

Abstract

The purpose of this thesis is to investigate Japanese students' pronunciation problems with initial single-consonant sounds in the Thai language, comprising 20 consonant sounds [p t t̚ k p^h t^h t̚^h k^h b d m n ŋ l r f s h w j] and 3 minimal pairs [p,p^h] [t,t^h] [k,k^h]. Results are classified according to the degree of Japanese language interference in the Thai language.

It was initially hypothesized that most Japanese students would have problems in pronouncing these 3 groups of consonant sounds in the Thai language:

1. The initial single-consonant sounds in the Thai language that don't exist in the Japanese language;
2. The initial single-consonant sounds in the Thai language that don't exist as initial consonant sounds in the Japanese language;
3. The pronunciation of unaspirated consonant sounds and aspirated consonant sounds which are phonemical sounds in the Thai language, but are phonetical sounds in the Japanese language.

The data was collected by videotape-recording of informants' pronunciation of Thai word lists. The informants were 27 Japanese students at the Faculty of Foreign Studies, Osaka University of Foreign Studies, years 2, 3, 4 and graduate students.

Results of the study show that pronunciation errors are found with the highest frequency in pronouncing these 18 consonant sounds [r ŋ p w t h f p^h t̚^h t^h j l k k^h t̚ d s b] respectively. Errors are not found, however, in pronouncing [n] and [m].

The main cause of the pronunciation errors that are found in this thesis is the interference of the first language with Thai, which can be classified into 4 categories as follows:

1. Problems pronouncing Thai consonant sounds which don't exist in the Japanese language;
2. Problems pronouncing Thai consonant sounds which don't exist as

initial consonant sounds in the Japanese language;

3. The confusion of unaspirated consonant sounds with aspirated consonant sounds in the Thai language;

4. Problems pronouncing Thai consonant sounds caused by the interference of vowel sounds in the Japanese language.

The interference of the first language with Thai, as described in the first, second and third categories match with the hypothesis of this study. The fourth category of problems, however, is unexpected.