



คำศัพท์ภาษาอังกฤษในหนังสือแบบเรียน
สำหรับผู้เรียนในระดับประถมศึกษา
ในประเทศไทย

● นายรัชวุฒิ มาตวังแสง

คำศัพท์ภาษาอังกฤษในหนังสือแบบเรียนสำหรับผู้เรียนใน ระดับประถมศึกษาในประเทศไทย Lexical Input in ELT Coursebooks Used in Thai Primary Schools: A Corpus Study

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บทคัดย่อ

สำหรับการศึกษาขั้นพื้นฐานในประเทศไทย ภาษาอังกฤษได้ถูกกำหนดให้ใช้สอนเป็นภาษาต่างประเทศ โดยกระทรวงศึกษาธิการได้กำหนดเนื้อหาสาระและจำนวนคำศัพท์ที่ผู้เรียนจะได้เรียนรู้เมื่อจบการศึกษาในระดับประถมศึกษา ซึ่งผู้เรียนต้องเรียนภาษาอังกฤษในวงคำศัพท์ตามหัวเรื่องเกี่ยวกับตนเอง ครอบครัว โรงเรียน สิ่งแวดล้อม อาหาร เครื่องดื่ม เวลาว่างและนันทนาการ สุขภาพและสวัสดิการ การซื้อขาย และลมฟ้าอากาศ แต่อย่างไรก็ตามหลักสูตรไม่ได้ระบุคำศัพท์และจำนวนคำที่เหมาะสมในแต่ละหัวเรื่อง ดังนั้นจึงเป็นอุปสรรคสำหรับผู้เรียนและครูผู้สอนในการเลือกคำศัพท์เพื่อใช้ในการเรียนการสอนให้สอดคล้องกับหลักสูตรของกระทรวงศึกษาธิการ การศึกษาครั้งนี้จึงได้สำรวจหนังสือแบบเรียนภาษาอังกฤษที่ใช้กันอย่างแพร่หลายในระดับประถมศึกษาในประเทศไทย และเลือกหนังสือแบบเรียนที่นิยมใช้มากที่สุดจำนวน 3 ชุด เพื่อวิเคราะห์คำศัพท์หลักที่ปรากฏรวมในหนังสือแบบเรียนนำมาเปรียบเทียบกับคำศัพท์มาตรฐานสากล 2,000 คำหลัก โดยใช้โปรแกรมวิเคราะห์คำศัพท์ที่เรียกว่า Range Program และจัดคำศัพท์หลักที่ปรากฏรวมในหนังสือแบบเรียนมาจัดเข้าหัวเรื่องตามเนื้อหาที่กระทรวงศึกษาธิการกำหนดไว้ จากการศึกษาพบว่าหนังสือแบบเรียนที่ถูกเลือกมีจำนวนคำศัพท์ที่เหมาะสมกับระดับประถมศึกษาเมื่อเปรียบเทียบกับคำศัพท์มาตรฐานสากล (GSL) และสามารถจัดเข้าหัวเรื่องตามเนื้อหาที่กระทรวงศึกษาธิการกำหนดได้อย่างไรก็ตามคำศัพท์มาตรฐานสากล 2,000 คำนี้มีความสำคัญอย่างยิ่งสำหรับครูหรือผู้เกี่ยวข้องซึ่งควรตระหนักในการเลือกใช้คำศัพท์ที่เหมาะสมกับระดับชั้นเพื่อประโยชน์ที่จะเกิดกับนักเรียน

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Abstract

In Thai primary schools, the national curriculum under the Ministry of Education has offered English courses and provided outlines for contents and words taught across the nation. After graduation, learners had to gain better, told through the established framework, namely myself, my family, my school, the environment, foods, beverages, free time and recreation, health and welfare, selling and buying and the internet, and would be able to use one word sentences, phrases, simple sentences and compound sentences accurately. However, there is no detailed claim of exact words to represent in each theme as the curriculum states. In practice, this could lead to differences and difficulties for practitioners in terms of word choices and contents to be taught in classroom. Thus, the primary goal of this study was to compare the English headwords found in the English coursebooks which were widely used in Thai primary schools throughout the country. Another goal was to establish those words found in the English textbooks into themes. In response to those goals, three series of English coursebooks widely used in Thai primary schools were purposively chosen for the study. The Range program was employed to compare and analyze the English headwords of the chosen textbooks. The study revealed three series of the English coursebooks provided sufficient proportions of vocabulary essential for primary school students to build up their lexical knowledge, the most 2,000 high frequency words in particular. In effect, the classification of the words found in the study could be established in 10 different themes as per the Ministry of Education. In conclusion, *GSL* words were sizable proportions of useful for teachers with a well prepared instruction and provided an adequate portion for learners in the classroom.

Introduction

Learning a vocabulary has been considered to be a very important part of learning a language. As far as we know the more the learners gain words, the more they can improve. Of course, the better they would express their thoughts to others. However, if language learners lack knowledge of vocabularies, they are likely to struggle in reading texts. Vocabulary knowledge has come to be recognized as a critical feature of all language abilities in general and reading ability in particular (Koda, 1989; McKeown & Curtis, 1987; Nagy, 1988; Nation & Coady, 1988; Stanovich, 1986). In other words, vocabulary knowledge has played an important role in learning a language. With reference to the importance of vocabulary knowledge, Hu and Nation (2000) had studied the relationship between vocabulary knowledge and reading comprehension to indicate that at the 80% text coverage (roughly one unknown word in every

five running word.) none understand. At the 95% coverage (roughly one unknown word in every two text lines), some learners would be able to comprehend the text, but most of them did not. Consequently, they concluded that for largely unassisted reading for pleasure, learners would need to know around 98% (two , nknown words in 100) of the coverage of running words in the text.

In Thailand, for primary schools, the Ministry of Education's policy, curriculum (The Basic Education Core Curriculum B.E. 2551 (A.D. 2008) has been determined by the study frames of context and vocabulary knowledge which Thai learners are expected to learn under the themes namely, myself, family, schools, the environment, foods, beverages, free time and recreation, health and welfare, selling and buying and the climate with vocabulary of around 1,050 1,200 words (concrete and abstract words). However, there is no detailed claim of exact words to be set in each theme as the curriculum states. Likewise, there are many different English coursebooks published by different authors available in Thailand. It is assumed that all English coursebooks published both in and outside the country meet standards of the Ministry of Thai Education in terms of content and word choice.

Therefore the purposes of the study were to investigate vocabulary found in the coursebooks used in Thai primary schools in order to compare the words with those from the GSL and to set the overlapped words from both the coursebooks and the GSL as basewords being grouped according to the determined themes: myself, my family, my school, the environment, foods, beverages, free time and recreation, health and welfare, selling and buying and the climate. The findings would be used as a guideline for designing a syllabus and selecting a coursebook to be employed in primary schools. In addition to a pedagogical practice, the findings would be used to fill a gap for students in order to extend their vocabulary size, and as guidelines to develop students' vocabulary size for core studies and supplementary courses in language teaching and learning for Thai primary school learners.

Purposes of the study

The first objective of this study was to investigate vocabulary found in the coursebooks used in Thai primary schools in order to compare the words with those from the GSL and AWL. The other objective was to set the overlapped words from both the coursebooks and the GSL and AWL as basewords being grouped according to the determined themes: myself, my family, my school, the environment, foods, beverages, free time and recreation, health and welfare, selling and buying and the climate

Research questions

1. How many words in the selected coursebooks are related to the General Service List of English Words (GSL)?
2. What words related to the General Service List of English Words (GSL) can be grouped and set into themes according to a word frequency?

Scope of the study

This study mainly emphasizes the investigation and the comparison of words occurring in popular coursebooks used in Thai primary schools throughout Thailand. There are popular top three coursebooks which are used in the primary schools. Each series of the coursebooks used in the study consists of six different volumes. There are totally eighteen coursebooks under this study:

Say Hello (grade 1-6) ; Mac PressCo., LTD

Project : Play & Learn (grade 1-6) ; Khurusapha Ladprao Publishing, Ministry of Education

New Aha English (grade 1-6) ; Aksorn Charoen Tat ACT. Co.LTD

The wordlists were investigated and compared to those from the selected coursebooks and the General Service List of English Words (*GSL*) by using the RANGE program. Finally the overlapped words were set as a list of headwords according to the curriculum statement, and then classified into the themes according to a word frequency (Leech, 2001)

Research methodology

The *RANGE* program is a Windows based program developed by Paul Nation and Alex Heatley of Victoria University, Wellington and freely available from <http://www.vuw.ac.nz>. It can apply three distinct word lists, called Baseword lists, to any text, and can sort the text vocabulary into three categories of headwords from each list, and a category of words outside all three lists, making four categories altogether. This program has been used with the text based studies of Hirsh and Nation (1992), Laufer and Nation (1995) and Coxhead (2000). The English coursebooks used in the study were Say Hello (grade 1-6) ; Mac PressCo.,LTD, Project : Play & Learn (grade 1-6) ; Khurusapha Ladprao Publishing, Ministry of Education and New Aha English (grade 1-6) ; Aksorn Charoen Tat ACT. Co.LTD

Procedures

The study adapted a computer method as used in ege e rom's study (2008) as the following:

Step I: Investigation and comparison of words in the target coursebooks and the *GSL* lists. The words in the target coursebooks were listed and combined and then checked against with the wordlist. of the three basewords by the RANGE program.

Step II: Construction of the baseword list of the words found in the target coursebooks and a General Service List of English Words (*GSL*). Words of the two lists were checked against each other by the RANGE program.

Step III: Classification of the wordlists of the three series of the target coursebooks into 7 themes for grade 1-3 and 10 themes for grade 4-6 according to the Ministry of Thai Education by a word frequency. Before classification of the wordlists of the three series was made, the baseword lists of the three series were carefully checked to make sure all the words in the lists were included at the right levels and they all had the same family members.

Results

Table 1: Comparing the number of words appearing in Terms of word families and coverage in the Three series of the Target English textbooks against the *GSL* and *AWL*

Coursebooks	1st 1,000 n	2nd 1,000 n	3rd 1,000 n	Proper Names	Coverage
Say Hello (grade 1)	704 (70.4%)	409 (40.9%)	135 (13.5%)	319 (3.93%)	92.39%
Project : Play & Learn (grade 1)	664 (66.4%)	404 (40.4%)	51 (8.94%)	295 (2.37%)	89.81%
New Aha English (grade 1)	617 (61.7%)	343 (34.3%)	41 (7.19%)	213 (4.21%)	89.95%

Note : Percentage coverage was calculated from the number of token in the text.

Table 1 showed that the numbers of the first 1,000 words in three English coursebooks ranged from 61.7% to 70.4%, yielding considerable numbers of the 1st 1,000 *GSL* words in each list. Based on the numbers found in each list, the three target English coursebooks had provided a rather different total number of the 1st 1,000 *GSL* words; that was, 617, 664 and 704 out of 1,000 words respectively. The target English coursebooks were not likely to give a very big size for enhancing readability in each series, when we looked at the percentage, but learners, however, were considered to learn them.

For the 2nd 1,000 *GSL*, the three target English coursebooks; Say Hello, Project: play and learn, and New Aha English, presented 409 (40.9%), 404 (40.4%), and 343(34.3%) words out of the 2nd 1,000 *GSL* words respectively. If compared to the portions of the 1st 1,000 *GSL* words, the three target English coursebooks did not seem to provide a big size of the 2nd 1,000 *GSL* words. However, based on different portions of 570 academic words occurring in the three target English coursebooks, this was considered a considerable size of academic words since there was 77 words in series of Say Hello, 51 words in a series of Project: Play & Learn, and 41 words in a series of New Aha English. In other words, there were 13.5%, 8.94%, and 7.19% in a series of Say Hello, Project: Play & Learn and New Aha English consecutively. To this aspect, it was not essential for primary students to acquire such academic words. Unlike academic words, proper names were considered frequency words since students could guess their meanings from context while reading. According to the finding in this study, there were 319, 295, and 213 proper names in the order of Say Hello, Project: Play & Learn and New Aha English. In other words, they were accounted for 3.93%, 2.37%, and 4.21% respectively. In terms of proper names, such words could be understood in the context and were counted as high frequency words because students could guess their meanings from its context.

In terms of readability, text coverage was looked at. There were 92.39% in a series of Say Hello, 89.81% in a series of Project: Play & Learn, 89.95 % in a series of New Aha English. These data indicated that the three series of English coursebooks were well written for readability according to text coverage since a proportion of the high frequency words normally contained around 82% of text coverage in general.

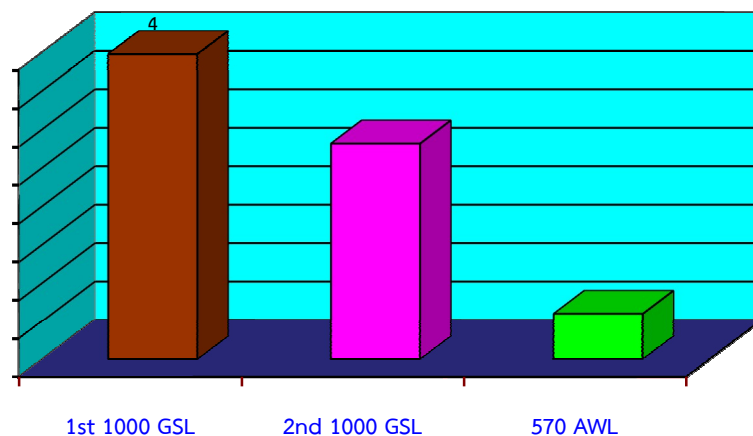


Figure 1: Comparing the total overlap of the words in the wordlists of the three series of the target English coursebooks (grade 1-6) against the GSL and AWL

As seen, three things were shown in Figure 1: (1) the total overlap of the 1st 1,000 GSL words, (2) the total overlap of the 2nd 1,000 GSL words, and (3) the total overlap of the AWL words. There were 796 of the 1st 1,000 GSL words shared by the three target English coursebooks, yielding 79.60% overlap of words which appeared in three coursebooks. This made up a remarkable proportion of the words the three English coursebooks share. Based on the numbers found in the list, the three target English coursebooks provided a rather different total number of the 1st 1,000 GSL words; that was, 704, 644, and 617 out of 1,000 words respectively. These figures showed that the total numbers of 1st 1,000 GSL in the three target English coursebooks were not likely to give a very big size for enhancing readability, when we looked at the coverage. However, the wordlists in the 1st 1,000 GSL of the three target English coursebooks had to be practically used and directly taught for class instruction.

According to the 2nd 1,000 GSL, the three target English coursebooks; Say Hello, Project: play and learn, and New Aha English, shared 564 (56.4 %) words of the 2nd 1,000 GSL words. If compared to the portions of the 1st 1,000 GSL words, the three target English coursebooks did not seem to provide a large size of the 2nd 1,000 GSL words. As we knew these wordlists were overlapped from the English primary school coursebooks. Thus, with reference to the numbers of words found in the three target coursebooks, it could be said that there were rather small sizes appearing in the number of words found in the three target English coursebooks.

Based on different portions of 570 academic words occurring in the three target English coursebooks, there were about 121(21.22%) which provided a little difference in the three series. As a whole, there was a very small size in the number of the AWL words found among

the three target English coursebooks because the *AWL* words actually were to emphasize a .caidic field and occurred frequently over e wide range of academic TauTs as varied as Arts, science, commerce, and law. However, the wordlists in the 570 *AWL* of the three target English coursebooks had to be practically used for students at upper level and/or in a specific field.

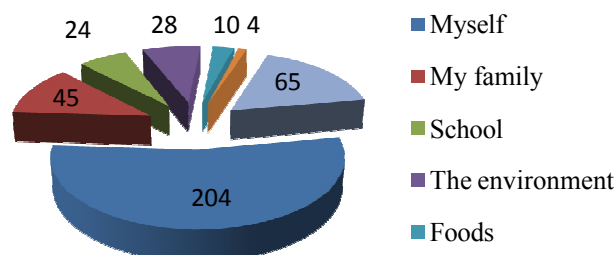


Figure 2: Grouping the Total overlap of the words in the wordlists of the Three Target English i oursebooks against the GSL and AWL according to the Themes for Grade 1

As shown in Figure 2, there were 470 headwords including 380 words and 90 k, gi Tion words for grade 1. The theme “Myself” contained 204 headwords of the total overlapped one. 45 headwords appeared in “My keh dR” 24 headwords in “My .i f t” 28 headwords th “The environment” and 10 headwords in “Food”. There were nly 4 headwords i ccurring in “Beverages”. “Free time and Recreation” had 65 headwords.

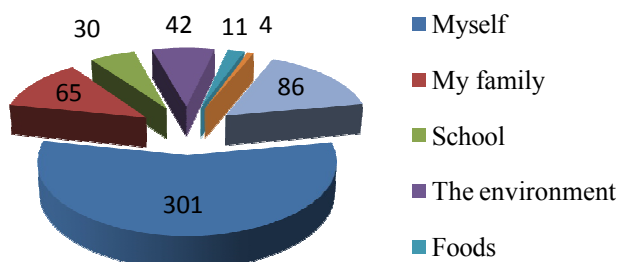


Figure 3: Grouping the total overlap of the words in the wordlists of the three target English coursebooks against the GSL and AWL according to the themes for Grade 2

Based on the numbers found in Figure 3, there were 660 headwords comprising of 539 words and 121 function words, grouped according to the following themes; “Myself” contained 301 headwords, “My family” 65 headwords, “My school” 30 headwords, and “The environment” 42 headwords. There were 11 headwords about “Foods”, 4 headwords about “Beverages”, and 86 headwords about “Free time and Recreation”.

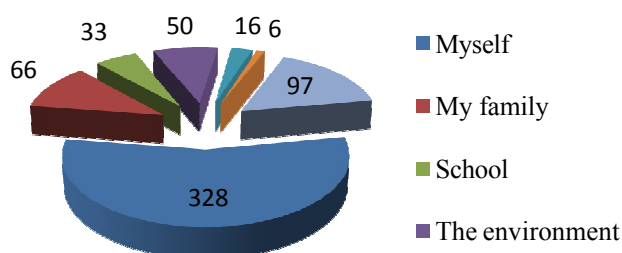


Figure 4: Grouping the total overlap of the words in the wordlists of the three target English coursebooks against the GSL and AWL according to the themes for Grade 3

As indicated in Figure , there were 731 headwords appearing 596 words and 135 function words for grade 3. “Myself” contained 328 headwords of the total overlap words, “My family” 66 headwords, “My school” 33 headwords, “The environment” 50 headwords and “Food” 16 headwords. There were 6 headwords appearing in “Beverages” and 97 headwords in “Free time and Recreation”.

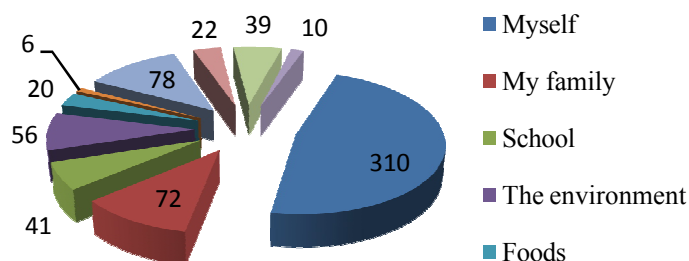


Figure 5: Grouping the total overlap of the words in the wordlists of the three target English coursebooks against the GSL and AWL according to the themes for Grade 4

As shown in Figure 5, There were 808 headwords showing 654 words and 154 function words for grade 4. “Myself” contained 310 headwords, “My family” 72 headwords, “My school” 41 headwords, “The environment” 56 headwords, “Foods” 20 headwords, “Beverages” 6 headwords, “Free time and recreation” 78 headwords, “Health and Welfare” 22 headwords, “Selling and Buying” 39 headwords, and “the Climate” 10 headwords.

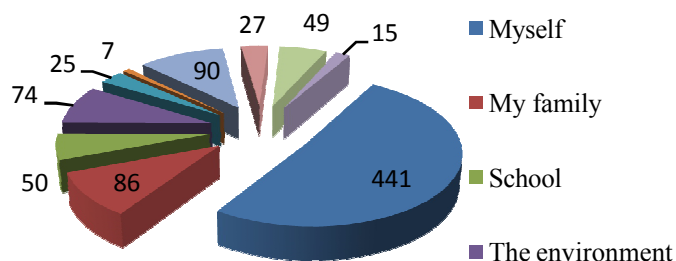


Figure 6: Grouping the Total overlap of the words in the wordlists of the Three Target English coursebooks against the GSL and AWL according to the Themes for Grade 5

Based on the numbers found in Figure 6, there were 1,069 headwords containing 864 words and 205 function words for grade 5. “Myself” contained 441 headwords, “My family” 86 headwords, “My school” 50 headwords, “The environment” 74 headwords, “Foods” 25 headwords, “Beverages” 7 headwords, “Free time and Recreation” 90 headwords, “Health and Welfare” 27 headwords, “Selling and Buying” 49 headwords, and “the Climate” 15 headwords

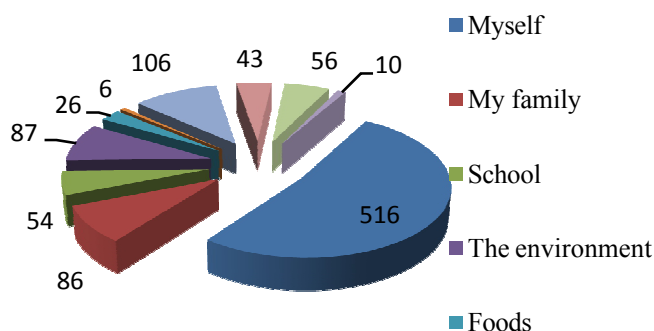


Figure 7: Grouping the Total overlap of the words in the wordlists of the Three Target English coursebooks against the GSL and AWL according to the Themes for Grade 6

Based on the numbers found in the list for grade 6, there were 1,227 headwords containing 990 words and 237 function words appearing in the following themes; “Myself” contained 516 headwords, “My family” 86 headwords, “My school” 54 headwords, “The environment” 87 headwords. “Sports” 26 headwords, “Beverages” 6 headwords, “Free time and leisure” 106 headwords, “Health and Welfare” 43 headwords “Selling and buying” headwords, and “the Climate” 10 headwords

Conclusions and Discussions

The analysis and comparison of The lists of word in each of the three series of English coursebooks were carried out using the Range Program and then grouped the total overlap words into themes. The findings could be concluded that, as stated by the first 1,000 GSL, there were 704 words in a series of Say Hello, 664 words in a series of Project: Play & Learn, and 617 words in a series of New Aha English respectively. This could be claimed that there was a considerable size of vocabulary which could enhance students’ guessing meanings of new vocabulary as well as comprehension of a text when reading. If the number of 1,000 GSL words was a matter of constructing a reading context, any of the three target English coursebooks could successfully contribute a fruitful word source for students to learn and use for building up an understandable context when coping with their own reading for comprehension. However, the wordlists in the 1,000 GSL of the three target English coursebooks could be practically used for class instruction.

Further, there were 409, 404, and 343 words in series of Say Hello, Project: Play & Learn and New Aha English respectively. This suggested that the size of vocabulary found in each series slightly varied in terms of the second 1,000 GSL words. This was slightly different because the themes or topics might be different upon the publishing companies. If compared to the portions of the 1,000 words, the second 1,000 GSL words in the three target English coursebooks did not seem to provide big sizes of 1,000 words. As indicated, it could be said that a variety of themes or topics could be differently focused depending upon publishers of the books. In other words, on average, the number of the 1,000 GSL words found in the target English coursebooks was likely to indicate different themes and contents which different publishers had presented as a unity of the series.

However, as per 570 academic words found in the study, there was a small size of academic vocabulary, but this was not considered essential words for primary students to achieve since they were in the level of beginners of learning. Unlike the academic words,

proper names were considered high frequency words and such words could be understood in the context and were counted as high frequency words because students could guess their meanings from its context.

In terms of readability, text coverage was looked at. There were 92.39% in a series of Say Hello, 89.81% in a series of Project: Play & Learn, 89.95 % in a series of New Aha English. These data indicated that the three series of English coursebooks were well written for readability according to text coverage since a proportion of the high frequency words normally contained around 82% of text coverage in general.

With reference to vocabulary analysis discussed above, the study presented frequent headwords found in the three English coursebooks used in Thailand. Among the primary school students, it seems that vocabulary has always been treated as the mainstream or at least as one of the major components of language teaching and learning. Therefore, if learners learn the target words, they will be able to get through the next step such as reading comprehension. It would be useful for both the student and teacher with a bilingual source for teaching and learning English at primary schools throughout the country, by counting and listing the words from the coursebooks in order to be taught and learned in classroom. The findings would be used as a guideline for designing a better and selecting a coursebook to be used in the primary schools. In addition to a pedagogical practice, the findings would be used to fill a gap between students in order to extend their vocabulary size, and as guidelines to develop students' bilingual size for core studies and supplementary courses in language teaching and learning for Thai primary school learners.

Suggestions for Further Study

Based on the present study, it would give some useful information in terms of vocabulary learning. With a narrow focus, a further study is still needed to look at different aspects which might affect learners' achievement in the English class. In addition, a principle of English coursebooks a study can also be conducted in different levels so as to investigate the frequency words and academic words necessary for basic understanding of the texts in different class levels.

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