

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

#### **2.1 Thailand's Educational Policy**

According to Dr. Rung Kaewdang, Deputy Minister of Education who is known for his progressive approach and instrumental role in the 1999 Education Reform Act, after the first education reform in the reign of King Chulalongkorn a hundred years ago, there have been several attempts to reform Thai education to cope with the changing situation. In his view, Thailand's education system has long emphasized on "chalk and talk" pedagogy, rote learning, and teachers as the center of teaching-learning activities. Moreover, the knowledge provided is not relevant to the needs of learners and community. Dr. Kaewdang admitted that the old education system is not entirely bad, but in the age of advanced information technology and the world competition, he maintained that education should not be restrained only to the classroom and that teachers should not be the sole knowledge source. Instead, education must aim at cultivating within students the skills of searching knowledge through self-learning so that they can learn continually at any time and any place throughout their lives. Education in the new decade should, therefore, aim at the full development of the Thai learners in all aspects: physical and mental health, intellect; morality, integrity; and desirable way of life so as to achieve a balanced integration of intelligence and integrity.

According to the 1999 National Education Act, educational policies and plans are to be based on the principle that all learners shall be capable of learning and developing themselves at their own pace and to the best of their potentiality in all aspects – physical and mental health, intellect; morality, integrity, and the pursuit of a desirable lifestyle in accordance and harmony with the society. Since the National Education Act of 1999 came into effect, the focus of teaching has gradually been changing from Teacher-Centered to Learner-Centered methodology. The teacher's role has become that of a facilitator to suggest and provide activities for the learners

while the learners are encouraged to learn independently inside and outside the classroom and throughout their lives. Gradually, colleges and universities should become more autonomous, taking greater responsibility for the learning environment they adopt rather than simply following ministry guidelines.

(<http://drung.com/espe/espe02.html>).

## **2.2 The national Education Act B.E. 2542 (A.D. 1999)**

The National Educational Act is composed of 9 chapters as follows:

Chapter One: Objectives and Principles

Chapter Two: Educational Rights and Functions

Chapter Three: Educational System

Chapter Four: National Education Guidelines

Chapter Five: Educational Administration and Management

Chapter Six: Education Standards and Quality Assurance

Chapter Seven: Teachers, Faculty Members, and Educational Personnel

Chapter Eight: Resources and Investment for Education

Chapter Nine: Technologies for Education and Transitory Provisions

The focus of this research is on Chapter Seven: Teachers, Faculty Members, and Educational Personnel.

Section 52: The Ministry shall promote development of a system for teachers and educational personnel, including production and further refinement of this category of personnel, so that teaching will be further enhanced and become a highly respected profession. The Ministry shall, in this regard, take a supervisory and coordinating role so that the institutions responsible for production and development of teachers, faculty staff, and educational personnel shall be ready and capable of preparing new staff and developing in-service personnel.

In reference to Section 52, teachers are regarded as agents of learning reform. According to Dr. Rung Kaewdang, another priority of the ministry educational plan is to develop teacher training, especially as the curriculum shifts to embrace a more

learner-centered approach. To this end, it is hoped that there will be more hands-on advice from practicing teachers and a little less reliance on university professors who usually have no direct teaching experience at elementary or high school level. The idea is that schools work together in clusters by attending a workshop led by a group of experienced professionals called 'master teachers'. These teachers from various schools would bring with them the problems that happen in their class and the master teachers can share ideas on how to solve those problems. When they go back to school, the teachers can try out new ideas in the classroom.

The Thai government believes that there are a large number of capable and hardworking teachers who have not presented themselves to the wider public due to the lack of opportunity. As a result, two prestigious educational awards: the National Teacher Award and the Master Teacher Award have been established to reward capable teachers and set them as role models for other teachers in terms of teaching-learning reform.

The National Teacher Award was designed to be the highest award ever presented to teachers. It aimed at honoring the teachers who have had excellent performance record and who can demonstrate their future research project beneficial to the improvement of teaching and learning. For the first 5-year phase, emphasis was to be placed on 4 subject areas - Thai, English, Mathematics, and Science. The award winners would receive a financial allocation for their research. In 1998 four teachers were declared the National Teachers and in 1999 six more teachers were given the prestige. While carrying their teaching function as usual, these excellent teachers conduct their research and are visited by teachers from other schools to observe their classroom and exchange opinions on the learning reform.

The Master Teacher Award, on the other hand, was designed to be presented to teachers who adopt the child-centered concept into their outstanding classroom activities, which can be a good sample for other teachers. These master teachers are required to form a teacher network of at least 10 persons and expand their teaching methods through the "Kalayanamitr Nites" (friendship-based supervision) to the

network members. The Office of the National Education commission (ONEC) also gives them financial support for the supervisory activities. In 1998 thirty teachers were chosen to be master teachers and ninety-six more were selected in 1999 (*Learning Post*, the Bangkok Post, October 4, 2005).

Furthermore, with the system of a teacher network, it was expected that in 2001, all 600,000 teachers in Thailand would be completely transformed to be “Teachers of the New Millennium.” These teachers would become the important factor of change for the learning reform in schools all over the country. (Rung Kaewdang, “Learning for the New Century”, 1999).

### **2.3 Basic Educational Curriculum of B.E. 2544/A.D. 2001 (Foreign Language)**

The basic educational curriculum of B.E. 2544 (A.D. 2001) provides the standard criteria for teaching and learning for the development of learners from grade 1 to 12, which can be adapted to suit every type of educational system, formal and non-formal. For grade 1 to 6, the curriculum focuses on the development of life quality, social knowledge, basic reading, writing, arithmetic, analytical thinking, and communicative skills, as well as humanity. All in all, it emphasizes an integration of physical, intellectual, emotional, social, and cultural development.

English is the only foreign language required throughout the basic educational curriculum. The standard criteria for teaching and learning are as follows:

#### **Aspect One: Language for Communication**

Learning Standard 1.1: Understand the listening and reading process, be able to comprehend the content of various types of media, and be critical in adapting knowledge for daily lives

Learning Standard 1.2: Be competent in expressing ideas and opinions, communicating and exchanging information through technology and management suitable for life-long learning

Learning Standard 1.3: Understand the speaking and writing process and be able to exchange information and express ideas and opinions effectively, creatively, and aesthetically

**Aspect Two: Language and Culture**

Learning Standard 2.1: Understand the relation between language and culture and be able to put the understanding and awareness into effective communicative use

Learning Standard 2.2: Understand the similarities and differences between language and culture of native speakers of English and of native speakers of Thai and be able to put the understanding into use effectively

**Aspect Three: Language in Relation to Other Subject Matters**

Learning Standard 3.1: Be able to make use of the skills in foreign language in learning other subject matters as well as in providing a basis for developing and widening learners' own vision

**Aspect Four: Language in Relation to Local, National, and World Community**

Learning Standard 4.1: Be able to make use of the skills in foreign language in classroom as well as outside situations

Learning Standard 4.2: Be able to make use of the skills in foreign language as a tool in learning, working, participating, and living in a community

**2.4 Quality Control Framework for the 12-Year Compulsory Education**

**Level One (Completion of Pratom 3)**

1. Be able to use a foreign language to present and exchange idea and information concerning learners themselves, their daily activities, and immediate environments.
2. Be able to listen to and speak a foreign language on topics related to learners themselves, their families, schools, immediate environments, food, beverages,

and interpersonal relationship, all within a range of 300-450 concrete vocabularies.

3. Be able to construct simple sentences of monosyllabic words in daily conversations.
4. Be able to acquire both linguistic and communicative competence so as to communicate effectively with the native speakers of a foreign language.
5. Be able to use a foreign language in presenting idea and information in other subject matters according to learners' age and interest.
6. Be able to use a foreign language as a means to obtain knowledge and enjoyment.

#### **Level Two (Completion of Pratom 6)**

1. Be able to use a foreign language to present and exchange idea and information concerning learners themselves, their daily activities, and community environments.
2. Be able to listen to and speak a foreign language on topics related to learners themselves, their families, schools, environments, food, beverages, interpersonal relationship, leisure time, recreation, health and welfare, trading, weather conditions, all within a range of 1050-1,200 concrete and abstract vocabularies.
3. Be able to construct simple, complex, and compound sentences to communicate in different contexts.
4. Be able to grasp the gist of various subject matters and engage in formal and informal conversations in various contexts.
5. Be able to acquire both linguistic and communicative competence so as to communicate effectively with the native speakers of a foreign language.
6. Be able to use a foreign language in presenting idea and information in other subject matters according to learners' age and interest.
7. Be able to use a foreign language as a means to obtain additional knowledge and enjoyment.



## 2.5 Vocabulary Instruction

In the past, teaching and learning a foreign or second language was viewed primarily as a matter of controlling its grammar while vocabulary development was approached as some kind of auxiliary activity, often through memorizing decontextualized word lists. However, in the past decade there has been an increasing trend among second language acquisition researchers to pay more attention to the importance of vocabulary in language teaching and learning. Researches dealing with vocabulary learning in another language have made substantive contribution to an area now recognized as of central importance for grammarians, acquisition specialists, language teachers and language learners (Long and Richards, 2001).

In his book *Learning Vocabulary in Another Language*, Nation (2001) outlines four major strands of vocabulary learning necessary for a well-designed course. In the first strand, learning from comprehensible meaning-focused input, the main focus is on the information in what learners are listening to or reading where learners have the opportunity to learn new language items through listening and reading activities. Here learning can best occur if learners are familiar with at least 95% of the running words in the input they are focusing on. In other words, learning from meaning-focused input cannot occur if there are lots of unknown words. The second strand, language-focused learning, is said to have been subject to a lot of debate. Those who dismiss this approach consider it not a useful learning activity. The reasons are that the learning is not good for remembering and the learning does not help with the use of the language. It is undesirable because the word is not introduced in a 'communicative' context. However, a number of researches suggest that vocabulary is best learned by a combination of both direct and indirect instruction. The third strand, meaning-focused output, provides the opportunity for learners to develop their knowledge of the language through speaking and writing activities where their main attention is focused on the information they are trying to convey. These productive activities can strengthen knowledge of previously met vocabulary. To make up a balanced course, fluency development is needed so that learners can use items they already know. If a course does not have a strong fluency element, then the learning done in the other three strands will not be readily available for normal use.

In summary, Nation stated that in a language course the four strands should get roughly the same amount of time. It is stressed that meaning-focused input and output are only effective if learners have sufficient vocabulary to make these strands truly meaning focused.

Regarding the fundamental competence of language learners, it cannot be denied that vocabulary resource is the basic foundation of their abilities to listen, speak, read and write effectively. According to Stahl (1996), learning how to pronounce, spell, and correctly define new vocabulary words is important to the overall process of reading. Research on Language<sup>1</sup> reading shows that vocabulary knowledge and reading comprehension are very closely related to one another. Readers cannot understand what they are reading without knowing what most of the words mean. As children learn to read more advanced texts, they must learn the meaning of new words that are not part of their oral vocabulary. Moreover, effectiveness of writing depends very much on the size of one's vocabulary. The larger one's vocabulary, the more capable one is of expressing their meaning accurately, clearly, and suitably.

In another work, Francie Alexan (1997) stated that vocabulary improvement is not only critical to the learner's communicative skills but also beneficial to their social confidence. Comprehension improves when the learner knows what the words mean. With the improvement of their vocabulary, they gain confidence and competence in their communicative competence, too. It can, therefore, be concluded that vocabulary instruction, a process in which a basic understanding of word meanings is developed, is crucial in improving learners' academic competence and social performance. Alexan proposed two main approaches to teaching vocabulary. The first approach, the list approach, gives a list of words and their meanings. The list may or may not be related to the topics the student is currently studying. The second approach, the contextual approach, relies on students ascertaining the meaning of words through reading, and related activities. Traditional methods for teaching vocabulary include the teacher-centered style. This style means that the teacher speaks for most of the class time. Some advantages to this method are that it is easy for the teachers to prepare and conduct the lessons. Some disadvantages are the



boredom and lack of motivation experienced by the students. Another disadvantage to this method is that the class becomes divided as the more talented students gain benefit from this method but the less talented students get left behind.

Games are also a possible superior method of teaching English. This can be due to the reward and motivation it provides the students. The lessons become more fun and captivating. Activities can be used to stimulate pupil interest, imagination and creativity. These activities are useful not only for increasing the abilities of the students, but possibly for increasing student happiness as well. Solving and playing word games are two enjoyable ways of increasing students' word power. Montessori Method, Child-centered approach to teaching developed by Maria Montessori, which features a wide range of graded, self-motivational techniques and materials specially designed to provide sensor motor pathways to higher learning is an example of the methods most often used to teach vocabulary to children in their early years (<http://www.montessori.edu/info.html>)

## **2.6 Previous Studies**

A major research project under Thailand Research Fund Regional Office (2003) was conducted to explore the current state of foreign language education at all academic levels and to examine satisfaction, needs, and problems related to foreign-language use in the business sector in the northern and southern part of Thailand. The sample for the project included those from the academic arena (administrators, teachers, and learners of foreign languages) and the business sector (owners/staff heads and staff workers). Purpose sampling and simple random sampling methods were used at different stages of the sampling in an attempt to capture sample subjects for as many different foreign-languages and as many types of institution and business as possible. The research data showed that a number of foreign languages have been taught in Thai schools. These include English, French, German, Spanish, Italian, Japanese, Korean, Mandarin, Malay, Arabic, and Khmer. With regard to the teachers' role in promoting the learners' success of acquiring and using the English language, it was found that in both the northern and southern parts of Thailand, most teachers are Thai who are not trained well to teach English, and often used Thai as a medium

of instruction. Moreover, most of the sample teachers reported being proficient in reading and least proficient in speaking and listening English skills. Anek Kimsuwan (2004), leader of the northern research team, reported that while most secondary, high school, and vocational school English teachers hold their college degrees in English, only 16% of primary school teachers do so. In addition, Pratana Karnnawakul (2004), leader of the southern research team, reported that almost all teachers in the sample population use integrated skills in their teaching approach but frequently use multiple-choice or written examinations as methods of assessment. Moreover, the English teachers in the southern part reported having difficulty in implementing the curriculum and providing activities suited to the set objectives within the limited sessions.

Scientific studies of how to best teach vocabulary have been conducted since the 1920s. The results of these studies have identified effective strategies for teaching vocabulary. While McKeown & Beck (1988) found that direct instruction in which specific words are taught through definitions, multiple exposures, and external cues such as recognizing word histories, root and base words to connect the words with meanings is more effective and more efficient than incidental learning for the acquisition of a particular vocabulary, Smith (1997) found that for optimal vocabulary development, students should be continually engaged in reading, listening, speaking, and writing.

In her study *Vocabulary for Achievement Research Base*, Richek (2000) maintained that the words students know and the strategies they have available to learn new words are critical to success in school and in life. Moreover, strategies for enabling students to learn words independently are critical to any vocabulary program. Based on the conclusion of the National Reading Panel that students learn most words and on a deep level when wide-reading is accompanied by directly teaching grade-level appropriate words, Richek designed the vocabulary for achievement series for grades three through twelve to provide direction instruction on vocabulary. Her work was also based on the research findings of many educators. Richek cited Daneman's statement (1991) "... vocabulary knowledge is one of the

best single predictors of reading comprehension.” to support her belief that the development of a large and varied vocabulary is a critical educational task. Richek also cited Stahl’s statement (1996), “... in order to know a word, one must not only know its definitional relations with other words, but also be able to interpret its meaning in a particular context” to support her approach of both direct and indirect instruction in teaching vocabulary. While studying words through the direct instruction amplifies a student’s knowledge base of word meanings, incidental or indirect instruction through reading, for example, provides opportunities for students to extend word meaning in several ways. Richek believed that reading the new words in context helps students not only to achieve greater control over meanings but also to gain the nuances of usage available only when a word is placed in connected reading. Moreover, students learn much vocabulary if the reading topics cover a balanced range of reading topics or different genres.

Regarding direct instruction in words, Richek cited Stahl (1983) who maintained that word learning is enhanced if definitions of words are combined with contextual information and Scott and Nagy (1997) who found that the inclusion of sample sentences in the introduction of words is effective in fostering word learning to support her method of making direct instruction effective by introducing each word with a definition followed by a sample sentence, and included in a reading passage. To ensure that students learn the new words, Richek provides multiple opportunities for students to act on the words. Not only do students write the word several times but they also need to judge correct usage, change forms of words, and answer reading comprehension exercises. Students are also given writing assignments that require them to synthesize the words into an essay, thus requiring students to do some thinking to increase the effectiveness of in-depth word learning during direct instruction.

Shira Koren (1999) conducted a study *Vocabulary Instruction through Hypertext: Are There Advantages over Conventional Methods of Teaching?* Her study tested the retention of two types of words, words that have to be inferred and words glossed in a text in TEXTFUN, an interactive program on the Internet for the

practice of reading skills for academic purposes. The results showed that retention of the inferred words was much higher than that of the glossed words. This study confirmed theories that the retention of inferred words is higher than the retention of words where the meaning is given, and that incidental vocabulary learning is not particularly efficient. The conclusion of the study is that even an attractive computer program cannot help much in the incidental learning of words.

A study by Wipapan Raksasil (2002), entitled *Achievement of English Vocabulary Learning of Prathom Suksa 5 Students Through Rhymed Words*, compared the English vocabulary learning achievement of Prathom Suksa 5 students between those taught through rhymed-words lesson plans and those taught through regular lesson plans. It was found that most students taught through the plans passed 60 percent criteria. It was also found that through the introduced method, the students enthusiastically cooperated in all steps of learning activities, helped each other, actively and confidently participated in learning English. The vocabulary learning achievement of the students learning through rhymed words was statistically higher than that achieved through regular lessons plan at the .05 level of significance. The students also expressed the highest level of satisfaction with its usefulness, while the easiness of application to learning English words was at a considerable level.