

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Statement of the Problem

Vocabulary has rapidly changed in status from a neglected aspect of language learning to an area of growing in research and publication (Carter & McCarthy, 1991). In the process of second or foreign language (L2) reading, one of the integral components, though not the only or most important, is the ability to understand individual vocabulary items in a text (Chun & Plass, 1996a). Knowing vocabulary is important for getting meaning from a text. Moreover, knowing grammatical structures enables readers to understand the relationship between words, but it does not provide access to the meaning of the sentence the way knowing the meaning of content words does (Aebersold & Field, 1999).

Barnett (1989) states that American L2 learners repeatedly claim that lack of vocabulary knowledge are a major problem when reading. In addition, English as a foreign language (EFL) learners are often confronted with words that they have to clarify before they can

continue reading the text (Carter & McCarthy, 1991). Not only does this vocabulary problem happen to higher-level L2 learners but it is also a serious problem for elementary L2 learners who have acquired less vocabulary knowledge.

Both teachers and learners face problems in vocabulary teaching and learning (Aebbersold & Field, 1999). Teachers cannot teach all the words that learners need to know because of limited classroom time. Thus, teachers should consider which words learners have to know and how to bring words to the attention of students in meaningful and useful ways.

The traditional method for glossing or annotating words is to provide a definition or explanation of the word either in the native language (L1) of the readers or in their L2. With multimedia technology, it is possible to provide various forms of vocabulary annotations, for example text, picture, video, and sound (Chun & Plass, 1996a). Chun and Plass (1997) explain that in facilitating L2 reading comprehension, the use of sound, pictures, text, animation or video not only play an important role in vocabulary acquisition and in overall text comprehension but are also unquestioned components of instructional materials for language learning. A study about L2 vocabulary acquisition by Kellogg and

Howe (1971) reveals that foreign words associated with actual objects or imagery techniques are learned more easily than those without. In addition, recent studies do not provide enough evidence as to a decisive advantage of one type of annotation over another (Al-Seghayer, 2001; Chun & Plass, 1996a; Kost et al., 1999; Siribodhi, 1995). Thus, the current study investigated the effects of three different types of vocabulary annotations: text-only, picture-only, and text-plus-picture on elementary-level EFL Thai learners.

The objectives of this study were to compare the effects of three types of vocabulary annotations -- text-only, picture-only, and text-plus-picture -- on EFL Thai learners' vocabulary immediate and delayed recall.

Research Questions

The current study was guided by the following research questions:

1. What are the effects of three different types of vocabulary annotations -- text-only, picture-only, and text-plus-picture -- on elementary EFL learners' vocabulary test scores in the immediate test?

2. What are the effects of three different types of vocabulary annotations -- text-only, picture-only, and text-plus-picture -- on elementary EFL learners' vocabulary test scores in the three-week delayed test?

Statement of Hypothesis

The hypotheses, which the study sought to test were stated as follows:

1. Among the three groups (text-only vocabulary annotations, picture-only vocabulary annotations, and text-plus-picture vocabulary annotations), the subjects who acquire vocabulary through both text and picture vocabulary annotations will get the highest scores on the vocabulary immediate test.
2. The subjects who acquire vocabulary through text-only vocabulary annotations will get higher vocabulary scores than the subjects who acquire vocabulary from picture-only vocabulary annotations in the immediate test.
3. Among the three groups (text-only vocabulary annotations, picture-only vocabulary annotations, and text-plus-picture vocabulary annotations), the subjects who acquire vocabulary through text-plus-picture vocabulary annotations will get

the highest scores on the vocabulary tests given three weeks after the reading task.

4. The subjects who acquire vocabulary through text-only vocabulary annotations will get higher vocabulary scores than the subjects who acquire vocabulary from picture-only vocabulary annotations in the three-week delayed test.

Significance of the Study

The purpose of the study was to explore the effects of using different types of vocabulary annotations to help EFL learners to increase their vocabulary immediate recall. Three benefits were expected from this study. First, there was evidence that context and annotation factors aided vocabulary learning in L2 reading (Jacobs, Dufon, & Hong, 1994; Kost, Foss, & Lenzini, 1999; Watanabe, 1997), attention should be shifted to which type of annotations affected L2 learners' vocabulary immediate and delayed recall (Wu, 2002). Recent studies did not provide enough evidence as to a decisive advantage of one type of annotation over another although there were some data referring to a positive impact of image-based annotations on L2 vocabulary acquisition (Al-Seghayer, 2001; Chun & Plass, 1996a; Kost et al., 1999; Plass, Chun,

Mayer, & Leutner, 1998; Siribodhi, 1995). Therefore, the results of this study contributed to this line of research.

The second benefit concerned the level of L2 learners. Most studies about the effects of different types of annotations on L2 vocabulary immediate recall were conducted with learners at college level (Chun & Plass, 1996a; Al-Seghayer, 2001; Plass, Chun, Mayer, & Leutner, 1998). However, there were a few studies that investigate the effects of vocabulary annotations on elementary level. The current study was conducted with elementary-level EFL learners. Thus, the result should be beneficial to both elementary school teachers and added another dimension to the field of Teaching English as a Foreign Language.

Lastly, most studies regarding the effects of the textual and pictorial annotations on L2 learners' vocabulary immediate and delayed recall were conducted with speakers of other languages (Kost, Foss, & Lenzini, 1999; Yoshii, M., Flaitz, F. 2002). Studies conducted with Thai EFL learners are rare or none. Thai is a tonal language while the languages (French, German, and Spanish) tested in other studies are not. Moreover, languages in other studies use Roman alphabets whereas Thai does not. The results of the current study might be similar or

different from the recent studies. It is therefore beneficial for the field of EFL to find out which type of annotations help EFL learners, whose first language are tonal and use non-Roman alphabets, to acquire and retain vocabulary.

Assumption of the Study

The current study assumed that the subjects answered the questions in the questionnaire and performed the vocabulary tests to the best of their knowledge and abilities.

Definition of Terms

Annotation/Glossing "A gloss is a brief definition or synonym, either in L1 or L2, which is provided with the text" (Nation, 2001). In this study, vocabulary annotation is word definition provided in three different forms: meaning in L1, picture, and meaning in L1 plus picture.

English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners	EFL learners are those who study English while living in their first language culture (Bernett, 1989).
Vocabulary acquisition	Vocabulary acquisition is a key component to successfully developing communication and literacy skill (Belisle, 1997).
Vocabulary retention	Vocabulary retention is the ability to recall or remember words after an interval of time (Wu, 2002).

Organization of the Study

In this chapter, the statement of the problem related to the effects of textual and pictorial annotations on EFL Thai learners' vocabulary acquisition and retention was discussed. Research questions, statement of hypothesis, significance of the study, assumption of the study, and definition of terms were described. Chapter Two explains theoretical background of the study and reviews empirical research about the effects of L2 vocabulary annotations in both printed and electronic texts. Chapter Three presents the method of

the study which includes subjects, reading materials, instrument, data collection procedures and data analysis. Chapter Four reports the results of the analysis. Chapter Five concludes the major findings, suggests the pedagogical implication, and recommends future studies.

PAYYAP UNIVERSITY