CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY, IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Summary of the Study

This study aimed to investigate students' attitudes towards the use of formal and conversational explanation styles in two grammatical CALL packages. It also investigated the ability of the students after learning the two grammatical aspects ("Articles" and "There is/There are and Have/Has") with the grammatical CALL packages. To obtain the requisite data, sixty students from the Faculty of Natural Resources undertaking "English for Agriculture" as an elective course in the second semester of the academic year 2003 at Prince of Songkla University, Hat Yai Campus, were invited to take part in the study. All of them had used other CALL packages prior to the data collection.

According to research procedures, six research instruments were used: computerized pre-tests, progress tests, and delayed post-tests, grammatical CALL packages focusing on two lessons ("Articles" and "There is/There are and Have/Has"), questionnaires, and interviews. The students were paired and randomly divided into two groups based on their pre-test scores. For the first lesson, the students in the first group studied an "Articles" lesson with a formal explanation style while the second group studied the same lesson with a conversational one. For the second lesson, the students in the first group studied a "There is/There are and Have/Has" lesson with a conversational explanation style while the second group did the same lesson with a formal one.

After the students in both groups finished each lesson, all of them completed the computerized progress tests and responded to the questionnaires. The next day of each lesson, based on the students' click back history, eight students from both groups were randomly selected to take part in the first ongoing interview and nine students in the second ongoing interview. Two weeks after the second ongoing interview, all of the students completed the computerized delayed post-tests which were identical to the

computerized pre-tests. The following day, 30 students from both groups were randomly selected to participate in the final interview.

The data from each test, questionnaire, ongoing interview and final interview were analyzed quantitatively and qualitatively. The findings of this study are summarized below:

1. The students had positive attitudes towards both formal and conversational explanation styles since the explanations were made simple and to the point. However, they had a tendency to prefer the conversational explanation style since this style was sensational, especially praise and criticism provided in the exercises. These features made the students enthusiastic to learn.

2. The explanation styles did not affect students' learning in that the students' abilities in using two grammatical aspects were not significantly different but their abilities to use both grammatical aspects were significantly higher after they studied with both grammatical CALL packages because of the CALL nature: students' interactivity and students' control.

5.2 Implications for Teachers and CALL Designers

Based on the findings of the study, there are three major implications for teachers and CALL designers on explanation styles, tutorial, and exercises with immediate feedback. Firstly, Thai explanation styles in grammatical CALL packages could be either formal or conversational because explanations given un either style are easy to understand and to the point. However, it depends on grammatical aspects to be taught. If grammatical points to be taught are complicated, or if the purpose of a lesson is to teach new subject matters, a formal explanation style would be more effective. If students are familiar with grammatical aspects, or if a lesson is written for revision purpose, a conversational explanation style would be more suitable.

Secondly, if CALL lessons aim to help students review what they had learned, tutorial may be not necessary as they know the subject matter before. What is more important is exercises. Students need a lot more exercises to practice together with immediate feedback. There should be meaningful explanatory feedback which is to the

point. Students can save their time from reading the explanation of the whole lessons to read only relevant explanation. Nevertheless, tutorials are still deemed essential when the subject matter is new to students. Another equal important characteristic is that not only feedback to wrong answers must be provided but also to right answers. There might be the case that students choose correct answers but they still cannot fully understand why the answers are correct. Therefore such feedback is important as it helps reinforce their understanding. Lastly, immediate feedback with a conversational explanation style is suggested since it makes the lesson user-friendly, especially when praise and criticism are offered.

5.3   Recommendations for Further Research

On the basis of this study, some recommendations for further research are:

1. Because of time constraints of the present study, some variables such as gender, age, language aptitude, learning style, and level of English proficiency were not taken into account. Further research should include these variables to examine if they affect students' attitudes towards explanation styles and students' learning outcomes. For example, gender might affect students' attitudes towards the explanation style. Perhaps, male students might prefer a formal explanation style and this preference might enhance their learning outcomes.

2. The complexity of each grammatical aspect itself is different. Some may be difficult to students, while some are easy. It may be worthwhile investigating whether other problematic grammatical aspects, which have the same level of complexity influence students' attitudes towards explanation styles.

3. Further research should experiment on the effectiveness of feedback provided in class by teachers as against by CALL packages to find out student' attitudes towards two different types of feedback and if the positive attitudes can promote students' learning outcomes.