

Primary Students' use of Picture Book for Vocabulary Learning In a Global English Context

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Research Article

This study investigated primary students' use of picture book for learning vocabulary in a Global English Context. An experimental research designed is applied using one group pretest-posttest, lesson plan and picture book entitled "Transportation" as research instruments. The sample comprises 40 students obtained by purposive sampling out of 80 third grades enrolled in primary school located within Muang Pitsanulok, Thailand. The main analysis was carried out using t-test (one-tailed).

The finding shown that the participants' overall post-test scores were significantly higher than their pre-test scores at the level of 0.01, confirming that the use of picture book was able to improve the students' achievement in English vocabulary acquisition. The finding also suggested a further study on cognitive load theory (CLT) as a meaningful mean of storing the newly improved vocabulary learning into student's long term memory which is true and lifelong learning resource of 21st Century which English is no longer foreign language but global.

Keywords: Primary students, Vocabulary Learning, Picture Book, Global English context.

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การใช้สมุดภาพเพื่อการเรียนรู้คำศัพท์ภาษาอังกฤษในบริบทภาษาโลก ของผู้เรียนระดับประถมศึกษา

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บทความวิจัย

บทคัดย่อ

การวิจัยครั้งนี้เป็นการวิจัยเชิงทดลองกลุ่มเดียวมีตัวตุประสังค์เพื่อศึกษาการใช้สมุดภาพเพื่อการเรียนรู้คำศัพท์ภาษาอังกฤษในบริบทภาษาโลกของผู้เรียนระดับประถมศึกษา เครื่องมือที่ใช้ในการวิจัยได้แก่ แผนการจัดการเรียนรู้และสมุดภาพ เรื่อง “Transportation” กลุ่มตัวอย่างที่ใช้ในการวิจัยได้แก่ นักเรียนระดับประถมศึกษาในเขตพื้นที่จังหวัดพิษณุโลกจำนวน 40 คน ด้วยวิธีการคัดเลือกแบบเฉพาะเจาะจง วิเคราะห์ข้อมูลด้วยการทดสอบที่ (t-test)

ผลการวิจัยพบว่า ผลสัมฤทธิ์การเรียนรู้คำศัพท์ภาษาอังกฤษของกลุ่มตัวอย่างเพิ่มสูงขึ้นอย่างมีนัยสำคัญทางสถิติ (0.01) การใช้สมุดภาพช่วยให้ผู้เรียนระดับประถมศึกษาเพิ่มผลสัมฤทธิ์การเรียนรู้คำศัพท์ภาษาอังกฤษ นำไปสู่ข้อเสนอแนะสำหรับการทำวิจัยครั้งต่อไปที่ควรศึกษาการประยุกต์ใช้ทฤษฎีการกระทำการทำงานทางปัญญา (Cognitive Load Theory : CLT) เพื่อช่วยให้ผู้เรียนจดจำคำศัพท์ภาษาอังกฤษได้ในระบบความจำระยะยาว (long-term memory) ที่มีการเก็บความจำไม่จำกัดและส่งต่อโครงสร้างทางปัญญาของผู้เรียน อันเป็นจุดมุ่งหมายแห่งการเรียนรู้ที่คงทนในศตวรรษที่ 21 ยุคที่ภาษาอังกฤษได้ก้าวสู่ความเป็นภาษาโลก

คำสำคัญ: ผู้เรียนระดับประถมศึกษา การเรียนรู้คำศัพท์ สมุดภาพ ภาษาอังกฤษในบริบทภาษาโลก.

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Introduction

English literacy is in fact the key that allows greater opportunity for higher education and ensures sustainable development for young learners was explained as one of powerful domain for 21st century (Partnership 21, 2008). To acquire English as a global language, vocabulary learning is considered one of the most critical role in both written and oral communication (Mathukorn, 2015). According to Gersten et al. (2007) the purposes of vocabulary learning are to improve understanding of word meaning, to ensure that learners can use these words to communicate and to encourage learners to use these words in the process of further learning. There are several international and domestic scholars whose study reinforced the importance of vocabulary. First, McCarthy (2003) stated that no matter how well the students learn grammar, no matter how successfully the sound of L2 are mastered, without word to express a wide range of meaning, communication in an L2 just cannot happen in any meaningful way. Second, Harmer (2001) stated that structure was compared to the skeleton of language, then it was vocabulary that forms the vital organs and the flesh. Likewise, Thai learner aiming to gain access to enormous information from various parts of the world, they must acquire vocabulary knowledge sufficiently (Mathukorn, 2015)

With total awareness of the paradigm pointing out that English vocabulary learning is crucial, Thai government acts accordingly by identifying vocabulary knowledge as one of competence standard of English language learning. By acquiring vocabulary of around 1,050-1,200 words (concrete and abstract words) Grade 6 graduate will be able to communicate fluently in listening, speaking, reading and writing (OBEC, 2008)

Refer to the statement that English vocabulary learning is the necessary path leading to English literacy which finally becomes a provision for 21st century citizenship, this study aims to improve primary students' vocabulary learning achievement by using picture books in the category of "Transportation." The specific research question explored in the present study is:

Does the English vocabulary acquisition of the primary students improve after applying a picture book entitled "Transportation"?

Theoretical Background

Vocabulary Learning

The vocabulary in English language can be classified as meaning vocabulary, literacy vocabulary, receptive vocabulary and productive vocabulary. Meaning vocabulary is referred to those that will be spoken or heard during a conversation. Literacy vocabulary involves those that will be used while students are reading or writing a text. Meanwhile receptive vocabulary represents to words that can be understood, including spoken, written, or signed words. In contrast, expressive vocabulary represents to words that students can perform for example, by speaking or writing (Pikulski and Templeton, 2004).

When teaching a new language, the importance of acquiring useful vocabulary comes in the first priority. It is simply because vocabulary gives fundamental support four components of language, namely: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. If teachers can employ effective strategies for teaching vocabulary, they could facilitate students' proficiency in the four skills (Nam, 2010). In the same fashion, vocabulary is one of the most significant components of language learning and teaching of a foreign language since it endeavors learner of the language access to all forms of oral and written communication of the word. It is also a fundamental aspect of English literacy. The language learner has to master the vocabulary knowledge and work on improving it to produce the language. So, knowing a word means understanding of abundant facets of the vocabulary knowledge that is a multidimensional and complex construct (Faraj, 2016).

There is no doubt that vocabulary puts great impact on learning and teaching English language but the effective vocabulary pedagogical technique to help learners expand their vocabulary requires greater effort from a teacher or an educator. The utmost aim in term of vocabulary learning is when young learners perceive a word different from the first time they engage it. It simply suggests that meaningful learning is achieved.

Whereas a considerable amount of research has examined effective vocabulary teaching and learning, one particular technique has drawn the researcher's attention.

Picture book

Typically picture book is the work of art created using a wide variety of media. It might be simple charcoal sketches, watercolor or acrylic paintings, mixed-media collages of found objects and torn paper, or mosaics of colored tissue paper or broken glass. It embodies the interaction between the visual and the verbal that defines this genre. Its illustrations depict

movement, emotions, and story and hold readers' interest, supplying elements of the story that do not appear in written form (Malu, 2013).

The advantage of picture book includes not only its availability or the fact that it can be accessed within schools, libraries and most importantly from world wide web, but also effective learning assistant kit which creates intellectual stimulation, linguistic challenge, literature fulfillment and lastly educational reward (Hsiang-Ni, 2009).

The picture book is considered a genre of children's literature in which illustrations, designs and words usually tell the story. It is the meaningful combination of illustration, words practically complete one another. The readers, young learners in particular often understand the story by looking at them (Culham & Coutu, 2008). Also indicated by Hsiang-Ni (2009) picture book is recognized as an effective learning material. It functions as an illustration of simplified natural languages with colorful pictures, which underprivileged learners may find informative and enjoyable. Accordingly the book's illustration, whatever the medium, creates a bond between the children's eyes and ears (Malu, 2013).

A Global English Context in Thai Primary School

English is nowadays categorized as a global language in Thai society. Students go to school to learn English every. In fact, it is prescribed in the Basic Education Core Curriculum B.E. 2551 (A.D.2008) Primary students will study English language more than 360 hours (OBEC, 2008) Aiming to enable primary learners to acquire a favorable attitude towards English, to communicate in various situations, to seek knowledge, to pursue further higher education, Young learners will be engaged to 4 major contents and one of those contents involves language and relationship with Community and the World. The description includes the use of English in various situations, both in the classroom and the outside community and the global society, forming a basic tool for further education, livelihood and exchange of learning with the global society (OBEC, 2008). Indeed, this implemented content is one of characteristics of a global language stated by David Doms (2003) who proposed that there were 2 important ways for a language to achieve genuinely global status. Firstly, a language can be made the official language of a country, to be adopted as a medium of communication by government, the law courts, the media, and the educational system. Secondly, a language can be entitled a priority in a country's foreign-language teaching. It becomes the language which children are most likely to be taught when they arrive in

school, and the one most available to adults who – for whatever reason – never learned it, or learned it badly, in their primary educational level.

According to the review of literatures related to English vocabulary acquisition, picture book was considered one of meaningful children literatures. Young learners are able to understand the content easily through pictures (Culham & Coutu, 2008). In accordance with the current English language learning and teaching in Thai primary school, learners are encouraged to use foreign languages to communicate about various situations in their daily life including transportation which is one of vocabulary categories derived from English textbooks recommended by The Ministry of Education. With such a livelihood engaging topic, they are able to relate the English vocabularies they have learned in English classroom to their own daily activities. The researcher, therefore, would like to draw this study's hypothesis as :

With the use of picture book entitled “Transportation”, primary students will be able to enhance their vocabulary acquisition in a global English Context.

Methodology

Participants

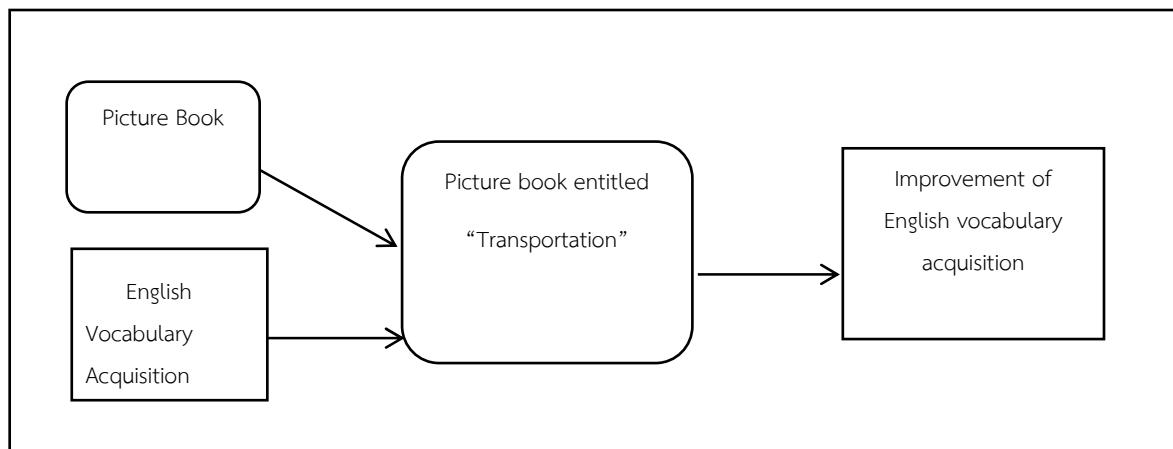
Using a purposive sampling technique, participants of this study comprise 40 students obtained out of 80 third grades enrolled in primary school located within Muang Pitsanulok district, Thailand. The participants had aged between 8 and 10 years old and were studying in the same class where the researcher was teaching during the 1st academic semester of 2016. Table 1 presents the characteristics of participants being investigated in this study. According to the following table, most students are poor in English. 60% of the participant had low level of English background.

Table 1 presents the characteristics of participants

Characteristics	Categories	Frequently	%
English Background	Low	24	60
	Average	8	20
	High	8	20
Total		40	100

Research design

This study applied an experimental research design and implements one group pretest-posttest. Below please find a conceptual framework applied for the study



Research Instrument

Lesson plan

The lesson plans were conducted in accordance with the two bases including the analysis of English language learning area and its objectives were derived from The Thai Basic Education Core Curriculum B.E. 2551 (A.D. 2008) and the analysis of the existing problems facing by Thai primary students in term of their vocabulary knowledge. The vocabularies in category of transportation, selected to be learned during the experimental period, were derived from English textbooks recommended by The Ministry of Education. In order to ensure the content validity, these lesson plans were submitted to and approved by the school's head of Foreign Language learning group prior to the study.

Picture Book "Transportation"

This picture book is a researcher designed and implemented during the experimental period. On the first page, 6 different vehicles were illustrated together with vocabularies so that the students can be able to match the visuals with the written forms. On the next page, the students were presented the picture of small town depicting the neighborhood, the road, the railway, the river and the sky. On the third page, the illustration of the same town depicting the railway where students can see the train, the bus stop where the bus was parked, the airplane was in the sky, the river where people were on the boat, and the small road where people were driving their car and children were riding their bicycle. This helped

increase the students' interaction between the pictures and the texts. This was intended to reduce external cognitive load they might come across (Mathukorn, 2015).



Figure 2 Illustration of the picture book “Transportation”

Assessment instrument

There were two instruments conducted and applied for assessment purpose. Firstly the pretest instrument of 10 items of written vocabulary was used to measure the primary students' English vocabulary knowledge prior to the experiment. Secondly the posttest instrument of 10 items of both visual and written vocabulary was used to measure those following the experiment.

Procedure

The researcher conducted 3 different research instruments based upon the analysis of learning area of foreign language, The Basic Education Core Curriculum B.E. 2551 (A.D.2008) and applied for collecting data from the selected participants during second semester of 2559 academic year as following :

1. First the researcher began the teaching with PPP approach by presenting the written form of transportation vocabularies. The researcher pronounced those vocabularies and the students repeated one by one.
2. After that the researcher continued with the Practice session. The students were asked to play a hangman game. The instruction was to have students trying to fill the missing vowels in order to form the correct vocabulary.
3. Finally it was the Production session which the students spent 15 minutes to do the pretest of 10 items of written vocabulary.

4. The researcher continued on the following week applying the picture book ‘Transportation’ to replace the hangman game during the Practice session. Subsequently to 3 weeks, students took the posttest of 10 items of both visual and written vocabulary aiming to measure the students’ English vocabulary knowledge following the experiment.

Data Analysis

To answer research question, t-test (one-tailed) was used to analyze and interpret the results from the pretest and posttest of each participant.

Findings and Discussion

The following Table 2 presents the students’ achievement in English vocabulary acquisition. The columns of the table represent the frequency and percentage of the pretest and posttest, while the rows of the table represent three ranges of the score.

Table 2 students’ score in English vocabulary acquisition

Range of Score	Pretest		Posttest	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
0-5 points	20	50	0	0
6-7 points	12	30	8	20
8-10 points	8	20	32	80
Total	40	100	40	100

Referred to the table above, the finding indicated that 50 % of students had scored less than 5 points, 30% had scored 6 to 7 points and only 20% had scored 8-10 points during the pretest. 80 % of those students, however, were in highest range (8-10 points) None of them had scored less than 5 points during the posttest.

In Table 3 presents the participants’ overall scores of vocabulary acquisition before and after using the picture book entitled “Transportation”.

Table 3 participants’ scores of vocabulary acquisition before and after using the picture book entitled “Transportation”

Participants	Pretest		Posttest		t-test (one-tailed)		
	\bar{x}	S.D.	\bar{x}	S.D.	t	df	Sig.
n = 40	5.45	2.17	8.85	1.63	13.32	39	0.01

Due to the table above, the pretest's average score was 5.45 (S.D. = 2.17, while the posttest's average score was 8.85 (S.D. = 1.63). It indicated that 40 participants' posttest scores were significantly higher than their pre-test scores at a level of 0.01. This significant difference confirmed that the use of picture book improved primary students' English vocabulary acquisition.

Although the finding of this study confirmed primary students' improvement in English vocabulary acquisition, it rarely ensures that the information learnt and obtained after the experiment will be transferred from working memory to long term memory. It is clearly that the experiment arouses the students to construct new information within their working memory which helps store them to be transferred to and stored in long-term memory for future use. Somehow a huge load of information is held in young learners' long term memory. The greater amount of information in long term memory can be used by working memory to manage the external cognitive load. Nevertheless, working memory is compelled in capacity that is processing a finite amount of new information at a time (Xuan Jiang, 2014). As such, being unable to store these vocabularies into their long term memory, unable to recall them after a period of time, or unable to deal with external cognitive load, those young learners may not genuinely acquired. In fact, Rubin (1987, p. 29) summarized that learning is the process by which information is obtained, stored, retrieved, and used". As agreed by Torcasio & Sweller (2010) that learning means storing information in long term memory to be used later, which is to say, if "nothing has been stored in long term memory, nothing has been learned"

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