

# **CHAPTER 1**

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Background of the Study**

To communicate with and understand people all over the world today, we have to have an intermediary bridge to understand each other and the most important bridge is language. Learning foreign languages is essential to daily life, as foreign languages serve as an important tool for communication, education, acquisition of knowledge, livelihood and understanding the cultures and visions of the world community. Foreign languages enable learners to be aware of the diversity of cultures and viewpoints in the world community, and are conducive to friendship and cooperation with various countries (Ministry of Education Commission, 2008, p. 1).

In Thailand, the Basic Education Core Curriculum B.E. 2551 (A.D. 2008) has been used as the educational curriculum. The Ministry of Education announced the implementation of the Basic Education Curriculum 2001, which served as the core curriculum for national education at the basic level. The curriculum prescribed goals and learning standards. They contribute to learners' development by giving learners' a better understanding of themselves and others. Learners are thus able to learn and understand differences of languages and cultures, customs and traditions, thinking, society, economy, politics and administration. Learner will be able to use foreign languages for communication as well as for easier and wider access to bodies of knowledge, and will have vision in leading their lives (Ministry of Education Commission, 2008, p. 1). There are many languages used in the world community but the most common language used today is English because it is the international language, so we have to learn English to understand and communicate with others. In order to acquire English, our English skills: listening, reading, speaking and writing are needed.

Language learning is a hard task which can sometimes be frustrating. Constant effort is required to understand, produce and manipulate the target language and this

requires the four skills mentioned above of listening, reading, speaking and writing as well as the skill of vocabulary attainment. Even though vocabulary is the part of a language, it plays a very important role in language learning and teaching (Siriwan: 2007). The language ability of learners will be improved overall by vocabulary improvement (Linse, 2006), because one cannot speak, understand, read or write a foreign language without knowing a lot of words. Therefore, vocabulary learning is at the heart of mastering a foreign language (Rubin and Thompson, 1994, cited in Siriwan, 2007). Even if there are many ways to learn and teach vocabulary for the learners, it is not easy to learn and get success in vocabulary because the learning and teaching of vocabulary has lately received little attention from language teaching methodologists (Waldermar, 1977, pp. 33-57). Many teachers still use simple and old-fashioned methods in teaching that can cause learners to be uninterested in learning vocabulary. This is especially true in Thailand, Thai students have learned and studied English as a foreign language for a very long time, they have never been successful even when English was added in education curriculum for students at the primary level, and they still can not use English in daily life, as a result of lack of vocabulary. Not having a large vocabulary is one factor for the unsuccessful learning of English for example, in a news item, there are many words. If the readers do not understand the meaning of some words, they will never properly understand the stories, so the richer vocabulary they have, the better they will acquire information. Therefore, learning vocabulary is also important for students to reach the successful goal of learning English and to understand all the information in the world community.

There are many ways to teach the students vocabulary whether by role play, through songs, reading, or finding words from stories. One way that helps students in learning and also changes their attitude to learning through games. Well-chosen games are invaluable as they give students relaxation and at the same time allow students to practice language skills. Games are highly motivating since they are amusing and at the same time challenging. Furthermore, they employ meaningful and useful language in real contexts. They also encourage and increase cooperation (Ersoz, 2000) so games will help learners to improve their learning skills more easily and have fun during the learning. A variety of educational games for students exist, including board games, card games, interactive puzzles and video games. Most

students enjoy the challenge of participating in games, and the process of playing educational games should make them smarter and more capable. Students will learn and retain new words easily because games create the motivation to learn English from the competition between students. Vocabulary games bring real world context into the classroom, and enhance students' use of English in a flexible, communicative way (Huyen and Nga, 2003).

The Holy Infant Jesus Roi-Et School or Prakuman Roi-Et is one of the schools in Roi-Et Province that also has problems in teaching English vocabulary and language learning. According to the score of English in O-NET achievement report reference of 2015 test for Mattayom Suksa 3 students (Grade 9), the mean scores of the school were lower than mean level score of the school's standard. After interviewing English teachers, both native speakers and non-native speakers, the most common problems found in the classroom were the lack, misuse and misunderstanding of vocabulary of students and also the attitude of students in learning language. This is because most of the students in The Holy Infant Jesus Roi-Et School are rural students who come to school just to get a certificate from school to find a job after finishing basic education level or Mattayom Suksa 3 (Grade 9). Consequently they do not have a good attitude toward learning nor do they know how English would benefit their daily lives and so they become bored with learning language without interesting activities (Huyen and Nga, 2003).

Because of the importance of vocabulary and the problems of vocabulary learning and teaching and the advantages points of educational games mentioned above, the researcher as one of English teachers in this school aimed at using educational games to improve the students' vocabulary learning. The researcher believes that games bring relaxation and enjoyment for students, and they will learn and retain new words more easily. Games create motivation for learners of English because of the competition among students. Vocabulary games bring real world context into the classroom, and enhance students' use of English in a flexible, communicative way (Huyen and Nga, 2003). Therefore, the main purpose of this study is to study the development of English vocabulary of Mattayom Suksa 3 (Grade 9) students in The Holy Infant Jesus Roi-Et School after learning through games

## **1.2 Purposes of the Study**

The purposes of this study are to:

1.2.1 Study the effectiveness of an instructional plan to improve Matthayom Suksa 3 students' English vocabulary learning ability by using games.

1.2.2 Compare the English vocabulary learning ability of students before learning and after learning by using games for developing vocabulary learning.

1.2.3 Study the attitudes of students toward games for learning vocabulary.

## **1.3 Research Hypothesis**

The students' English vocabulary learning ability after studying by using games is higher than before studying through games.

## **1.4 Scope of Study**

### **1.4.1 Population, place and time**

The participants of the study consisted of 30 students of Matthayom Suksa 3/3 (Grade 9) in the Holy Infant Jesus Roi-Et School, selected from 122 students by using cluster random sampling. The experimental period of the study was 18 periods through 6 weeks, 3 periods a week, in the second semester of the 2016 academic year.

### **1.4.2 Scope of the contents**

The vocabulary in this study was taken from lessons 6-9 of the "Team Up" book for Matthayom Suksa 3 on the topics of "family relationships", "where's the fire?", "let's call an ambulance!", "a ransom or a reward?", "eating the rainbow" and "what's it made of?"

## 1.5 Definitions of Key terms

The major terms used in this study are defined as follows:

“Game” refers to educational games that are used in teaching in class such as card guessing, crosswords game, mime game, Who am I? , slap game and dice rolling.

“English vocabulary” refers to vocabulary appearing in lessons 6-9 of the “Team Up” book for Matthayom Suksa 3 on the topics of “family relationships”, “where’s the fire?”, “let’s call an ambulance!”, “a ransom or a reward?”, “eating the rainbow” and “what’s it made of?”

“Matthayom Suksa 3” refers to 15 years old students who are studying in Grade 9 in The Holy Infant Jesus Roi-Et School, Roi-Et.

“Attitude” refers to feeling; opinions and ideas of learners on English vocabulary learning that can be assessed by asking questions about student’s feelings during learning, learning activities and the importance of English vocabulary to them.

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