Thesis Title   A Comparative Study of Passive and Active Vocabulary
                                     Knowledge of Prince of Songkla University and
                                     South China Agricultural University EFL Learners

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ABSTRACT

The present study investigates relationships between three modalities of vocabulary knowledge (**passive recognition, active recall and free active written**) within two different learning contexts (i.e., Thai and Chinese contexts) and across the same two learning contexts. Bilingual Vocabulary Levels Tests were designed for determining passive recognition and active recall vocabulary sizes and a guided e-mail writing test was intended to find free active vocabulary size. Participants were university EFL learners at Prince of Songkla University (PSU) in Thailand (n=57) and South China Agricultural University (SCAU; n=85) who had nearly completed one-year Foundation English courses. SPSS 13.0, the VocabProfile, the Text Lex Compare and the FreqList were used to analyze the data. The main findings from each research question are as follows:

Research Question 1

1. For all the subjects (PSU n=57; SCAU n=85), it was found that **passive recognition** vocabulary knowledge in both groups was about 3,000 word families with PSU students having 3,021 word families and SCAU students 3,348 word families; **active recall** vocabulary knowledge was a little more than 1,000 word families with PSU students having 1,118 word families and SCAU students 1,456 word families; the average **free active written** vocabulary sizes were 86 word families for PSU students and 117 word families for SCAU students.

2. Two parallel groups were identified for the comparisons in the four research questions (PSU n=40; SCAU n=40). Significant correlations were found between **passive recognition** and **active recall** vocabularies of PSU students (.662**) and SCAU students (.557**). The correlations between **passive recognition** and **free active**

written vocabulary knowledge were different in the two learning contexts with significant correlation for SCAU students (.405**) and no significant correlation for PSU students.

Research Question 2

Significant differences were found between **active recall** and **free active written** vocabulary knowledge in the parallel groups across the learning contexts with SCAU students having 244 more word families in **active recall** test and 35 more word families in **free active written** test than PSU students.

Research Question 3

1. **Active recall** and **free active written** vocabulary knowledge increased at different rates with the shifts of the **passive recognition** vocabulary knowledge, which were similar in both PSU and SCAU learning contexts.

Significant differences were found in the **active recall** scores between the middle groups and the high groups in both learning contexts.

In contrast, no significant differences were found in the growth of **free active written** vocabulary knowledge between the low groups and the middle groups as well as between the middle groups and the high groups of PSU and SCAU students.

2. Compared across different learning contexts, significant differences were found between PSU students' and SCAU students' middle groups in **active recall** scores and between all low, middle and high groups in **free active written** vocabulary knowledge of PSU and SCAU students showing that SCAU students were better at their productive vocabulary knowledge especially in **free active written** vocabulary knowledge.

Research Question 4

For the **free active written** vocabulary knowledge of the PSU and SCAU students, significant differences were found in all word levels except the Off-list words level. On average, SCAU students have used 35 more word families than PSU students.

From a qualitative perspective, the findings are as follows:

(1) The average length of the texts produced by the two high groups was 282 tokens for SCAU students and 186 tokens for PSU students (excluding proper nouns).

(2) Word frequency analysis showed on the whole, SCAU students used a greater variety of vocabulary. PSU students used less definite article "the" and the indefinite article "a" compared with SCAU students and native speakers.

(3) PSU students used 302 word families that SCAU students did not use while SCAU students used 594 word families that PSU students did not use.

(4) A number of unique words were influenced by the culture and geographical positions in both learning contexts.

(5) As for parts of speech, SCAU students used a greater variety of conjunctions, propositions and pronouns. The result indicated that PSU students had not mastered the relative clause introduced by "which". Regarding adjectives, it was found that 92-97% of the adjectives that were used by PSU and SCAU students had a positive meaning.