

CHAPTER 5

IMPLICATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY

The results of the present study provide plenty of rich food for thought for language teachers. Two paradoxes are displayed. The first paradox is: why haven't the output-focused learning and teaching helped PSU students produce higher **AR** and **FAW** test outcomes than their SCAU counterparts, even though comparative class sizes and the testing styles would seem to give PSU students an advantage? Secondly, with big class size and about 85% objective items in the testing materials, why did SCAU students still achieve higher in **AR** and **FAW** tests than did their PSU counterparts?

5.1 Pedagogical implications

Some major implications can be drawn from the findings of this study. They are discussed in terms of the following aspects:

- (1) motivation;
- (2) curriculum;
- (3) teaching materials;
- (4) instruction time;
- (5) testing;
- (6) activating the passive vocabulary;
- (7) ways of learning and teaching high- and low- frequency words;
- (8) the unique words influenced by the culture or geographical position.

(1) First of all, the most important job might be to increase the students' motivation to study the foreign language. No matter whether a student is motivated intrinsically or extrinsically or no matter the motivation is instrumental or integrative, the greater the motivation the higher the performance.

(2) It is important to set different goals for passive and active vocabularies in the university curriculum which guide the materials design, testing, teaching and the

students' learning. Moreover, it is helpful to inform the students of the goals of their vocabulary learning.

For PSU students, it would be helpful to include detailed guidelines for vocabulary learning and teaching with numbers of words they are required to learn with a word list that includes the passive and active vocabulary.

For SCAU students, the passive vocabulary list has been offered in the curriculum, and it would be helpful to also provide an active vocabulary list.

(3) For both PSU students and SCAU students it would be very helpful if the vocabulary were in the form of word families in the vocabulary list of the textbook instead of in the form of word types. The idea of word family will to a great degree help students expand their vocabulary, facilitate their memory of vocabulary and become more familiar with the grammar including inflections.

It would be helpful to offer PSU students a systematic vocabulary list with pronunciation, and both L1 and L2 glossing for each text or unit.

It would be good to increase the quantity of new vocabulary required for PSU students to learn.

It would also be good to increase the difficulty, quantity and varieties of the texts for PSU students, in addition to the topics in the textbook.

(4) It might also be important to lengthen the instruction time for studying English.

The FE courses in Thailand last only one year while the FE courses in China last for two years. This means it is very probable that the PR and AR vocabularies of SCAU students (n= 85) will continue growing. If they can master the new vocabulary in the second year FE courses (about 1,500 word families), it is hoped that their **PR** vocabulary size will reach 3,000 to 5,000 word families which is needed to provide a basis for comprehension, and that their **AR** vocabulary size will increase too.

(5) In PSU students' tests, about half of the scores are for subjective items. SCAU students need to take advantage of the positive washback of subjective items to facilitate the output practice of the vocabulary. However, this needs to be considered critically, as present conditions in the SCAU context, such as the large class sizes and the teachers' workload, may not make such changes practical.

(6) Since both PSU students (n=57) and SCAU students (n=85) have achieved about 3,000 to 3,300 word families passive vocabulary which indicated they have

gained a minimum basis for English comprehension globally, the most important task might be to find more effective ways to better facilitate students in activating their passive vocabulary.

PSU students have much time for the active use of vocabulary in speaking and writing in class and they normally get teachers' feedback for their oral or written tasks. For PSU students, the output-focused learning and teaching seemed inadequate for activating the passive vocabulary. Therefore, other aspects should be taken into consideration such as whether the motivation is strong enough or the instruction time is enough or not.

For teachers at SCAU, while considering this point, the large class size needs to be taken into consideration at the same time. The most important point might be to use the appropriate learning and teaching strategies dealing with the low-frequency words. The teacher should not spend substantial amounts of class time explaining and instituting practice with low-frequency vocabulary according to Nation (2001). If this is carried out, SCAU students will have more time for active practice of vocabulary in class.

(7) Since 93.6% of the words in PSU students' writing and 94.7% of the words in SCAU students' writing came from the first 2,000 high frequency words and about 2,000 to 3,000 word families words are for productive use even for native speakers, it is essential that these 2,000 words be mastered productively. It is important to inform the EFL learners of high-frequency vocabulary and some low-frequency vocabulary in the curriculum or in the textbook. Usually, the 2,000-word level has been set as the most suitable limit for high-frequency words (Nation, 2001).

Meanwhile, it is also important to train English teachers and students what strategies are appropriate for different frequency words. Nation (2001) suggests some ways of learning and teaching high-frequency words including direct teaching (such as teacher explanation and peer teaching), direct learning (such as study from word cards and dictionary use), incidental learning (such as guessing from context in extensive reading and use in communication activities), and planned encounters (such as graded reading and vocabulary exercises).

Moreover, Nation (2001) suggests that when learners move to the study of low-frequency words, the teacher does not spend substantial amounts of class time explaining and having students practice vocabulary, but instead concentrates on

expanding and refining the learners' control of vocabulary learning and coping strategies. These strategies include guessing from context clues, using word parts to help remember words, using word cards, and dictionaries.

(8) The findings that both PSU students and SCAU students adopted a number of words influenced by their own culture or geographical positions indicated that in real communication, students need this part of unique vocabulary. However, for PSU students, textbooks compiled by native speakers might not cover some of the vocabulary. For SCAU students, it was almost the same situation because all the texts were chosen from those written by native speakers. Therefore, in the teaching, these words should be included for EFL learners. It would be helpful to build a unique corpus for each country.

5.2 Suggestions for further study

(1) The tasks used in the study were all written. It would be interesting to compare lexical richness of spoken and written language samples of the same people to investigate oral vocabulary knowledge as productive vocabulary knowledge.

(2) As for the development of passive and active vocabulary knowledge, it would also be meaningful to conduct a longitudinal study in which the researcher collects data over a longer period of time e.g. the one or two-year FE courses, to analyze the development of passive and active vocabulary of the university EFL learners. This will provide a better understanding of the vocabulary learning process of the students.

It would also be meaningful to investigate the development of vocabulary knowledge of EFL learners at different stages i.e. from the very beginning of learning a foreign language until the university stage.

(3) It would add to the validity of the VLTs if the equivalence of the Thai and Chinese translation had been checked by someone who is good at Thai, Chinese and English.

It would also add to the validity of the instruments if the second pilot tests could be conducted when some revisions were made in the instruments after the first pilot tests.

It would also add to the validity of the instruments if the subjects of the pilot tests were selected by more accurate method such as using the means of the subjects' English scores of the Entrance Exam or the English achievement scores of the previous semester.

(4) It is suggested that the study should be replicated if possible with different subjects at different universities since this study is a small sample design which might not well represent a big population.

(5) Many questions require further studies to answer:

Whether or not the stronger instrumental motivation, the more English instruction time, the more new vocabulary required to learn, and the more difficult and different varieties of the reading texts will nurture PSU students' vocabulary learning significantly still needs further investigation.

Is it possible that output-focused learning and teaching methodology does not fit Thai students? If not, what is the most suitable method?

Is it possible that PSU students do not adopt many vocabulary learning strategies compared with SCAU students?

How and what can be done to effectively help students activate more vocabulary knowledge for either PSU students or SCAU students? Do the high and low frequency vocabulary learning and teaching ways fit well in Thai and Chinese contexts?

Would it be helpful to offer PSU students a systematic new vocabulary list with pronunciation, both L1 and L2 glossing for each text or unit?

Why doesn't the washback effect of the testing on PSU students work satisfactorily?

How well can EFL learners master the 2000 high-frequency words passively and actively when their high school instruction ends? The related information will help the university English teachers and EFL learners decide which kinds of teaching and learning strategies to adopt.