

# The Use of Note-Taking Strategies to Develop Vocabulary Knowledge for Thai EFL Secondary School Students

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## Abstract

The main purposes of this study were 1) To examine the effects of note-taking strategy could be used to improve vocabulary knowledge for Thai high school students, 2) To examine how note taking could help Thai high school students to improve their vocabulary knowledge. The participants were purposively selected 30 Thai native students who had CEFR level between below A1 and A1 level and were studying Intermediate English course at a Thai high school, Thailand. The research instruments included 1) pre- and post- vocabulary knowledge tests, 2) lesson plans, 3) questionnaires. The data were analyzed by using Mean ( $\bar{X}$ ), Standard Deviation (S.D.), t-test. The result presented that after note-taking implementation, the participants significantly improved their vocabulary knowledge at 0.05 statistic level. Moreover, participants considered note taking as an important tool to acquire vocabulary knowledge in term of meaning ( $\bar{X} = 4.17$ ), form ( $\bar{X} = 3.37$ ), and use ( $\bar{X} = 3.37$ ). In addition, the participants revealed that they had positively opinions and were satisfied while they were using note-taking strategy to develop their vocabulary knowledge.

**Keywords:** Note-taking, Vocabulary knowledge

## I. INTRODUCTION

In the 21st century, English has been recognized as a global language used by people all around the world, it is spoken as a second language, or foreign language, in some countries and as a lingua franca in the others (Crystal, 2003). English is used for communication that can vary from personal matters such as wandering abroad, interracial marriages, overseas education, and personal entertainment broaden to global activities such as business correspondence, national policies, regional economics and politics, and international affairs. Thus, it is not a surprise that English is spreading all over the world, including Thailand.

In Thailand, English plays a more important role especially with the coming of AEC during 2012–2018. The Roadmap of an ASEAN Community outlines proposals of how to overcome political-security, economic, and socio-cultural communities. There are many strategies that need to improve by using the free flow of goods, services, capital, investment, and skilled labor within each country. By the same token, the Thai government has to observe ASEAN policies, meaning that these burdens have managed to create top-down policymaking. In specific regards to the language policy, English is expected to be a compulsory language among all ASEAN citizens. Therefore, English speakers would have the benefit of having more occupation opportunities across different countries. At a regional level, not only has English become a lingua franca in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), it has also become an official language (Kirkpatrick, 2010). This status has pressed the government, i.e. policy makers, to structure new methods and policies regarding English language education in their countries.

As a result, more and more, learning difficulties in Thailand and around the world have to do with the importance of the English language. English is one of the compulsory subjects in schools at the K-12 level as

well as for some years in tertiary education. It is clear that English plays a key role as a gate-keeping device, employed chiefly to measure student's academic success. The compulsory nature of English education in Thailand creates a mounting tension when the results that the Ordinary National Educational Tests (O-NET), of compulsory subjects including English, each year reveals that the outcomes are not satisfactory. Particularly, English learning outcomes of secondary Thai students, with regards to the English language education policies. This is done by testing the English skills in the standardized Ordinary National Education Tests (ONET), under the National Institute of Education Testing Service (NIETS), as the national standard for the success of language learning within primary, secondary, and tertiary levels. The test assesses the academic proficiency of English language within the four main strands of, listening, speaking, reading and writing. Unfortunately, the ONET results have presented inadequate outcomes of learning the English language. According to the English language test results, the average ONET scores in the English subject are twenty percent lower than the standard goal score (Saengpassa & Khaopa, 2012). These results were shown through the report of O-NET, Ordinary National Education Test, from 2012 to 2015. These statistics support the claims that there is a lack of English proficiency levels among ninth and twelfth graders, within Thailand. The test results presented 28.98 as the average scores of English O-NET tests between 2012 and 2015, in Thailand. According to the latest announcement from NIETS, the results of the ONET exams taken by grade twelve students, on March 3–4, 2018, presented the average marks of English language at 28.31. In other words, the percent of English language proficiency levels of Thai learners, specifically, are lower than fifty percent of all students throughout the past six years. These outcomes specifically focused on



what could be considered as problems within the Thai educational system and how they could be solved.

One of the main factors leading to the low proficiency in English is the lack of vocabulary knowledge, this component of language is still far below the proficiency levels and need to be significantly improved upon (Chomchaiya, 2014; Chomchaiya & Dunworth, 2008; Kasemsap & Lee, 2015; Sawangsamutchai & Rattanavich, 2016). According to previous research, obstacles of English learning among Thai learners have been focused in the area of vocabulary knowledge (Jehdo, 2009; Kongkerd, 2013). It is also mentioned that the main difficulties in learning English is vocabulary (Liangpanit, 2010; Maneeganont, 2012; Wangkangwan, 2007).

In fact, vocabulary knowledge is considered one of the main factors and an important subject for Thai students. According to the Thai core curriculum, the Basic Education Curriculum A.D. 2008 states that students graduating from grade 3 should have acquired around 300–450 words. Consequently, students graduating from grade 6 should have acquired around 2,100–2,250 words and students graduating from grade 12 should have collected on average 3,600–3,750 words (Ministry of Education, 2008). According to Nation (2001), knowing vocabulary significantly enhances the capability of all language skills. Accordingly, the graduated students who are ready to attend university education should have an English vocabulary size of on average 3,750–4000 words.

One way to help them improve vocabulary knowledge is to implement the vocabulary learning strategy towards them. It is valuable and necessary for language learners to be taught vocabulary-learning strategies in order for them to learn how to discover the meaning of new words, how to store them in their memory, and how to use the words by working and expanding their vocabulary knowledge. Some scholars, such as Tarone (1983); Rubin (1987); O'Malley & Chamot (1990); Oxford (1990); Williams & Burden (1997),

state that strategies are essential tools for developing communicative competence. In addition, appropriate language learning strategies improve proficiency and enhance self-confidence. Harmer (1991) and Schmitt (1997) affirm that introducing language learners to a wide range of strategies is very useful since they can choose the individual strategies that suit their individual learning styles. It could help the language learners to acquire the meanings of unknown words, to stock them in their memory and remember them, to appropriately use words in situations, or to enlarge their vocabulary size. Therefore, in order to achieve vocabulary learning successfully, and become self-directed learners of vocabulary, they must be taught and appropriately trained in some kind of vocabulary learning strategies.

Note taking strategy is one kind, or category, of vocabulary learning strategy used. Nation (2008) mentioned that the note taking strategy could be trained as a vocabulary learning feature that encourages learners to enhance their vocabulary knowledge. In addition, student's learning experiences are likely to be fulfilled by applying note taking skills towards the way they acquire new words, record, and process the information. In order to achieve effective note taking skills, note takers have to collect the information naturally from one or multiple sources, then try to understand and process the cognitive processes, and store the information in long-term memory by writing it down. Previous research studies also revealed that note taking strategy could be an effective way to help learners to learn new vocabulary in their long-term memory (Bozkurt, 2007; Walters & Bozkurt 2009; Fowle, 2002).

Therefore, this study focuses on the initial elements of note taking strategy, in the area of vocabulary knowledge development.

## II. PURPOSES OF THE STUDY

1. To examine the effects of note taking strategy, which could be used to improve CEFR vocabulary knowledge for Mathayom Suksa 4 students.

2. To examine how note taking could help Mathayom Suksa 4 students to improve their CEFR vocabulary knowledge.

## III. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What are the effects of using note taking to enhance CEFR vocabulary knowledge among Thai high school students?

2. To what extents does the note taking strategy help Thai high school students to develop vocabulary knowledge?

## IV. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

### *A. Participants*

The group of participants of this present study included thirty students who were studying Mathayom Suksa 4 level. The participants of this present study were purposively selected from the group of sixty-seven populations in Mathayom Suksa 4 at a Thai School.

### *B. Instruments for Research*

In order to answer the two research questions, five research instruments, 1) pre- and post-vocabulary tests, 2) lesson plans, 3) the vocabulary worksheets, 4) two questionnaires were used in this study.

#### *1) Pre- and Post-Test on Vocabulary Knowledge*

Pre- and post- vocabulary knowledge tests were adapted from the vocabulary knowledge scale (VKS) by Stahl & Bravo (2010) and reviewed by three experts. This assessment was aimed to indicate the growth of participant's vocabulary knowledge. The pre- and post-vocabulary knowledge test shared the same set of vocabulary and questions to see what extent the participants acquire target vocabulary from four learning

units, which consisted of sixteen hours instruction of note-taking strategy. The pre- and post- vocabulary knowledge consisted of forty words which followed the four main themes; crimes, problems, money and prices, and appearance and personality. The vocabulary in the tests could be divided into two groups; seven words of target vocabulary and another three words from the same theme were also included. The pre- and post-vocabulary knowledge test focused on three aspects of vocabulary knowledge; form, meaning and use. The list of target words was adapted and used in order to determine learners' vocabulary knowledge development.

As mentioned, the list of vocabulary was restricted in the appropriated CEFR level of Mathayom Suksa 4 which is between A1 to B1 CEFR level. The test content and validity were checked and evaluated by three experts and were adjusted according to their suggestions. All questions were equally weighted. The questions were imitated to the well- established word knowledge assurance of Nation & Newton, (2008); Johnson & Pearson, (1984); Nagy & Scott, (2000). The VSK format and scoring guide were calculated out of following five categories. Each word was scored based of the stages of word knowledge assessment, which is presented the scores evaluation and described assessment criteria by using numeric scores to indicate the vocabulary knowledge. For Any incorrect answer in stage 3 yields a score of 2 points for the total item even if the participant attempted category 4 and 5 incorrectly. In case that participant answer in stage 4 semantically correctly, but use the word in completing sentence in inappropriately in the sentence context, a score of 3 is given. The participant receives 5 scores if the answer is both grammatically and semantically corrected. Moreover, students' score could be used to compare the class average ( $\bar{x}$ ) and standard deviation (S.D.) to include on data collection.



## *2) Lesson Plan*

There were four lesson plans from four different units; each lesson plan covered one unit which takes two sessions of learning processes in a week. The first unit consisted of the target vocabulary in Crimes theme. The second unit covered the target vocabulary in Problems theme. Then the third unit presented the target vocabulary in Money and Prices theme. The last unit consisted of the target vocabulary in Appearance and Personality theme. This study, moreover, the authentic lesson of Shrum & Glisan (2000) was adopted in order to answer research question 1. The participants experienced the note-taking instructions and training for twenty minutes in one particular sessions of learning processes. In other words, the lesson plans were designed to take eight sessions covering four units within four weeks, or sixteen hours. The Cornell note-taking instructions were encouraged and included in every session of learning processes. The cycle of task in each session includes fifteen minutes of introduction, twenty minutes of presentation, forty minutes of practice and production, twenty-five minutes for discussion and last twenty minutes for conclusion. Moreover, the note-taking strategy were included as the important phase of the lesson plans. During the conclusion part, participants' notes were collected and checked in terms of accuracy of the method. The teacher may provide further instruction.

This study adopted Cornell Note-taking style as the guideline of vocabulary note-taking implementation. Firstly, the initial week of note-taking implementation began with general important and benefit of taking note in order to gain attention from the participants. Then second week mainly focused on the specific style of Cornell note-taking method. The note-taking practicing was instructed during the presentation and practicing processes. Participants were provided vocabulary and note-taking worksheet for each learning unit. They were

allowed to ask for more piece of paper if they needed. The worksheets were promoted in order to provide an opportunity for participant to practice generate correctly note-taking organization. The instructions were clearly explained step- by- step as to cover all the three important parts of vocabulary and note-taking worksheet. While the target words were introduced in all aspects; form, meaning, and use. Accordingly, the participants were asked to take note of the unknown words from the lesson and target words which were mentioned in the provided worksheet. In addition, each note-taking worksheet was carefully examined and evaluated to ensure the corrective answers regarding three aspects of vocabulary knowledge.

## *3) The Questionnaire*

The questionnaires were constructed within three main parts; a list of questions to examine the opinions of participants about the use of note taking, and a list of open-ended questions for participants' feedback after using note taking. One of the main focuses of the study is to investigate the effects of using the note-taking strategy to enhance vocabulary knowledge.

## *C. Data Analysis*

The data were retrieved and categorized into four groups which are the data from pre- and post- vocabulary knowledge test, data from the questionnaires, and the data from the semi-structured interview which were administered at the end of the notetaking implementation.

### *1) Pre- and Post-Test on Vocabulary Knowledge*

The data from the tests were analysed with paired samples t-test and run to compare the score of pre- and post-vocabulary knowledge test in order to answer research question 1. Before and after implementation, the scores were transcribed to examine the differences of pre- and post- vocabulary knowledge test of vocabulary knowledge with the statistical significant set at 0.5 level.

## 2.) The Questionnaire

This present study adopted Mean ( $\bar{X}$ ) and Standard Deviation (S.D.) to present the collected data of the questionnaire.

## V. RESULTS OF THE STUDY

### A. Research Question 1: What Are the Effects of Using Note-Taking Strategy to Enhance Vocabulary Knowledge for Thai High School Students?

According to research purpose which is previously mentioned in Chapter 1, research question 1 aims to investigate the effects of using note taking to enhance vocabulary knowledge among Thai students. In order to answer the research question 1, the thirty minutes pre-test was taken, the test was administered one week before all the four units of note-taking implementation started. After sixteen hours lessons of note-taking implementation, post- test was taken directly. The test was completed by thirty participants. Mainly, the test aims to examine whether the participants could recognize the word form, remember its meaning correctly and how to use the word by writing particular sentence. The participants are allowed to translate the meaning of the words into their native language or English language. On the other hand, the term and definition in English

language is expected. However, they are required to write sentences in English. The highest scores which the participants could achieve is restricted in the level of the accuracy in both semantic and grammatical sentences writing. The full scores of pre- and post- vocabulary tests were 100% from total scores of 140. It also shows that the scores of the pre- and the post- vocabulary test were statistically significantly different (level of 0.05). In other words, the scores of post- vocabulary knowledge test were significantly higher than the scores of pre- vocabulary knowledge test. Hence, it could be deduced that note-taking strategy is successfully developing participant's vocabulary knowledge.

### B. Research Question 2: To What Extent Does the Note Taking Strategy Help Thai High School Students to Learn Vocabulary?

According to research question 2, this study aims to investigate how note taking could enhance Thai students to learn vocabulary in the terms of form, meaning and use.

The results of the questionnaire were presented in Table 1. The participants revealed their opinions on using of note taking in various aspects; word form, word meaning, and word use.

Table 1: The results of questionnaire

Vocabulary Learning	Items	( $\bar{X}$ )	S.D.	Level
Form	1. Note taking enhances me with spelling.	3.93	0.78	High
	2. Note taking enhances my recognition of word form.	3.73	0.78	High
	3. Note taking enhances me with part of speech.	3.70	0.88	High
	4. Note taking enhances me with pronunciation.	2.90	0.84	Medium
Meaning	5. Note taking enhances my understanding about the word and its concept.	4.17	0.65	High
	6. Note taking enhances my understanding about word meaning.	4.07	0.52	High
	7. Note taking helps me be able to know which words must be used together. (collocations)	3.87	0.68	High
	8. Note taking helps me be able to know more about words that could be related. (synonym)	3.83	0.79	High

Table 1: The results of questionnaire (cont.)

Vocabulary Learning		Items	( $\bar{X}$ )	S.D.	Level
Use	9.	Note taking helps you know where to use the words in various context.	3.80	0.96	High
	10.	Note taking helps me be able to know how to use the words in writing sentences.	3.73	0.69	High
Average			3.77	0.13	High

### 1) Word Form

According to the results from item 1, 2, 3, and 4 of the questionnaire 1, firstly, the participants revealed that note taking enhances their word form recognition ( $\bar{X}$  = 3.73, S.D. = 0.78) and followed by recognizing part of speech of the word ( $\bar{X}$  = 3.70, S.D. = 0.88) at a high level. In addition, note-taking implementation enhances participant's ability to be able to correctly spell the words ( $\bar{X}$  = 3.93, S.D. = 0.78) at a high level. However, it is revealed that note taking tends to provide the least effect on the part of word pronunciation comparing to word form recognition, part of speech, and word spelling ( $\bar{X}$  = 2.90, S.D. = 0.84) at a level of moderate level.

### 2) Word Meaning

According to item 5, 6, 7, and 8 from the questionnaire 1 revealed the opinions of the participants towards the use of note-taking worksheet and note-taking implementation in term of word meaning. The results presented that note taking encourages them to understand the words and its concept which was provided in the worksheets at high level ( $\bar{X}$  = 4.17, S.D. = 0.65). Compared to other aspects, it is presented that participants found the using of note taking helps them to understand the meaning of words at high level ( $\bar{X}$  = 4.07, S.D. = 0.52). In addition, it is suggested that note taking helps the participants to understand about word's collocations ( $\bar{X}$  = 3.87, S.D. 0.68). The last rank is the opinion of the participants towards using note-taking strategy to enhance vocabulary knowledge in term of synonyms ( $\bar{X}$  = 3.83, S.D. = 0.79) at a high level.

### 3) Word Use

According to item 9, and 10 from the questionnaire 1, the participants revealed the correlation of note taking and vocabulary knowledge in term of word use. The finding suggested that the use of vocabulary and note-taking worksheet helps the participants to be able to use the words in various context ( $\bar{X}$  = 3.80, S.D. = 0.96). Then, the results were also revealed the using of note taking encouraged the participants to be able to use target words in writing sentences at a high level ( $\bar{X}$  = 3.73, S.D. = 0.69) ranked second.

## VI. DISCUSSIONS

According to the finding of this study, note-taking could be considered as an effective vocabulary learning tool which enhances vocabulary knowledge of Thai high school students. The study has focused to develop vocabulary knowledge in terms of word form, word meaning, and word use. Accordingly, the effects of note-taking strategy were discussed based on the results of this study. The mean score of the post-vocabulary knowledge test was 72.45 and the mean score of pre-vocabulary knowledge test was 36.67. It could be concluded that the mean score of post-vocabulary knowledge test was significantly higher than the mean score of pre-vocabulary knowledge test ( $t$  = 13.75,  $df$  = 29). This is because the students received note-taking training from the instructions on lesson plans and implement the strategy as their vocabulary learning strategy (Fowle, 2002; Walters and Bozkurt, 2009).

The finding confirmed the effect of note-taking strategy which was used to acquire new vocabulary forms included word recognition, spelling, part of speech, and pronunciation. It is revealed from the interviews that note-taking strategy encourages the students to recognize the word, correctly spell the form, acquire part of speech, and pronounce the word. However, in term of pronunciation, note-taking strategy has not successfully enhanced students' pronunciation due to the note-taking strategy training provide little opportunity for the students to pronounce the words.

The finding presented the effects of using note-taking strategy which promotes an important role of the written information on the learning process (Locke, 1997; Armbruster 2009; Van Der Meer, 2012). The functions of physical records consisted of keywords and significant information encourage the generating connection between previous information and new receiving information. This finding was supported by the research conducted by Williams (2004). As note-taking has focused on the written down an important and related the information about particular word on the keyword.

## VII. CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

As the results of this study have already been mentioned, it leads to the implications of this study which are directly relevant to the language learning classroom.

- In teaching vocabulary knowledge within Thai context, the finding from this study supports that teachers and instructors should apply note-taking training to the students. Therefore, the students could implement and develop note-taking skills to use in- and out-side of classrooms.

- In teaching vocabulary, the lessons should consider using the note-taking strategy as vocabulary learning in the all terms; form, meaning, and use. All

mentioned vocabulary aspects were emphasized during the vocabulary learning process.

- According to the finding, students could understand the meaning of the vocabulary by implementing the note-taking strategy. The note-taking strategy helped the students to understand meaning in context the most, so teachers should consider using this vocabulary strategy to teach students in class.

- Note-taking products, which were made by the students, were used as the guideline and could be reviewed by the students for a long-term retention. According to Rickards & Friedman (1978), note-taking strategy encourages learning, even though the note-taking products are noted later reviewed.

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