

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSIONS**

#### **5.1 CONCLUSIONS**

##### **5.1.1 Findings on Respondents' educational background, experience, professional development, current duties and responsibilities**

The findings indicate that the respondents who are all female range in age from the twenties to the fifties. All except one are bachelor's degree holders and most of them have more than 5 years of teaching experience. The majority of the respondents teach 12-18 periods per week. While all of the respondents serve as academic unit coordinators, others are also assigned different extra duties, namely home room teachers, school activity organizers, and church and community service supervisors. A college major field of study in English is the main reason for respondents' becoming English teachers. Other reasons are respondents' fascination by the English language, good command of English, and enjoyment in teaching English.

The findings also show that while all respondents choose participation in academic workshops and professional seminars as a means to broaden their professional horizons, many improve their careers by self study. While some of the respondents participate in school curriculum development programs, none is currently furthering their education.

The findings further reveal that the respondents acquire information about primary school English curriculum mainly from the Ministry of Education Curriculum. Other sources include the school curriculum, professional lectures, research results and educational newsletters. The respondents make use of the information regarding primary school English curriculum mostly in drawing up their

lesson plans and in organizing experiential learning programs, preparing teaching techniques and teaching aids as well.

With regard to their teaching performances, it was found that most of the respondents were satisfied with the overall teaching results, their English vocabulary teaching methods as well as the English vocabulary teaching results. They were also satisfied with the conformity of their lessons to the provision of the Ministry of Education curriculum, their English competence, the class levels they have been assigned to teach, the amount of time for teaching, number of students in each class, and students' readiness to learn. However, some of the respondents were not satisfied with the teaching facilities, the assignment of their specific duties and responsibilities, and the size of the classroom. Finally, they were least satisfied with the general support from the school.

#### **5.1.2 Findings on Respondents' English Vocabulary Teaching Strategies**

The findings reveal that most of the respondents followed the guidelines set by the national English curriculum provision although some introduced more new vocabularies than the minimum requirement.

With regard to vocabulary instruction through listening and speaking skills, it was found that the respondents require students to listen to their pronunciation, taped materials, or music before speaking or acting out. Most respondents have their students listen to the pronunciation of the newly introduced words and repeat them, or listen to the teacher pronouncing the previously taught words and give their meaning in Thai. Many respondents have their students listen to taped materials and do exercises, listen to songs and sing along, playing "Simon Says" game and follow Simon's orders, and listen to the teachers' word dictations and write them down. Other less-used methods include having their students listen to the teachers taking the role of the bingo master and match the pictures, listen to the teachers telling stories and answer questions, listen to the previously taught words and give words with opposite meaning in English, and listen to the teachers telling stories and guess word meanings from context.

With regard to vocabulary instruction through reading and writing skills, it was found that the respondents require students to look up words in the dictionary, recognize words from contextual reading, and play word games. The writing tasks are included in the reading tasks and assigned separately as well. They include spelling contest, story telling, and other fun exercises. It was found that most respondents have their students read stories and dialogues and do written exercises, read given words and match them with given definitions, read word with missing alphabets and fill them in. Other methods include having students look up unknown words in the dictionary and write down their definitions, read and fill in blanks of crossword games, read given words and match synonyms and antonyms, read song lyrics and sing the songs, read short passages and write down word meaning from context, and read maps, charts, advertisements, and announcement and do exercises. A small number of teachers have students read and give titles or guess the beginning or ending of the stories, write list of things required for certain activities, and write journals. Finally, it was found that only a few teachers have students read and rearrange jigsaw passages or write reports on famous people.

## **5.2 DISCUSSIONS**

### **5.2.1 Vocabulary Instruction**

The teaching of English vocabulary for students at the Sacred Heart school is carried out through all four skills of language learning, namely listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Based on the concepts and approaches recommended by various researches on vocabulary instruction reviewed in Chapter Two of Literature Review (Stahl, 1996, Rachek, 2000 and Nation, 2002), the teaching as such can be considered a well-balanced curriculum.

It is not known how many words are exactly introduced to students at the Sacred Heart School. However, it was indicated that the minimum number of words introduced are 300-450 at the Preparatory Level (pratom 1-3) and 1,050-1200 at the Beginner level (pratom 4-6) as required by the national English curriculum for primary students. To set goals for vocabulary learning, Nation (2002) recommended

that three kinds of information are needed: the number of words in the language, the number of words known by native speakers and the number of words needed to use the language. The words are also categorized into high-frequency words, academic words and technical and low-frequency words. A very rough rule of thumb would be that for each year of their early life, native speakers add on average 1,000 words families, each of which consisting of a headword, its inflected forms, and its closely related derived forms. English teachers at Sacred Heart School are not involved in setting the vocabulary learning goals. Instead they are given guidelines and directions for English vocabulary instruction that would enhance students' listening, speaking, and reading skills in English.

It is interesting to observe that primary students at Sacred Heart School are provided various means of learning new vocabularies and through various approaches as well. They are given vocabulary instruction through both direct and indirect methods. In doing so, students have a chance to listen to both teachers and recorded materials as well as communicate in contextualized scenarios. While games are used as main methods, other appropriate and motivating strategies such as story telling, jigsaw reading, singing, and cooking which are enjoyable for primary school students are used as well. Furthermore, the strategies enable students to participate and perform in the learning activities individually as well as in group.

There is no doubt that students at Sacred Heart School are learning vocabulary through effective strategies, associating between form and meaning through the direct method and becoming activated of the previously learned words as well as gaining some notion as to how the words is used through each communicative context before they are required to actually use the words. However, there are a few aspects which may be seen as shortcomings of the program. First of all, students seem to engage more in a passive rather than an active learning situation. Passive activities such as reading stories and dialogues and doing exercises as well as reading given words and matching them with given definitions are preferred to activities that encourage students' active physical and emotional participation such as listening to

songs and singing along as well as reading maps, charts, advertisements, and announcement.

Secondly, their activities are not designed to be in a cumulative process so that learning in one meeting can contribute to another meeting. While looking up words and copy their definitions which requires students to memorize meaning is most often used, activities such as reading and rearranging jigsaw reading which requires students to construct and reconstruct meaning is not. The same pattern of use is true with the preferred activity of looking up a word and copying a definition which is not likely to result in vocabulary learning, especially if there are long lists of unrelated words to look up and for which to copy, and the less used activity of writing journals which requires students to use the words they have learned in meaningful contexts. To enable students' vocabulary growth less toward the accuracy goal and more toward the fluency of use, the activities in all four skills need to be improved in terms of integration, repetition, and meaningful use of new vocabulary.

Finally, the role of the teachers should be reduced to become that of a facilitator while the lessons are designed with students independently engaging in various communicative contexts among themselves not with the teacher as the center. If this can be done, it would be in line with the National Education Act of 1999 Section 22 (Learners as the Center of Learning) that "... the teaching-learning process shall aim at enabling the learners to develop themselves at their own pace and to the best of their potentiality."

### **5.2.2 Professional development**

The findings reveal favorable educational background, experience, professional development, and current duties and responsibilities of the respondents. However, the two findings that the respondents rely on outside information, namely information provided by the Ministry of Education, education newsletters, and professional researches more than that provided by the school and that they were least satisfied with the general support from the school can be interpreted that more



communication channels are needed to enhance the work morale and productiveness among teachers.

### **5.3 GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS**

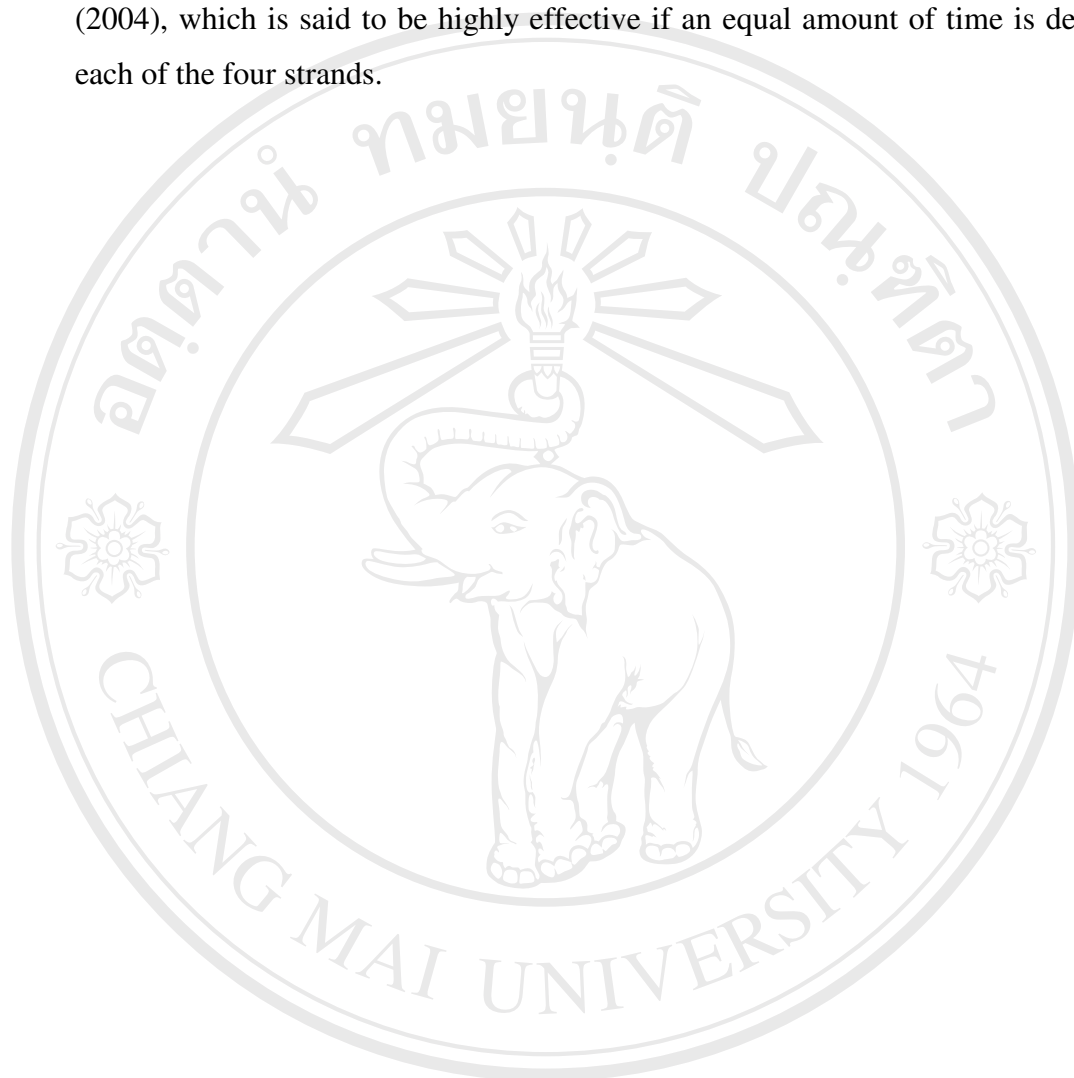
It is recommended that primary school teachers should not only continue developing their teaching careers through available means only but also seek opportunities to further their education. Furthering education is highly rewarding for teachers in that it provides us more knowledge in the specialized areas as well as broaden our horizons. Most importantly, it pushes us to be more productive in our career, which is in turn beneficial for our students. For vocabulary instruction to be effective for new generations of learners, it can no longer be viewed as a kind of auxiliary activity in the classroom but needs to involve various important factors. As illustrated by this study, a thorough review of research results and a systematic study of our teaching and learning situation can help create our awareness of the strengths and weaknesses of our vocabulary development program. To meet the educational objectives set by the Ministry of Education, we must be concerned not only with the vocabulary growth but also the growth of the minds of our students.

### **5.4 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH**

5.4.1 Thailand's 12-year formal education is divided into 4 learning periods or levels: Preparatory Level (prathom 1-3), Beginner Level (prathom 4-6), Developing Level (matayom 1-3), and Expanding Level (matayom 4-6). It would be worthwhile to conduct a study on vocabulary instruction at each particular level to see the cumulative process of vocabulary learning of Thai students.

5.4.2 The findings of Wipapan Raksasil's study (2002) in which two lesson plans for teaching English vocabulary were constructed for two groups of primary school students, one through rhymed words and the other through regular lesson plans were that the students benefited more through the former method not only in gaining knowledge of new words but also in building up their confidence and facilitating the

learning process. It would also be worthwhile to conduct a study among primary school children based on a four-strand vocabulary lesson plan proposed by Nation (2004), which is said to be highly effective if an equal amount of time is devoted to each of the four strands.



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