University and Guangxi Foreign Languages University and enrolled in Thai Language for Foreigners course at the Faculty of Liberal Arts, Maejo University.

## Expected Outcomes

1. Perception of sounds of consonants, vowels, and tones wrongly pronounced by overseas students.
2. Guidelines for Thai language teachers for solving pronunciation problems and for developing speaking skills

## Research Methodology

1. Based on teaching materials, preparing a set of Thai pronunciation regarding consonants, vowels, and tones and a set of words having final sounds.
2. Collecting data by asking 43 Chinese students to produce 44 consonants, 28 vowels, tones (high, mid, low), and words having final sounds.
3. Analyzing results of the study and sorting problem types.
4. Drawing conclusions and preparing a report.

## Results of the Study

**Table 1:** Consonant Pronunciation

|   | Consonant | Phonetic alphabet | Correct Pronunciation |      | Mispronunciation/<br>Unable to pronounce |   |     |
|---|-----------|-------------------|-----------------------|------|--|---|-----|
|   |           |                   | N                     | %    | Mispronounced                            | N | %   |
| 1 | ก         | กวิ๊ว             | 43                    | 100  | -  | - | -   |
| 2 | ข         | khวิ๊ว            | 39                    | 90.7 | khวิ๊ว                                   | 4 | 9.3 |
| 3 | ช         | khวิ๊ว            | 42                    | 97.7 | khวิ๊ว                                   | 1 | 2.3 |
| 4 | ค         | khวิ๊ว            | 42                    | 97.7 | khวิ๊ว                                   | 1 | 2.3 |
| 5 | ค         | khวิ๊ว            | 42                    | 97.7 | khวิ๊ว                                   | 1 | 2.3 |
| 6 | ฌ         | khวิ๊ว            | 39                    | 90.7 | Unable to pronounce                      | 1 | 2.3 |
|   |           |                   |                       |      | khวิ๊ว                                   |   |     |
| 7 | ง         | ngวิ๊ว            | 42                    | 97.7 | hวิ๊ว                                    | 1 | 2.3 |
| 8 | จ         | chวิ๊ว            | 41                    | 95.3 | chวิ๊ว                                   | 2 | 4.7 |
| 9 | ฉ         | chวิ๊ว            | 39                    | 90.7 | chวิ๊ว                                   | 4 | 9.3 |

|    | Consonant | Phonetic alphabet | Correct Pronunciation |      | Mispronunciation/ Unable to pronounce |    |      |
|----|-----------|-------------------|-----------------------|------|---------------------------------------|----|------|
|    |           |                   | N                     | %    | Mispronounced                         | N  | %    |
| 10 | ช         | ch๖๖              | 36                    | 83.7 | Unable to pronounce                   | 1  | 2.3  |
|    |           |                   |                       |      | ch๖๖                                  | 4  | 9.3  |
|    |           |                   |                       |      | kh๖๖                                  | 1  | 2.3  |
|    |           |                   |                       |      | s๖๖                                   | 1  | 2.3  |
| 11 | ช         | s๖๖               | 31                    | 72   | s๖๖                                   | 6  | 14   |
|    |           |                   |                       |      | ch๖๖                                  | 5  | 11.6 |
|    |           |                   |                       |      | ch๖๖                                  | 1  | 2.3  |
| 12 | ฉ         | ch๖๖              | 32                    | 74.4 | Unable to pronounce                   | 3  | 7    |
|    |           |                   |                       |      | ch๖๖                                  | 4  | 9.3  |
|    |           |                   |                       |      | n๖๖                                   | 2  | 4.7  |
|    |           |                   |                       |      | s๖๖                                   | 1  | 2.3  |
|    |           |                   |                       |      | th๖๖                                  | 1  | 2.3  |
| 13 | ญ         | y๖๖               | 42                    | 97.7 | ch๖๖                                  | 1  | 2.3  |
| 14 | ฎ         | d๖๖               | 32                    | 74.4 | t๖๖                                   | 10 | 23.3 |
|    |           |                   |                       |      | n๖๖                                   | 1  | 2.3  |
| 15 | ฎ         | t๖๖               | 35                    | 81.4 | Unable to pronounce                   | 1  | 2.3  |
|    |           |                   |                       |      | d๖๖                                   | 7  | 16.3 |
| 16 | ฐ         | th๖๖              | 29                    | 67.4 | th๖๖                                  | 13 | 30.2 |
|    |           |                   |                       |      | t๖๖                                   | 1  | 2.3  |
| 17 | ฑ         | th๖๖              | 39                    | 90.7 | th๖๖                                  | 4  | 9.3  |
| 18 | ฒ         | th๖๖              | 41                    | 95.3 | t๖๖                                   | 1  | 2.3  |
|    |           |                   |                       |      | th๖๖                                  | 1  | 2.3  |
| 19 | ณ         | n๖๖               | 42                    | 97.7 | th๖๖                                  | 1  | 2.3  |

|    | Consonant | Phonetic alphabet | Correct Pronunciation |      | Mispronunciation/ Unable to pronounce |   |      |
|----|-----------|-------------------|-----------------------|------|---------------------------------------|---|------|
|    |           |                   | N                     | %    | Mispronounced                         | N | %    |
| 20 | ด         | ดัว               | 34                    | 79   | ัว                                    | 8 | 18.6 |
|    |           |                   |                       |      | นัว                                   | 1 | 2.3  |
| 21 | ต         | ัว                | 42                    | 97.7 | ดัว                                   | 1 | 2.3  |
| 22 | ถ         | หัว               | 35                    | 81.4 | หัว                                   | 8 | 18.6 |
| 23 | ท         | หัว               | 42                    | 97.7 | หัว                                   | 1 | 2.3  |
| 24 | ธ         | หัว               | 41                    | 95.3 | หัว                                   | 2 | 4.7  |
| 25 | น         | นัว               | 39                    | 90.7 | ัว                                    | 4 | 9.3  |
| 26 | บ         | บัว               | 40                    | 93   | ปัว                                   | 3 | 7    |
| 27 | ป         | ปัว               | 37                    | 86   | บัว                                   | 6 | 14   |
| 28 | ผ         | หัว               | 37                    | 86   | หัว                                   | 5 | 11.6 |
|    |           |                   |                       |      | ัว                                    | 1 | 2.3  |
| 29 | ฝ         | ัว                | 36                    | 83.7 | ัว                                    | 4 | 9.3  |
|    |           |                   |                       |      | หัว                                   | 2 | 4.7  |
|    |           |                   |                       |      | หัว                                   | 1 | 2.3  |
| 30 | พ         | หัว               | 39                    | 90.7 | หัว                                   | 3 | 7    |
|    |           |                   |                       |      | ปัว                                   | 1 | 2.3  |
| 31 | ฟ         | ัว                | 36                    | 83.7 | ัว                                    | 6 | 14   |
|    |           |                   |                       |      | หัว                                   | 1 | 2.3  |
| 32 | ภ         | หัว               | 37                    | 86   | หัว                                   | 4 | 9.3  |
|    |           |                   |                       |      | หัว                                   | 1 | 2.3  |
|    |           |                   |                       |      | หัว                                   | 1 | 2.3  |
| 33 | ม         | มัว               | 43                    | 100  | -                                     | 0 | 0    |
| 34 | ย         | ยัว               | 43                    | 100  | -                                     | 0 | 0    |



they mispronounced it as low tone consonants /kh<sup>55</sup>/.

4. They were confused by voiceless aspirated and voiceless unaspirated consonants such as /th<sup>55</sup>/ but they mispronounced it as /t<sup>55</sup>/ or /ph<sup>55</sup>/ mispronounced as /p<sup>55</sup>/.

5. They were confused by voiced and voiceless consonants such as /b<sup>55</sup>/ but they mispronounced it as /p<sup>55</sup>/ or /d<sup>55</sup>/ mispronounced as /t<sup>55</sup>/.

**Table 2:** Vowel pronunciation

|   | Vowel | Phonetic alphabet | Correct Pronunciation |      | Mispronunciation/ Unable to pronounce |    |      |
|---|-------|-------------------|-----------------------|------|---------------------------------------|----|------|
|   |       |                   | N                     | %    | Mispronounced                         | N  | %    |
| 1 | อะ    | a                 | 43                    | 100  | -                                     | 0  | 0    |
| 2 | อา    | aa                | 43                    | 100  | -                                     | 0  | 0    |
| 3 | อิ    | i                 | 43                    | 100  | -                                     | 0  | 0    |
| 4 | อี    | ii                | 43                    | 100  | -                                     | 0  | 0    |
| 5 | อึ    | ึ                 | 32                    | 74.4 | ๑                                     | 10 | 23.3 |
|   |       |                   |                       |      | กึ                                    | 1  | 2.3  |
| 6 | อึ    | ึึ                | 39                    | 90.7 | ๑๑                                    | 4  | 9.3  |
| 7 | อุ    | u                 | 43                    | 100  | -                                     | 0  | 0    |
| 8 | อู    | uu                | 43                    | 100  | -                                     | 0  | 0    |
| 9 | เอะ   | e                 | 20                    | 46.5 | ε                                     | 12 | 27.9 |
|   |       |                   |                       |      | กึk                                   | 3  | 7    |
|   |       |                   |                       |      | กึt                                   | 2  | 4.7  |
|   |       |                   |                       |      | กึk                                   | 1  | 2.3  |
|   |       |                   |                       |      | กึt                                   | 1  | 2.3  |
|   |       |                   |                       |      | กึk                                   | 1  | 2.3  |
|   |       |                   |                       |      | กึt                                   | 1  | 2.3  |
|   |       |                   |                       |      | a                                     | 1  | 2.3  |
|   |       |                   |                       |      | ia?                                   | 1  | 2.3  |



|    | Vowel | Phonetic<br>alphabet | Correct<br>Pronunciation |      | Mispronunciation/<br>Unable to pronounce |    |      |
|----|-------|----------------------|--------------------------|------|--|----|------|
|    |       |                      | N                        | %    | Mispronounced                            | N  | %    |
| 10 | เอ    | ee                   | 32                       | 74.4 | εε                                       | 10 | 23.3 |
|    |       |                      |                          |      | ia                                       | 1  | 2.3  |
| 11 | แอะ   | ε                    | 34                       | 79   | Unable to pronounce                      | 1  | 2.3  |
|    |       |                      |                          |      | ʔεεt                                     | 3  | 7    |
|    |       |                      |                          |      | ʔεεk                                     | 2  | 4.7  |
|    |       |                      |                          |      | ʔεk                                      | 1  | 2.3  |
|    |       |                      |                          |      | e  | 1  | 2.3  |
|    |       |                      |                          |      | ə  | 1  | 2.3  |
| 12 | แอ    | εε                   | 42                       | 97.7 | ee                                       | 1  | 2.3  |
| 13 | โอะ   | o                    | 24                       | 55.8 | ɔ  | 12 | 27.9 |
|    |       |                      |                          |      | ʔoot                                     | 3  | 7    |
|    |       |                      |                          |      | ʔok                                      | 2  | 4.7  |
|    |       |                      |                          |      | u  | 1  | 2.3  |
|    |       |                      |                          |      | ʔock                                     | 1  | 2.3  |
| 14 | โอ    | oo                   | 34                       | 79   | ɔɔ                                       | 9  | 21   |
| 15 | เอาะ  | ɔ                    | 37                       | 86   | o  | 2  | 4.7  |
|    |       |                      |                          |      | ʔooɔ                                     | 2  | 4.7  |
|    |       |                      |                          |      | ʔock                                     | 1  | 2.3  |
|    |       |                      |                          |      | ʔooɔp                                    | 1  | 2.3  |
| 16 | ออ    | ɔɔ                   | 39                       | 90.7 | oo                                       | 4  | 9.3  |
| 17 | เอาะ  | ə                    | 32                       | 74.4 | u  | 3  | 7    |
|    |       |                      |                          |      | uaʔ                                      | 2  | 4.7  |
|    |       |                      |                          |      | uaʔ                                      | 1  | 2.3  |

|    | Vowel  | Phonetic alphabet | Correct Pronunciation |      | Mispronunciation/ Unable to pronounce |    |      |
|----|--------|-------------------|-----------------------|------|---------------------------------------|----|------|
|    |        |                   | N                     | %    | Mispronounced                         | N  | %    |
|    |        |                   |                       |      | จ                                     | 1  | 2.3  |
|    |        |                   |                       |      | ia?                                   | 1  | 2.3  |
|    |        |                   |                       |      | ε                                     | 1  | 2.3  |
|    |        |                   |                       |      | ๑k                                    | 1  | 2.3  |
|    |        |                   |                       |      | ๑ut                                   | 1  | 2.3  |
| 18 | เออ    | ๑๑                | 35                    | 81.4 | ๑                                     | 2  | 4.7  |
|    |        |                   |                       |      | ๑a                                    | 2  | 4.7  |
|    |        |                   |                       |      | εε                                    | 1  | 2.3  |
|    |        |                   |                       |      | จจ                                    | 1  | 2.3  |
|    |        |                   |                       |      | ia                                    | 1  | 2.3  |
|    |        |                   |                       |      | ua                                    | 1  | 2.3  |
| 19 | เอี้ยะ | ia?               | 42                    | 97.7 | ๑iat                                  | 1  | 2.3  |
| 20 | เอี้ย  | ia                | 43                    | 100  | -                                     | 0  | 0    |
| 21 | เอือะ  | ๑a?               | 41                    | 95.3 | ๑                                     | 1  | 2.3  |
|    |        |                   |                       |      | ia?                                   | 1  | 2.3  |
| 22 | เอือ   | ๑a                | 39                    | 90.7 | ๑๑                                    | 2  | 4.7  |
|    |        |                   |                       |      | ๑๑                                    | 1  | 2.3  |
|    |        |                   |                       |      | ia                                    | 1  | 2.3  |
| 23 | อัวะ   | ua?               | 41                    | 95.3 | ๑uat                                  | 2  | 4.7  |
| 24 | อัว    | ua                | 43                    | 100  | -                                     | 0  | 0    |
| 25 | อำ     | am                | 40                    | 93   | ๑aam                                  | 2  | 4.7  |
|    |        |                   |                       |      | aw                                    | 1  | 2.3  |
| 26 | ไอ     | ay                | 30                    | 69.8 | ๑aay                                  | 10 | 23.3 |

|    | Vowel | Phonetic alphabet | Correct Pronunciation |      | Mispronunciation/ Unable to pronounce |   |     |
|----|-------|-------------------|-----------------------|------|---------------------------------------|---|-----|
|    |       |                   | N                     | %    | Mispronounced                         | N | %   |
|    |       |                   |                       |      | ηay                                   | 1 | 2.3 |
|    |       |                   |                       |      | ʔəy                                   | 1 | 2.3 |
|    |       |                   |                       |      | oo                                    | 1 | 2.3 |
| 27 | ไอ    | ay                | 34                    | 79   | Unable to pronounce                   | 1 | 2.3 |
|    |       |                   |                       |      | ʔaay                                  | 6 | 14  |
|    |       |                   |                       |      | ηay                                   | 1 | 2.3 |
|    |       |                   |                       |      | oo                                    | 1 | 2.3 |
| 28 | เอา   | aw                | 38                    | 88.4 | ʔaaw                                  | 4 | 9.3 |
|    |       |                   |                       |      | ʔam                                   | 1 | 2.3 |

Table 2 shows, among 28 Thai vowels, participants were able to pronounce 8 vowels correctly (29%) and there were อะ, อา, อี, อี้, อุ, อู, เอีย, and อัว. The rest was unable to be pronounced or mispronounced (71%). The following vowels were mispronounced mostly: สระเอะ /e/ (53%) mispronounced as /ɛ/, /ʔɛk/, /ʔet/, /ʔɛk/, /ʔeet/, /ʔek/, /ʔit/, /a/, and /iaʔ/; สระโอะ /o/ (44%) mispronounced as /ɔ/, /ʔoot/, /ʔok/, /u/ , and /ʔoɔk/ ; สระไอ /ay/ (30%) mispronounced as /ʔaay/, /ηay/, /ʔəy/, and /oo/; สระอี /u/ (26%) mispronounced as /ə/, and /ʔuk/, สระเอ /ee/ (26%) mispronounced as /ɛɛ/, and /ia/ and สระเออะ /ə/ (26%) mispronounced as /u/, /uaʔ/, /uaʔ/, /ɔ/, /iaʔ/, /ɛ/, /əɔk/, and /ʔut/, respectively; and สระแอะ /ɛ/ (21%) mispronounced as /ʔɛt/, /ʔɛk/, /ʔɛk/, /e/, and /ə/, สระโอ /oo/ (21%) mispronounced as /ɔɔ/, and สระไอ /ay/ (21%) mispronounced as /ʔaay/, /ηay/, and /oo/ respectively. These mistakes were caused by the followings:

1. Mispronunciation was resulted from wrong positioning of place of articulation such as สระอี /u/ is a vowel which the tongue position is in the back or rather to the middle (central-high) but mispronounced as สระเออะ /ə/ (central-mid). Another example was สระโอ /oo/ (back-mid) mispronounced as สระออ /ɔɔ/ (back-low).
2. Mispronunciation was resulted from confusion between short and long vowels. This problem was found in short vowel pronunciations rather than long vowel such

as สระไอ/ไอ /ay/ mispronounced as /ʔaay/ or สระเอา /aw/ mispronounced as /ʔaaw/.

### Tone pronunciation

Thai alphabet has tonal sounds in accordance with consonant groups including high level, medium tone, and low tone consonants. Details of intonation are shown below.

| Consonant Group       | Intonation                |                                 |                                  |                                 |                                   |
|-----------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------------|----------------------------------|---------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
|                       | Medium level <sup>ˉ</sup> | Falling tone <sup>ˋ</sup>       | Rising-falling tone <sup>ˆ</sup> | Rising tone <sup>ˊ</sup>        | Falling-rising tone <sup>ˋˊ</sup> |
| Medium tone consonant | Mid tone                  | 1 <sup>st</sup> Thai tonal mark | 2 <sup>nd</sup> Thai tonal mark  | 3 <sup>rd</sup> Thai tonal mark | 4 <sup>th</sup> Thai tonal mark   |
| High tone consonant   |                           | 1 <sup>st</sup> Thai tonal mark | 2 <sup>nd</sup> Thai tonal mark  |                                 | Mid tone                          |
| Low tone consonant    | Mid tone                  |                                 | 1 <sup>st</sup> Thai tonal mark  | 2 <sup>nd</sup> Thai tonal mark |                                   |

Results of data collection on tone pronunciation based on consonant groups were the followings:

**Table 3:** Tonal conjugation of medium tone consonants

| Tone                             | Phonetic alphabet | Correct Pronunciation |      | Mispronunciation/ Unable to pronounce |   |     |
|----------------------------------|-------------------|-----------------------|------|---------------------------------------|---|-----|
|                                  |                   | N                     | %    | Mispronounced                         | N | %   |
| Saman (no mark) (กาน)            | kāa               | 43                    | 100  | -                                     | - | -   |
| 1 <sup>st</sup> tonal mark (ก้า) | kàa               | 41                    | 95.3 | káa                                   | 1 | 2.3 |
|                                  |                   |                       |      | kaʔ                                   | 1 | 2.3 |
| 2 <sup>nd</sup> tonal mark (ก๊า) | kâa               | 42                    | 97.7 | kàa                                   | 1 | 2.3 |

|                                   |     |    |      |     |   |      |
|-----------------------------------|-----|----|------|-----|---|------|
| 3 <sup>rd</sup> tonal mark (ກໍ່າ) | káa | 42 | 97.7 | kǎa | 1 | 2.3  |
| 4 <sup>th</sup> tonal mark (ກໍ່າ) | kǎa | 35 | 81.4 | káa | 7 | 16.3 |
|                                   |     |    |      | kāa | 1 | 2.3  |

**Table 4:** Tonal conjugation of high tone consonants

| Tone                             | Phonetic alphabet | Correct Pronunciation |      | Mispronunciation/ Unable to pronounce |   |      |
|----------------------------------|-------------------|-----------------------|------|---------------------------------------|---|------|
|                                  |                   | N                     | %    | Mispronounced                         | N | %    |
| Saman (no mark) (ຜາ)             | phǎa              | 34                    | 79   | phāa                                  | 5 | 11.6 |
|                                  |                   |                       |      | phàa                                  | 2 | 4.7  |
|                                  |                   |                       |      | fǎa                                   | 2 | 4.7  |
| 1 <sup>st</sup> tonal mark (ຜ່າ) | phàa              | 37                    | 86   | phāa                                  | 3 | 7    |
|                                  |                   |                       |      | pha?                                  | 2 | 4.7  |
|                                  |                   |                       |      | phāa                                  | 1 | 2.3  |
| 2 <sup>nd</sup> tonal mark (ຜ້າ) | phāa              | 42                    | 97.7 | pháa                                  | 1 | 2.3  |

**Table 5:** Tonal conjugation of low tone consonants

| Tone                             | Phonetic alphabet | Correct Pronunciation |      | Mispronunciation/ Unable to pronounce |    |      |
|----------------------------------|-------------------|-----------------------|------|---------------------------------------|----|------|
|                                  |                   | N                     | %    | Mispronounced                         | N  | %    |
| Saman (no mark) (ລາ)             | lāa               | 41                    | 95.3 | lǎa                                   | 1  | 2.3  |
|                                  |                   |                       |      | lōo                                   | 1  | 2.3  |
| 1 <sup>st</sup> tonal mark (ລ່າ) | lāa               | 32                    | 74.4 | làa                                   | 11 | 25.6 |
| 2 <sup>nd</sup> tonal mark (ລ້າ) | lāa               | 31                    | 72   | lāa                                   | 9  | 21   |
|                                  |                   |                       |      | lǎa                                   | 2  | 4.7  |
|                                  |                   |                       |      | láak                                  | 1  | 2.3  |

According to the above Tables, the participants were able to pronounce mid tone (saman) correctly for one hundred percent but they failed to pronounce 4<sup>th</sup> Thai tonal mark (falling-rising ˨˨˩) most (16.3%).

Regarding to tonal conjugation of high tone consonants, it was found that they mispronounced falling-rising tone as mid tone mostly (11.6%) and the followed by 1st Thai tonal mark that they mispronounced falling tone as rising-falling tone (7%). For tonal conjugation of low tone consonants, the research population mispronounced 1<sup>st</sup> Thai tonal mark (rising-falling) mostly (25.6%) and followed by reading 2nd Thai tonal mark (rising tone) (21%). According to an analysis of error on tonal conjugation of high-tone and low-tone consonants, it was found that the research population was confused between the high-tone consonant group and the low-tone consonant group. For example, **phāa - phàa - phâa** (high-tone consonant), the research population mispronounced as **phāa - phâa - pháa** (low-tone consonant).

### Pronunciation of words having final letters

Consonant finales are consonants which act as the final consonant or a final letter. There are 8 consonant finals in Thai language as follows:

1. Mae Kok - /-k/ is the final letter
2. Mae Kong - /-ŋ/ is the final letter
3. Mae Kot - /-t/ is the final letter
4. Mae Kon - /-n/ is the final letter
5. Mae Kop - /-p/ is the final letter
6. Mae Kom - /-m/ is the final letter
7. Mae Koe y - /-y/ is the final letter
8. Mae Koew - /-w/ is the final letter

The participants read aloud words 136 times each consonant finals. The followings were problems in word spelling without the final letter and mispronunciation of the final letter.

1) Mae Kok /-k/ - Word spelling without the final letter was found 4 times; wrong spelling /-t/ 3 times; and wrong spelling /-p/ once.

2) Mae Kong /-ŋ/ - Word spelling /-n/ was found 4 times.

3) Mae Kot /-t/ - Word spelling without the final letter was found twice and wrong spelling /-k/ once.

4) Mae Kon /-n/ - Wrong spelling /-m/ was found 3 times and /-ŋ/ once.

- 5) Mae Kop /-p/ - Wrong spelling /-t/, /-k/, and /-n/ was found 3 times each.
- 6) Mae Kom /-m/ - Word spelling without the final letter was found twice. Wrong spelling included /-p/ (twice), /-n/ (twice), and /-ŋ/ (once).
- 7) Mae Koey /-y/ - Word spelling without the final letter was found once. Wrong spelling /-k/ and /-ŋ/ (once each).
- 8) Mae Koew /-w/ - Word spelling without the final letter was found once and wrong spelling /-m/ was also found once.

### Discussion and conclusion

From the result of the study on the Pronunciation Problems of Chinese Overseas Students in Maejo University, the following points can be concluded.

1. Wrong consonant pronunciation or inability to pronounce. This was from 1) inability to use alveolar ridge for pronouncing e.g. cannot trill for pronouncing /ʃ/ since there was such sound in their mother tongue, this was according to the study result of Sompong Witayasakpan, Chusee Seekaew, and Hataiwan Chaiyakul (2013, p. 54) which revealed that Chinese students pronounce /ʃ/ as /ʃ/ in every word because there is only /ʃ/ sound in Chinese but no /ʃ/; 2) inability to pronounce or wrong pronunciation because they cannot remember certain letters in the alphabet set, for example, /w/ was pronounced as /nɔ̄/ /hɔ̄/ and /phɔ̄/ since the shape of the letter looks like the letters /u/ /w/ and /w/; 3) wrong pronunciation (wrong level of consonants), for example, the consonants /u/ and /u/ which are in high-level consonant were pronounced as low-level consonant /khɔ̄/; 4) wrong swapping groups of Voiceless Aspirated consonants with Voiceless Unaspirated consonants e.g. /thɔ̄/ became /tɔ̄/ or /phɔ̄/ became /pɔ̄/; 5) wrong swapping between Voiced consonants and Voiceless consonants, i.e. /bɔ̄/ became /pɔ̄/ or /dɔ̄/ became /tɔ̄/.

2. Wrong vowel pronunciation or inability to pronounce them. This was because 1) placing point of alveolar ridge was wrong, for example, the vowel /u/, a tongue must be in back toward mid position and raise the tongue in central-high point, but the sampling population mispronounced as /ə/, the vowel in which the tongue in the same position but raising it in central-mid point only, or the vowel /oo/, a tongue must be in back position, raising to back-mid point but the samplings mispronounced as /ɔ̄/ in which the tongue is in position of back-low point; 2) due to confusion of short and long vowels, short vowels were found to be more of a problem than the long ones, for example, the vowel /ay/, the sampling

mispronounced as /ʔaay/, the vowel /aw/ was mispronounced as /ʔaaw/.

3. Wrong tone pronunciation or inability to pronounce. This was due to confusion of consonant level modes e.g. high tone consonants **phǎa - phàa - phāa** were mispronounced as low tone consonants **phāa - phāa - pháa**.

4. Wrong final consonant pronunciation or inability to pronounce. In Chinese there is only 2 final consonant sounds which are similar to Mae Kon and Mae Kong (Prapin Manomaivibool, 1998, p. 6) but in Thai there are 8 consonant finales. So, there existed no pronunciation of final consonants and wrong pronunciation in many styles. This is in accord to the result of the study by Chanika Khamphut (2002, p. 117) which stated that Chinese students pronounced consonant finales with great difficulty because they were not accustomed to final consonants other than those in their mother tongue.

#### Utilization of Results of the Study

1. Classroom problem solving by preparing pronunciation drills, establishing language clinic, and arranging speaking activities.

2. Developing practice module and form of teaching/learning on Thai language pronunciation /speaking skill.

3. Being basic data for the preparation of Thai Language Pronunciation Improvement course of Maejo University (New curricular program, 2018).

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