

## CHAPTER 5

### SUMMARY, IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 5.1 Summary

This study investigated types of questions and questioning strategies that teachers employed in English classrooms, the extent that each type of question and questioning strategy elicited students' responses and factors which affected the absence of students' responses to teachers' questions. The subjects participating in this study comprised four non-native EFL teachers and four classes of their first year students making up a total of 123 students. The data of this study were derived from verbal interaction between the four teachers and their first year students in eight videotape-recorded Foundation English II classes in the second semester of the academic year 1999 at the Department of Languages and Linguistics, Faculty of Liberal Arts, Prince of Songkla University, Hat Yai Campus and from the students' responses to a questionnaire. The data were analyzed qualitatively and quantitatively. The findings of this study are summarized as follows:

1. Five types of questions were used by the teachers in the classrooms: display questions, referential questions, confirmation checks, clarification requests and comprehension checks. Of all the question types found in this study, display questions were the most frequently used by the teachers. It was found that the topic, the objectives of the lesson and the classroom context contributed to the dominance of display questions. In addition, display questions elicited the greatest number of responses from the students. This is because responding to display questions does not require much of the students' time, effort, vocabulary and grammatical knowledge in

formulating their responses. It was also found that display questions elicited the greatest number of words per response due to two reasons. First, the students' responses to display questions in this study were taken from the coursebook and the coursebook-provided responses contained a great number of words, so this contributed to the greatest number of words per response to display questions. Second, most display questions in this study required the students' currently learnt grammatical knowledge which made it easy for the students to produce complete responses to display questions.

2. Four types of questioning strategies were employed by the teachers in the classrooms: repetition, simplification rephrasing and decomposition. Of all the questioning strategies employed, repetition was the most frequently used. There are three explanations for this. First, repetition is a convenient strategy for the teachers. Second, it helps the students process questions better. Third, it provides the students with a hint for figuring out answers to questions and enables them to think about the grammatical structure and the content focus at hand. Besides, repetition elicited the greatest number of responses from the students. This might be because repetition helps the students process questions better and it provides them with a hint for figuring out answers to questions. As for the length of the students' responses, simplification elicited the greatest number of words per response. This might be because simplified questions are easier, clearer and narrower than the initial questions and thus enable the students to answer questions more easily.

3. Several factors affected the absence of the students' responses to the teachers' questions in the classrooms in this study. These factors affected the students' silence after the teachers' questions in three situations. First, the students could not answer referential questions even though they understood them. The students were unable to answer referential questions because they had limited language ability and background knowledge required by the questions and there was insufficient wait-time provided by the teachers. Second, the students did not answer

display questions even though they understood those questions and knew the answers. The students did not answer display questions because they waited for answers from the teachers, they did not want to answer the questions, they were in fear of making mistakes and they had unfavorable attitude toward speaking English in the classroom. Third, the students did not understand both display and referential questions and could not answer them. The students did not comprehend the teachers' questions because they could not keep up with the pace of the teachers' questions, they did not pay attention to the teachers' questions and the content of the lesson was too difficult and complex for them.

## **5.2 Pedagogical Implications**

Four implications can be drawn from the findings of this study. They are as follows:

1. The finding of the study that display questions were used the most frequently by the teachers indicates that the teachers asked the questions to test the students' knowledge more frequently than to elicit their opinion. Although asking a great number of display questions has pedagogical value in encouraging students to learn and practise the grammatical structure, it may not enhance their thinking and interactive skills. Besides, it may decrease their opportunities to practise using the target language to express their own ideas spontaneously. As a result, the students may not be able to produce their own utterances and cope with the expressions that have not been presented in the classroom. Therefore, if the content and focus of the lesson allow for asking referential questions, teachers should not be restricted to asking display questions and they should increase the number of referential questions in the classroom in order to enhance students' thinking and interactive skills and to provide the students with opportunities to practise expressing their own ideas spontaneously in the target language. This can better prepare students to

communicate spontaneously and appropriately in the target language both in and outside the classroom.

2. As questions have different functions in eliciting responses from students in the classroom and teachers' use of questions is crucial for developing students' language ability and communicative skills, teacher training on asking questions should be conducted. This will provide teachers with insight into various functions of questions as well as how to ask questions which are appropriate for the content and the focus of the lesson and for students' level of language ability. When teachers use questions appropriately, they will be able to elicit responses from students. This will help develop students' language ability and communicative skills.

3. Apart from types of questions, wait-time provided by teachers also had an effect on quality and quantity of students' responses. In this study, the students were unable to respond to the teachers' questions after 3.60-second wait-time. The literature suggested that teachers' waiting three to five seconds for students' responses increased quality and quantity of students' responses. Since 3.60-second wait-time was still found to be insufficient for the students in this study, teachers should provide students with wait-time longer than 3.60 seconds, so that students have enough time to think and formulate responses to their questions.

4. This study revealed that several factors inhibited the students' responses to the teachers' questions in the classrooms. These factors were the students' limited language ability and background knowledge required by the questions, insufficient wait-time provided by the teachers, the students' waiting for answers from the teachers, their not wanting to answer the questions, their fear of making mistakes, their unfavorable attitude toward speaking English in the classroom, their inability to keep up with the pace of the teachers' questions, their not paying attention to the teacher' questions and too difficult and complex content.

Keeping the above-mentioned factors in mind, teachers can prevent students' silence after their questions by following these suggestions. Teachers should ask less

difficult questions to students with low language ability, anticipate words in their questions that students may have difficulties understanding and plan to use a variety of strategies, e.g., giving clear examples and simplifying questions. In addition, teachers should provide students with background knowledge relating to the topic of the lesson before discussion. They should provide sufficient wait-time for students to formulate answers to their questions. When students wait for answers from teachers, they may call on the students to answer the question one by one. This may encourage them to participate more in classroom interaction. When teachers found that students do not want to answer questions, are in fear of making mistakes and have unfavorable attitude toward speaking English in the classroom, they should encourage the students to answer their questions by explaining the advantages of practising speaking English in the classroom, telling the students not to worry about their mistakes and asking questions to the whole class to get the students to respond in chorus. Lastly, when students do not pay attention to the lesson, teachers should draw their attention before asking questions. This can be done by telling them to listen to their questions, using pictures, or asking questions with attractive tone of voice.

### **5.3 Recommendations for Further Research**

Some recommendations for further research are proposed as follows:

1. Since this study was conducted with certain groups of students at Prince of Songkla university, the findings may not be generalized to all learners in all universities and in different educational levels throughout Thailand. Hence, this study could be replicated with teachers and students who are in different universities and educational levels in Thailand. The results of such study would explain teachers' use of questions, students' responses and silence after teachers' questions in the classroom as well as provide teachers with better understanding of verbal interaction

in the classroom and help them cope with factors affecting students' silence in the language classroom.

2. This study revealed that some students did not answer the teachers' questions because they waited for the teachers to provide answers, they did not want to answer the questions and they were in fear of making mistakes. Further research should incorporate other data collection methods such as interview to get more in-depth information about why these are the case. Also, it would be interesting to incorporate the interview to get more information about why teachers use different questioning strategies after their questions failed to elicit responses from students. This will better explain the occurrence of questioning strategies in the classroom.

3. It would be interesting to explore types of questioning strategies teachers employ to elicit responses from students with low language ability and those with high language ability. Then, types of questioning strategies which best elicit responses from these two groups of students with different language ability could be further investigated. The results of such study will raise teachers' awareness of using questioning strategies with students with different language ability and provide teachers with suggestions for appropriate use of questioning strategies to elicit responses from their students. Once teachers appropriately use questioning strategies in the classroom, students' silence will be minimized and verbal interaction in the classroom will be increased.