

**MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING  
THE UNIVERSITY OF DANANG**

**TRẦN THỊ THU HIỀN**

**AN INVESTIGATION INTO THE ERRORS IN  
PRONOUNCING ENGLISH LONG AND SHORT  
VOWELS OF ENGLISH- MAJORED JUNIORS IN  
UNIVERSITY OF DA NANG- UNIVERSITY OF  
FOREIGN LANGUAGE STUDIES**

**Field : THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE**

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1. RATIONALE

##### 1.1.1. Statement of problem

As far as we have paid attention, English is now considered as a genuine lingua franca and the most wanted foreign language which people of all age desire to master it. According to David Graddol (1997), “The world is in transition, so the English language is itself taking new forms. English had changed substantially in the 1500 years or so of its use, reflecting patterns of contact with other languages and the changing communication needs of people”.

It is generally suggested that the sounds in a new language are often very difficult to learn and this is not helped by the fact that many teachers do not make it a priority. This problem happens to a large number of English colleges and universities, including University of Foreign Language Studies. From my observation, many students of the Department of English at University of Foreign Language Studies seem to find it difficult to pronounce English. Most of them consider the problem to be driven from consonants; thus, they intensively correct their errors with consonants while ignoring vowel sounds. And that certainly bring them an unintelligible pronunciation which they are unable to define the reasons.

Indeed, there are few books mentioned the mistakes of vowel sounds made by the English – majored juniors, which is not convenient for them to figure out their errors. Nevertheless, I realize from my own experiences of pronunciation practice as well as from observation that there is a must for the English – majored juniors to pay close attention to vowel sounds if they want to dramatically improve their communication skill. Furthermore, I hope that I at least

could provide the students more useful information for vowel practice in class as well as at home. For this reason, I have chosen to carry out vowel sounds for my graduation thesis.

### **1.1.2. Aims and objectives of the study**

#### ***a. Aims***

The first aim of the study is to bring out the differences and similarities between English and Vietnamese vowel system. Other aim of the study is to enable the English-majored juniors to obtain certain clearance between long and short vowels, which somewhat contributes to assist them for a better communicating practice. the aim of the study is to bring out the reasons causing the English-majored juniors errors. The study is aimed at demonstrating the main problems and suggesting some techniques related to vowel sounds including /i: / - /ɪ/, /ɔ: / - /ɒ/, /u: / - /ʊ/, /æ/ - /e/. After doing the I hope that I can help teachers and students enhance their pronunciation teaching, learning and communicating English.

#### ***b. Objectives***

With the aims mentioned above, this research is intended to:

- Point out some differences between vowels of the Vietnamese and English languages.
- Clarify the types of errors that English – majored third year students often make when pronouncing English vowels.
- Find out reasons for pronunciation errors and useful techniques for teaching English vowels.
- Find out the useful solutions to help the English-majored juniors enhance their pronunciation communicating and using

### **English RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

The study is mostly focused on finding out the answers for those questions below:

1. What types of pronunciation errors do they often make

when pronouncing the vowel sounds /i: / - /I/, /ɔ: / - /ɒ/, /u: / - /ʊ/, /æ/ - /e/ and the reasons for that? How can they make distinction between long and short vowels?

2. What causes these types of errors?

3. What are the solutions for these problems? How to practice these sounds without interruption of the language interference?

### **1.3. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

Firstly, I hope the study will benefit the English – majored juniors in University of Foreign Language Studies. From this study, teachers can probably solve common questions of the English – majored juniors about pronunciation which is considered as the most challenging subject of all. They can speak to foreigners, yet the conversation fail in comprehension while others cannot get out of the similar Vietnamese sounds. The study is aimed at demonstrating the main problems and suggesting some techniques related to vowel sounds including /i: / - /I/, /ɔ: / - /ɒ/, /u: / - /ʊ/, /æ/ - /e/. For the English – majored juniors it could be an adequate provision of advice to practice pronunciation based on the data and literature review written extensively.

Secondly, for the part of me, it is nerves and effort consuming in one year. However, I would never regret of what I have done since I am getting more mature manner of an English major students. Furthermore, during conducting the study, I have accomplished certain experiences for my career. I believe that from the study and with serious attempt, I will be able to help my students for a better pronunciation.

### **1.4. SCOPE OF THE STUDY**

The study is focused on identifying the pronunciation mistakes of English vowels made by the Vietnamese students. To make it valid and reliable, I have involved a number of English –

majored juniors of Department of English in University of Foreign Language Studies. In chapter III of Methodology, the questionnaire and recording will be used as main instruments to conduct the thesis.

## **1.5. ORGANIZATION OF THE STUDY**

### **CHAPTER 2**

#### **LITERATURE REVIEW & THEORETICAL BACKGROUND**

##### **2.1. PRONUNCIATION OVERVIEW**

###### **2.1.1. Definition of pronunciation**

There are numerous ways to define the term of pronunciation. It can be merely clarified as “The way in which a word or language is pronounced” (Macmillan Publishers Limited 2009–2012) or from Dictionary.com pronunciation can be defined by further four definitions:

- ★ The act or result of producing the sounds of speech, including articulation, stress, and intonation, often with reference to some standard of correctness or acceptability.
- ★ An accepted standard of the sound and stress patterns of a syllable, phrase, etc.
- ★ The conventional patterns of treatment of the sounds of a language.
- ★ A phonetic transcription of a given word, sound, etc.

###### **2.1.2. Factors affecting the pronunciation of second language**

###### ***a. The native language***

Most teachers’ experiences and research studies show that the learners’ first language plays a major influence on learning the sound system of another language (Nation & Newton, 2009). Rivers (1968) pointed that all learners had experiences that they meet a great difficulty in understanding what foreigner said. This is not because of their lack of knowledge of vocabulary, language structure or

grammar, but because the sounds they produce seemed peculiar and the voice rose and fell in unexpected places.

### ***b. The age of learners***

Someone who have learned English since they were young tend to have better English pronunciation than others who have learned when they are old (Kenworthy, 1987). If learners do not learn a foreign language before a certain age, they maybe cannot obtain a better pronunciation than those who learn a foreign language at a proper age.

In fact, it was offered as an explanation for why many adults trying to learn second language seem to have a hard time achieving native-like pronunciation.

### ***c. Ear perception***

Different people have different level of hearing abilities. The better their abilities are, the better the learners can imitate or differentiate the sounds, which result in their pronunciation skill developments (Kenworthy, 1987).

It is noteworthy that ear capacity relates to learners' age. That is to say, they may gradually lose some of their abilities when becoming older, and it will be difficult for them to pronounce the target language with a native or near native-like accent.

### **2.1.3. The importance of pronunciation**

## **2.2. VOWELS**

### **2.2.1. English vowels**

#### ***a. Definition of English vowel***

A **vowel** is a sound in spoken language that is characterized by an open configuration of the vocal tract (Karyn O'Connor).

#### ***b. Cardinal Vowels***

As Daniel Jones proposed, there are eight cardinal vowels which will be described in terms of their common articulatory features: height (vertical dimension), backness (horizontal dimension)

and roundedness (lips position).

#### **- Vowel Height**

The vertical position of the tongue is relative to either the roof of the mouth or the space of the jaw. In **high vowels**, such as [i] and [u], the tongue is positioned high in the mouth, whereas in **low vowels**, such as [a], the tongue is positioned low in the mouth. In general, the International Phonetic Alphabet identifies seven different vowel heights: close vowel (high vowel), near-close vowel, close-mid vowel, mid vowel, open-mid vowel, near-open vowel, and open vowel (low vowel) (Peter Roach, 1991).

#### **- Vowels Backness**

The International Phonetic Alphabet identifies five different degrees of **vowel backness**: front vowel, near-front vowel, central vowel, near-back vowel and back vowel. Vowel backness is treated as a scale with three ordered values, [front], [central] and [back] (Edward Flemming, 2003).

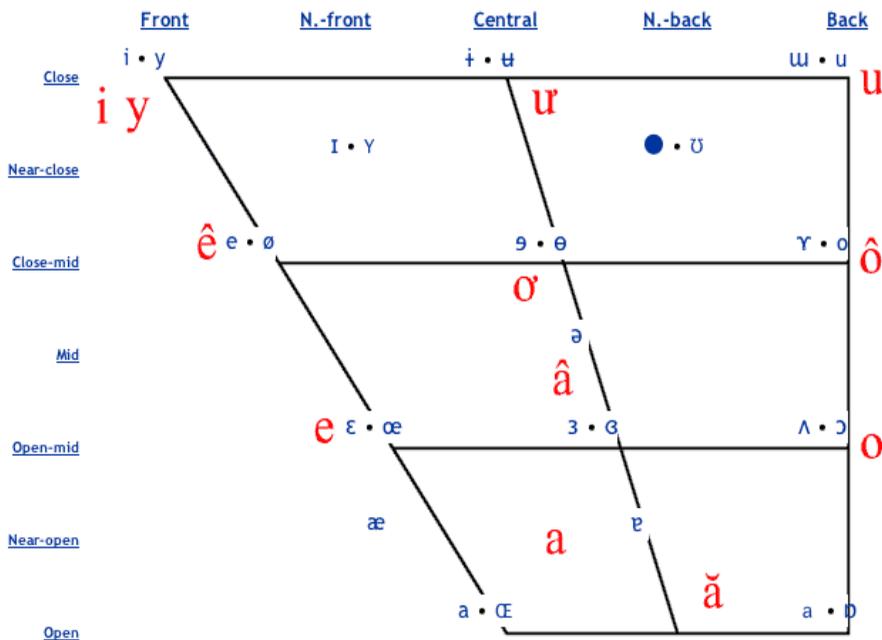
#### **- Vowel Roundedness**

Roundedness refers to whether the lips are rounded or not. In most languages, roundedness is a reinforcing feature of mid to high back vowels (Peter Roach, 1991).

### **2.2.2. Vietnamese vowels**

Vietnamese vowels are a monosyllabic and tonal language. Comparing to English, Vietnamese vowels are much more complicated and difficult (Thompson 1987:19). The highly complex Vietnamese vowel system possesses 11 monophthongs or pure/nuclear vowels and 3 diphthongs.

### 2.2.3. Contrasting English and Vietnamese vowels



The chart above, although it is not the most accurate chart to contrast English and Vietnamese vowels, has supported to demonstrate an alternative view of the positions of Vietnamese monophthongs comparing to English ones when they are made in the mouth.

Although there are some changes of the phonetic syllables, it can be seen that the positions of some Vietnamese vowels such as /i/, /u/, /e/, /o/ are at the same positions with those in English.

English vowel system seems much different from Vietnamese's. This matter will be revealed by certain conclusions below:

Firstly, in aspect of the articulation of height degree or level

of the tongue – close (high tongue position), close-mid, open-mid, and open (low tongue position), the tongue for Vietnamese vowels are almost higher than English ones. This can be clearly seen by the English “corner vowels” or primary vowels (/i:/, /e/, /æ/, /u:/, /ɔ:/, /ɒ/) are at lower positions than the equivalents in Vietnamese. It is also explicitly to see, in the aspect of vowel advancement (front to back), that Vietnamese vowels closely stay at the positions between the front and back of the mouth (Matt Winn, Alina Twist, Allison Blodgett, 2009). In other words, the English /i:/ must be shorter, close front than the sound /i/ in Vietnamese. The sound /ɒ/ in English is more rounded and pronounced more backwards than the sound /u/ in Vietnamese. Some students do not know this difference so they pronounce the sound /ɒ/ in English like /u/ in Vietnamese. The sound /e/ in English is the mid vowel, while the sound /e/ in Vietnamese is the high vowel. Both are the front vowels but the sound /e/ in English is pronounced more forward. Therefore when pronouncing the sound /e/ in English, students should put the tongue lower and more forward than when they pronounce the sound /e/ in Vietnamese. Another sound students may pronounce incorrectly is /ɔ/ in Vietnamese and /ɒ/ in English. The sound /ɔ/ in Vietnamese is a low rounded vowel, while the sound /ɔ:/ in English is a mid rounded vowel. Furthermore, English /ɔ:/ is pronounced more roundly and more backward than Vietnamese /ɔ/. Therefore, they are slightly different when they are pronounced.

Secondly, according to *Huyềnh Lộc, Ngọc Vũ, 2009*, the long and short features of vowels are phonologically relevant in both English and Vietnamese though other researchers assume Vietnamese has no definition of long and short vowel. It is needed to make clear the differences between English and Vietnamese long/ short vowels. Although there are distinctions between long and short vowels in English, both types of the vowels are classified by their qualities which belong to the dimensions of the tongue positions (vowel height and

vowel advancement) (Matt Winn, Alina Twist, Allison Blodgett, 2009).

Thirdly, Vietnamese has some unique vowels (ã, â, ê, u, ơ, ô) which do not consist in English system. It is remarked that these vowels are produced with greater tension of the muscles in the articulating organ. These vowels seem nothing to impact on English students when pronouncing English sounds; nevertheless, students are easily confused by sound similarities. On the contrary, English has one unique vowel /æ/ which is mostly pronounced as /e/ or /a/ like /bed/ for the word “bad” rather than /bæd/ or /kat/ for the word “cat” rather than /kæt/. Vietnamese students often fail in recognizing and producing this sound because they cannot hear the contrast between /æ/ and /a/, /æ/ and /e/.

Fourthly, the characteristic features of English vowels can vary according to whether they are followed by a voiceless consonant, a voiced consonant, or no consonant at all. In other words, they can be prolonged or shorten by the final consonants (Peter Ladefoged, 1993) as well as cause the quality of the produced sounds slightly changed. Vietnamese vowels can be only followed by certain consonants except for /b/, /d/, /g/, /f/, /v/, /s/, and the approximants /w, j, l, r/. The final consonant following a vowel in some cases slightly changes the quality of the vowel. As a result, there are several specific types of syllables in Vietnamese. When one of three rounded monophthong vowels /u/, /o/ and /ɔ/ is followed by one of two final consonants /ŋ/ or /k/, the rounding of the vowel does not start until the middle of the articulation, and the lips come together at the end of the articulation. While consonants can change the quality of the vowels in Vietnamese, the duration of an English vowel is usually shorten when followed by fortis plosive, affricate, or fricative (except /h/) – in other words, when followed by /p, t, k, tʃ, ʃ, s or /f/ - at the end of a syllable (Paul Skandera, Peter Burleign, 2005).

Finally, it is significant to mention the terms stressed/ unstressed

syllables and vowel reduction or reduced vowels, all of which does not include in Vietnamese phonological system. In other words, English has a system of word stress, but Vietnam, a tonal language, has no system of word stress; rather, it has a distinctive tones (Nguyen, 1970; Nguyen, 1980).

### 2.3. VOWEL DESCRIPTION

According to *Huyềnh Lộc*, Ngọc Vũ, 2009, the long and short features of vowels are phonologically relevant in both English and Vietnamese; yet, there is a difference between what are called **long** and **short** vowel sounds (Matt Winn, Alina Twist, Allison Blodgett, 2009).

#### 2.3.1. Long and short vowel description

Description of pairs of vowels /i: / - /I/, /ɔ:/ - /ɒ/, /u:/ - /ʊ/, /æ/ - /e/.

/i: / as in “heed” is a long vowel sound and speakers need to spread their lips tightly to make the sound.

/I / as in “hid” is a short vowel sound and speakers’ lips are more relaxed and less tightly spread.

/ɔ:/ as in “hawed” is a long vowel and speakers need to lower speakers’ jaws very slightly and round their lips. And pull back their tongues also.

/ɒ/ as in “hod” is a short vowel sound. Speakers need to lower their jaws more and keep their lips more open and less round. Their tongues should be pulled back and lowered.

/u:/ as in “hood” is a long vowel sound and speakers need to push the back of their tongues close to the back of their mouths. They also need to round their lips tightly and feel them push forward as they make the sound

/ʊ/ as in “who’d” is a short vowel sound. Speakers’ tongues need to be so high up at the back of their mouths and they do not need to round their lips as much.

/æ/ as in “had” is slightly longer. More importantly for this

sound speakers need to lower their jaws even more

/e/ as in “head” is a short vowel and speakers need to lower their jaws slightly to make the sound

### 2.3.2. Common pronunciation problems of Vietnamese learners of English and the reasons for such errors

The table below will list two types of errors that the English-major juniors make when producing English vowels. They are errors made from the confusion of long and short vowels in English, and the influence of mother tongue on English vowel production.

Vowels	Confusion of long and short vowels	The influence of Vietnamese tongue
/i:/ and /I/	They almost have no distinction between long /i:/ and short /I/. Thus, words with /i:/ are very often pronounced as the short one. For example, <i>see</i> , <i>heed</i> , <i>bleed</i> , <i>feet</i> , etc., are made as /sI/, /hId/, /bIId/, /fIt/.	The problem from confusion of long /i:/ and short /I/ is probably driven from the similar Vietnamese /i/. In Vietnamese, the long and short terms are controversial to define; hence they have the same pronunciation for /i/ which is neither long nor short.
/ɔ:/ and /ɒ/	The articulatory positions for these two sounds are slightly different. /ɔ:/ requires the tongue to be higher and more backward than it is for /ɒ/. Due to strange way of making the sound /ɔ:/, the students prefer to pronounce it as /ɒ/ which is quite familiar with Vietnamese /ɔ/. Some even completely change its quality into Vietnamese /ɔ/.	As mentioned in the left column, Vietnamese /ɔ/ sounds quite similar with English short /ɒ/, yet it should be made in the position between /ɔ:/ and /ɒ/. For example, words like <i>law</i> , <i>haw</i> , <i>taught</i> , <i>caught</i> , <i>taunt</i> , etc., will be probably sounded with vowel /ɔ/.
/u:/ and /ʊ/	These two sounds are substantially different from each other in term of	In the same case with Vietnamese /ɔ/, /u/ is placed at

	<p>articulation. In other words, the tongue for each vowel should be at certain positions to set apart them. Native speakers inevitably distinguish these two sounds, yet it is sometimes confused for the students to practice them. Some students are unable to make the sound /u:/, instead they change this sound into Vietnamese /u/ while others get confused when making the sound /ʊ/ in <i>good, book, foot, cook, hook</i>, etc., become /u:/ or Vietnamese /u/.</p>	<p>the position between /u: / and /ʊ/. However, it is important to notice that Vietnamese /u/ is more forward than English /u: / and /ʊ/. Therefore, there is no doubt that Vietnamese pronunciation for words like <i>good; hood</i> is much more disparate from English equivalents.</p>
/æ/ and /e/	<p>Unlike other vowels, /æ/ is a unique vowel in English vowel system. The articulatory position for /æ/ is more complicated than it is in /e/ though, to most of Vietnamese's ears, /æ/ sounds the same as /e/. They are, thus, will probably change the sound /æ/ into /e/ in words like <i>hat, cat, bad...</i></p>	<p>In old English, /æ/ denotes as a sound intermediate between /a/ and /e/. There is not such a sound in Vietnamese; hence it is easily produced as /a/ or /e/ instead. For example, words of <i>hat, cat</i> are made as /het/, /ket/ or <i>apple, admin</i> as /'apl/, /'admɪn/.</p>

### 2.3.3. Reasons for pronunciation errors and useful techniques for teaching English vowels.

Firstly, for different phonological systems, it is hard for the English-majored juniors to set an appropriate pronunciation of English sounds. Sometimes there are interferences and occasionally responses from one language system will intrude into speech in the other language (Faerch and Kasper, 1983). That proves contrasting the sound systems of the two languages at the same time would be a must

for students to distinguish reliably their differences from each other. Thus, teacher should create as many activities, especially oral activities, as possible because this could help students more or less perceive the distinctive features between English and Vietnamese sound system and avoid language interference.

Secondly, unfamiliar sounds considerably cause many students pronunciation errors. Long vowels, especially, like /i:/, /ɔ:/, /u:/, /æ/ or short vowels like /ɒ/, /ʊ/ are difficult to pronounce as they require producers for different positions of tongue, lips and jaws. Hence, teachers should provide students certain information to make clear the differences between these English vowels and Vietnamese ones. By pictures, charts, or graphs, they can instruct students how to set tongue, lips and jaws to appropriately pronounce these sounds.

Thirdly, students' laziness and reluctance are also accounted for their inappropriate pronunciations. Some students probably give up studying pronunciation right after judging themselves to be unable to deal with English sounds. Others are ashamed at their strange and incorrect pronunciation; then again they would not attempt to pinpoint their own problems or even worse they fail to cooperate with teachers to learn other subjects related to English. For example, many students feel embarrassed to communicate with others of better pronunciation; moreover, they also encounter number of obstacles when listening to English, especially when the text includes numerous words with long and short vowels. In these cases, teachers should positively encourage and instruct students step by step rather than blame them for the reasons they would never expect or push them on a new sound system.

Fourthly, Celce- Murcia and Goodwin states if a nonnative speaker's pronunciation falls below the standard level, no matter how good his or her control of English grammar and vocabulary might be, he or she will not be able to communicate orally with native speakers of English . Hence, it is suggested that teachers should work with students in person. Pointing out students' errors, providing advice of how to minimize their weaknesses and creating a good environment for learning should be taken into account. Therefore, establishing a non-threatening student-friendly environment is amongst main concerns of modern pronunciation instruction.

## **2.4. SUMMARY**

# **CHAPTER 3 METHODOLOGY**

## **3.1. PARTICIPANTS**

Pronunciation errors could happen to any students (be able to using English). Yet, due to restricted time, I involved English – majored juniors in Department of English only, specifically they were students from 11CNA07 and 11CNA08 including 85 students. I purposely chose third year students (juniors) since these students had taken a course in phonetics and phonology in their first semester of third year studying. The students more or less had general knowledge of vowel chart and the appropriate positions of the tongue and lips when pronouncing vowels. It was easy for me to get reliable and trustful answers for the questionnaires. Together with that, the number of students was quite large which provided me a wide sample research range as well as enable me to investigate the validity and reliability of the research.

## **3.2. METHODOLOGY**

### **3.2.1. Questionnaire**

Questionnaire is stated as “a well-designed method that provides useful information on respondents’ attitudes, values and habits” by Burton and Barlett (2005:100). For this reason, the questionnaire is employed to help me collect necessary information and data for the research. I has based on Literature Review to design 18 questions which consist of multiple – choice (also known as closed question) and opened – ended questions. Two types of questions are selected for the reasons given below:

Multiple – choice is preferred as it is quick and in good order to collect the data. Thus, time and effort can be saved. On the other hand, opened – ended questions is used to collect students’ own ideas for the questions. It would provide me variety of information of pronunciation problems the participants might encounter with vowel sounds. This does not involve interaction in person; therefore, the answers from participants are much more honest and positive.

### **3.2.2. Recording**

To make an attempt to ensure the reliability and validity of the results from questionnaire, I have employed recording method. This method enables me to achieve credible information obtained from direct recording participants’ voices.

## **3.3. THE PROCEDURE OF DATA COLLECTION**

The questionnaires have been carefully prepared from the very beginning of the research. Especially, since the Literature Review

was conducted, types of questionnaires have been seriously considered to assess the reliability and validity of the collected data. Additionally, a great deal of time has been invested in the questionnaire to ensure that it not only gets along well with the Literature Review but also with the purpose of the research.

After the questionnaire was closely looked over by the supervisor, it is distributed to participants. The researcher also asked the two teachers for permission to let their students finishing answering the questionnaire. In the first class, there were 40 questionnaires distributed. In the second class, there were 43 questionnaires delivered. As a whole, there were 83 questionnaires distributed and sufficiently collected.

Recording was conducted from step to step as followed.

Firstly, I took time and effort to find out suitable passages consisting of / i: / - /I/, /ɔ: / - /ɒ/, /u: / - /ʊ/, /æ/ - /e/. There are four passages that will be enclosed in Chapter IV. Each included words containing long and short vowels.

Secondly, after asking for the teacher who charged 11CNA07 and 11CNA08, ten students were allowed to follow me to another room for recording. Each of them was asked to sit in front of a laptop which was playing a recording program to read out four passages. The recorded files were saved then and taken into the analysis.

The procedure of data collection will be discussed in detail as following with two stages:

### 3.3.1. Data collection from questionnaire

As mentioned before, the questionnaire is designed to know the way English – majored juniors often make vowel sounds (/i: / - /ɪ/, /ɔ: / - /ɒ/, /u: / - /ʊ/, /æ/ - /e/) and kinds of problems they encounter with these sounds. It is also aimed at finding out how juniors are instructed to produce and distinguish these sounds in long and short terms. At the beginning, the topic and the purpose of the research were provided so that the participants knew the reasons why they were taking the questionnaire. Together with questionnaire, I also introduced to participants a picture of Vowel Chart to recall them to the articulatory positions of the vowels in question. To assure the objective criterion for the research, the participants were offered to optionally provide their name at the top of the questionnaire. There were 18 questions carefully written and explained in detail so that the participants could respond to the questionnaires without any ambiguity.

### 3.3.2. Data collection from recording

Four passages were purposely chosen from the Sound English- A pronunciation practice book of J.D, O'Connor and Clare Fletcher. Each passage consists of a pair of long and short vowels (/i: / - /ɪ/, /ɔ: / - /ɒ/, /u: / - /ʊ/, /æ/ - /e/) to investigate the types of problems that English – majored can make when pronouncing these vowels. Ten students who have done the questionnaire were picked to do the recording. They were asked to read out loud four passages and were observed by me. At that time, I also played a recording program in my

laptop. The participants' voices were recorded at the time they were reading the passages. I, after that, chose the best quality of files and discarded other unclear or consisting of parasitic noises. I then collected the answer with the help of the speaker from Oxford Advance Learner's Dictionary 8<sup>th</sup> to check which word was produced appropriately, inappropriately or was changed into similar Vietnamese vowels.

### **3.4. THE DATA ANALYSIS PROCEDURE**

#### **3.4.1. Method of data analysis**

The main method adopting for the analysis is the statistical method which includes coding data and analyzing data.

After checking the number of answers from participants, any incomplete or inconsistent answer was discarded from the research.

#### **3.4.2. Coding data**

The answers collected from questionnaire are converted into numerical values. For each question usually contains four answers symbolized by letter A, B, C and D. the same answers of different participants, then, were counted in number and converted into percentages for analysis.

#### **3.4.3. Procedure of data analysis**

After completing the calculating, the data analysis was continued. To display the data and show the result from the questionnaire, charts, tables and figures were employed for this research. To analyze questionnaire data is a simple counting method.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

#### **4.1. QUESTIONNAIRE**

##### **4.1.1. Questions of questionnaire**

##### **4.1.2. Results of questionnaire**

#### **4.2. RECORDING**

##### **4.2.1. Paragraphs of recording**

##### **4.2.2. Results of recording**

From the results, it can be seen that although the number of participants who have appropriate pronunciation of /i:/ - /ɪ/, /ɔ:/ - /ʊ/, /u:/ - /ʊ/, /æ/ - /e/ is always accounted larger, it is considerable to have a closer look in those participants who have incorrect pronunciation.

Compared to the results from the questionnaire, the percentage of juniors, in the recording, can distinguish between English long and short vowels as well as between English vowels and Vietnamese ones is slightly higher than in the questionnaire. The ratio of inappropriate pronunciation, however, is much higher than it is in the questionnaire. Especially, this recording result also displays a negative number of juniors making errors with English vowels by getting confused between long and short vowels then changing these vowels into similar Vietnamese vowels.

#### **4.3. SUMMARY**

## CHAPTER 5

### CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 5.1. CONCLUSION

The first major finding of the research is that almost University of Foreign Language Studies' English – majored juniors come to be aware of the difference between long and short vowels. As displayed in the results of questionnaire, nearly half 11CNA07 and 11CNA08 juniors asserted that they are able to distinguish between long and short vowels. It is also quite true for the results from recording.

The second finding is that even though English – majored juniors have taken Phonetics and Phonology course, their knowledge is still seriously limited by theory. It is obviously to see from the questionnaire and recording results, other half of juniors fail to distinguish between long and short vowels or between English vowels and Vietnamese ones.

Thirdly, the reasons for these errors are:

- Lacking of knowledge of the places for tongue, lips and jaw when producing vowel sounds.

- Lacking of learning autonomy. As discussed, English-majored juniors of University of Foreign Language Studies were carefully instructed how vowels are made in their mouths by vowel chart and pictures. Yet, in reality, these students remain making number of errors as mentioned in above sections; others consider vowels are less important than consonants in pronunciation, so they ignore to practice with vowel sounds.

- One of the most common difficulties English – majored juniors have to face when producing vowel sounds is language transfer. They cannot make a distinction between English vowels and similar Vietnamese vowels.

## **5.2. RECOMMENDATION**

### **5.2.1. Suggestions for University of Foreign Language Studies' teachers**

The first and the most important thing is that teacher should figure out the problems driving students to such pronunciation errors of vowel sounds. A deep and imitate understanding of the impediments students are facing in their learning will provide teachers a better way to solve the related problems and to bring students a better result.

Secondly, it is necessary for teachers to use Vowel Chart and pictures showing the positions of the tongue, lips and jaw when they teach pronunciation or Phonetics and Phonology. They also play some of videos instructing how tongue, lips and jaw move in the mouth when English vowels are made. Here, I would like to suggest one of the videos displaying the movement of the tongue for the vowels /i, e, a, o, u/ from YouTube:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BH4D9g6D5kY>

Thirdly, teachers are suggested to help students distinguish the differences between English and Vietnamese vowels. In order to conduct this task, teacher can use two pictures: one is a Vowel Chart in which English vowels are placed at correct positions and the other

Vowel Chart shows the positions of Vietnamese vowels. By comparing some differences of the vowels between two pictures, teachers enable students to have a clearer understanding of how adjust their articulation for English vowels or Vietnamese vowels.

Fourthly, students would be greatly appreciated if the teachers create a friendly environment in pronunciation or Phonetics and Phonology classrooms. Many students are shy when teacher requires them to exactly imitate English vowels, especially for some difficult sounds like long vowels (/i: /, /ɔ: /, /u: /, /æ/), most of them hesitate to stretch their lips or raise their tongue to the right positions for these sounds. Therefore, teachers are suggested to explicitly encourage students as well as enthusiastically instruct them to produce appropriate sounds. It is also useful tell students that they will not able to have a better pronunciation if they keep being shy and reluctant during the time practice. Teachers' cordial and helpful attitudes also play a very important role in teaching pronunciation. Students will be easily depressed if they are treated differently from others better than them or be abused by their funny voices.

### **5.2.2. Suggestion for English – majored juniors**

Firstly, paying meticulous attention to pronunciation or Phonetics and Phonology lessons is never a waste of time. Students certainly obtain useful knowledge of what vowels are and how they are made in proper ways. At that time, there is no doubt that they can easily acquire the results they have expected.

Secondly, self – practice is one the most effective ways to improve English pronunciation. Besides the lessons given by teachers

in class, students should find more lessons including vowel sounds to practice; individual words and paragraphs with long and short vowels are recommended. Read out loud those words, and if possible, students can record their voices then compare their sounds with real voices of foreigners as well as figure out their own mistakes and inconsistencies. Standing in front of a mirror and read out loud the words is also another effective way for students to adjust their lips when pronouncing English long vowels which require extreme corners for lips and tongue.

Imitation, thirdly, is the best way to have a likely native pronunciation. Students should listen to English words and pay much attention to vowel sounds then try their best to imitate these words properly. English songs and films are two sources which I consider as the bests ways for me to improve English pronunciation. From my observations, when trying to sing as same as possible the melody of the song and the sounds produced by singers, I realized that this way really enhances my pronunciation.

### **5.2.3. Limitation of the research**

Although taking much effort and time consuming of the researcher, it is inevitable to remains some limitations and restrictions.

First of all, the topic carried out is quite difficult. It took considerable time for me to find the information and related books to complete the section Literature Review, especially with Vietnamese vowel sounds. Each author has their own definition and different syllables. I, though, have done my best to make clear these matters.

The second limitation is that it covers only 83 of juniors

involved in the questionnaire analysis and other 10 for recording process while the number of English – majored students are much more than that and surely among them there are remain numerous of students have problems with vowel sounds. Nevertheless, I have used great efforts to approach the data and making the results from questionnaire and recording as valid and reliable as possible.

From these limitations above, I hope other researchers will base on the strong points and avoid the weaknesses of this research for a better result.