CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

5.0   General Discussion

From research findings, there is a relation between the vocabulary being taught and used in the classroom by the in service teacher teaching in the Fundamental Education Level from Prathomsuksa 1 to Mattayomsuksa 3 of Mahasarakham Province, Thailand and RNET. Both contain the same proportion of vocabulary according to the appropriate order of base lists' proportion for teaching, which are Base List One, Base List Two or The Offlist, and Base List Three. When compared to the vocabulary lists of the School of Linguistics and Applied Language Studies of Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand, edited by I.S.P. Nation, the teachers' choice and order of vocabulary to teach and use in the classroom at most levels also follow this proportion for teaching.

5.1   Implications for Teaching

From the varying amount of vocabulary taught for the whole term found by this study, it suggests that each teacher participating in this study gives different amount of attention to vocabulary teaching in their classrooms. It seems that the teachers loose balance in their teaching as the hindsight result of the free flowing reformed National Education Act. To cover the teaching syllabus and also to maintain the appropriate amount of attention to vocabulary teaching, a balance of each and every aspects involving teaching should be met. In order to give more freedom but also maintaining the framework of how the curriculum should be translated to teaching, The Balanced Curriculum (Waring, 2003) should be introduced in the Act.

5.1.1   The Balanced Curriculum

The Balanced Curriculum or TBC (Waring, 2003) is an ideal approach to syllabus and curriculum design that provides a framework highlighting the kinds of focus which are needed in order to learn a language. A well-balanced element in

language learning and teaching is the foundation of this approach. TBC works in several levels in education. In the micro level, it guides the teacher in preparing a class to ensure balance in teaching. In the macro level, it can be used to ascertain whether if there is balance within a course and, on an even bigger scheme, the curriculum.

There are two main elements, *input-output* or *receptive-productive modes* which are each subdivided by the nature of activities involved in each mode as *language-focused* or *fluency-focused*. Language-focused includes controlled nature of activities which emphasized on correctness of receiving and producing the language knowledge. Fluency-focused includes fluency-building nature of activities which emphasized on using the limited yet sufficient language knowledge in meaningful and communicative ways receptively and productively. Each requires different activities and demands different mental processes to achieve effective language acquisition and learning.

To make effective language acquisition and learning happen, teachers have to be flexible and responsive to learning events as they unfold because learning is dynamic. Teachers also need to be responsible for ensuring that the students get a full balance of activities and types of practice. Most importantly, the teaching should be learner's centred which correspond with what the National Education Act is aiming for.

5.1.2 The Relationship between The Balanced Curriculum and The Cycle of Learning

The hypothesis of The Cycle of Learning is that knowledge is built repetitively through series of exposures which with each extra exposure adding to the already possessed knowledge little by little. The cycle normally starts when the learner notices and raises awareness of *new* language knowledge or *refines* previous knowledge as refined from the feedback when trying to use it. From the awareness raises new hypothesis to be tested in both controlled and less controlled environment. The learner has to experiment with the knowledge to see if it is used correctly before internalizing it. This is why staying only in a discrete and isolated passive knowledge state will deny her the feedback she needs in order to assure her that she uses it

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correctly and then, therefore, could be internalized.

Since its nature is in cycle, the starting point should not be viewed as dividing solid blocks. The cycle can start anywhere because it reflects the learning process of different types of attention and learning aims. The cycle structure allows both the teacher and the student to move from one end to another and reversingly as they need and when they need. By doing so, it provides a multi-dimensional framework that allows students to work on several things simultaneously. Therefore, TBC accounts for and responds to the multi-tasking nature of language learning.

By over emphasizing one phase of learning at the wrong time can delay or even worse, retard language development. Teacher-fronted, grammar-based teaching does not provide the students with necessary meaningful practice in fluency as chunking knowledge input, experimenting or developing knowledge output in controlled or natural communicative events. Therefore, even years and years of learning, students are often unable to hold even the most basic communication.

As the cycle shows, balancing all learning and teaching elements have their contribution to language learning. By understanding and applying the cycle makes learning moves round its full circuit on providing a framework to check what is missing from the classroom and respond with balance. The understanding and application effects magnificently to teaching effectiveness because the class will stay clear from rote learning which the latest National Education Act is trying to stay clear from.

5.1.3 The Relationship between The Balanced Curriculum, The Cycle of Learning and Vocabulary Acquisition ·

Learning a language needs experimenting with it, meaning that it needs to be tried out in communication. As Coady and Huckin, 1997, Koda, 1997, Laufer, 1997 and Zimmerman, 1997 among others all agreed that vocabulary is at the heart of communication as mentioned in the introduction of this study, trying a language out needs sets of words for use. From the results of this research, it is found that one of the suspected problems in not being able to communicate in English even with years of learning for Thais is because they may not be taught with enough vocabulary to

The native speaker's vocabulary size is enormously large and very ambitious for a language learner as a second or foreign language. In order to cover or come as close to the size goal, there needs to be a systematic way in teaching and learning them to maximize and facilitate communication capacity in a limited amount of class time. In doing so, teachers need to categorize the vocabulary language learners *need* and *will use* into four levels according to immediate needs and usage: high-frequency, low-frequency, academic, and technical word level. Each level will take a language learner closer to a native speaker's vocabulary size.

The first two word levels, high-frequency and low-frequency word levels, and what we mean by *frequency* is how often a word occurs in a text. High-frequency words always to often occur in a text while low-frequency words are words we cannot predict *when* and *if* they'll occur in a text. It makes sense to focus on mastering the high-frequency words unless language learners have very special needs for language use. This is where the academic and technical words come in focus in language learning. After learning the high-frequency words, they might need to know an additional high-frequency word list for high school or university study. In addition to general academic words, they might also need to know vocabulary in their focused area of study. These words are the technical vocabulary of specific subject areas.

From linguistics studies on frequency word count, the results show that a small group of words of around 2,000 are used much more frequently than other words in the language. These words make up the foundation of communication. The number of each word's occurrence has important implications in vocabulary teaching and learning; the more frequent the word appears in use, the more attention it should receive in vocabulary teaching and learning. Because these 2,000 high-frequency words are so useful, students need to focus on them in all aspect of language use whether in listening, speaking, reading, and writing by directly studying them through different forms of usage in these modes of communication. Having a list of words we could learn and teach from sounds very appealing as it is a ready-made solution to vocabulary learning and teaching.

It *is* right in saying that it makes perfect sense in focusing on mastering the high-frequency words before moving on to other word levels. However, deciding the cutoff point between high-frequency and low-frequency words is an arbitrary decision

and as a result, made available many lists of high-frequency words to choose from. At present, the best available list is The General Service List of English Words (GSL) by West (1953). However great this list is, we have to keep in mind that the list was composed from a native speaking, western context. How language evolves depend tremendously on its context of use. Native speaking and non-native surely hold different context of language use. Composing vocabulary lists from a non-native, non-western context seems very tempting because these are flamed under the current of language usage in the language learner's context in Thailand.

Vocabulary lists composed from the language learner's context in Thailand hope to facilitate vocabulary teaching and learning by ensuring the right words be taught at the right level with exceptional proportion between word levels and the amount of coverage. The lists also set a core for vocabulary teaching and learning to be followed as a minimal requirement for every class nationwide. For curriculum and syllabus design purpose, the lists provide continuality in vocabulary teaching and learning as students progress in their command of language use. It is hope that all in all, the lists will improve English language education to make Thais more capable in communicating in English.

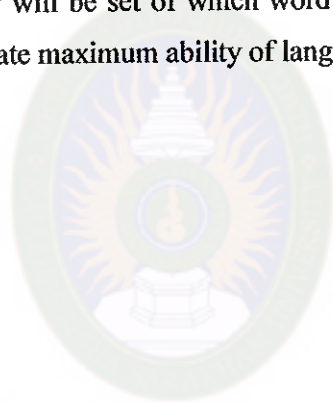## 5.3   Suggestions from the study

Because limitation of funding, this research looks only at in service teachers teaching in the Fundamental Education Level from Prathomsuksa 1 to Mattayomsuksa 3 who are located in Mahasarakham Province, Thailand. As these are sample groups, generalizing cannot be made for the whole Kingdom of Thailand. It is recommended that at least one of the regions of the country be studied in the posted issue for future study.

There is no research studying the vocabulary list in the textbooks that are claimed to be approved by the Ministry of Education of Thailand for teaching in the Fundamental Education Level. There is also no public agenda supported by research as to what basis of why these books are approved for teaching. This also implied that the vocabulary list with it is also undeclared. From the findings that the amount of words taught for the term varied in each level, it implies that some textbooks might have guided and emphasized on vocabulary teaching less than others. As to maintain

the appropriate amount of attention to vocabulary teaching in the Fundamental Education Level, there should be a national vocabulary list for each level of study, created by research-based results.

5.4 Conclusion

Even from one sample group of study, the findings of the vocabulary teaching in Mahasarakham Province caused concern. Along with the freedom that comes with the reformed National Education Act is the absence of specific guidance as to which vocabulary to teach and in what order. As a conclusion from the study, it is recommended that Thailand should have their own national English vocabulary lists in order to have core lists where every teacher can teach consistently despite of the different textbooks they use. The lists should be created with back up of hard research evidence to declare the rationale behind each word picked to be in the lists. With this, it is hope that the priority will be set of which word should be taught before others and to what level to facilitate maximum ability of language use after learning.