

# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

This chapter discourses the rationale, purposes of the study, research questions, hypotheses, significance, definition of key terms, and scope and limitation of the study. These contents will be shown as a the following sequences.

### 1.1 Statement of the Problems

Nowadays, English plays an important role as a communicative tool worldwide because materials or publications are printed in English such as textbooks, newspapers, magazines, advertisements, movie soundtracks, and television. Moreover, it is used in many aspects of society such as business, politics and education.

For this reason, learning English is the most crucial to improve the skills for communication in lifetime. For communication, words are very essential for understanding interaction. Understanding numerous vocabulary is rewarding because vocabulary is viewed as a primordial factor in successful communication and to a great extent in high-level reading ability and comprehension. (Levelt. 1989: 1; cited in Prachanant. 2006) In addition, Aebersold and Field (1997: 138) stated that vocabulary learning is being more important to get the meaning of a text. Kuntung (2007) pointed out that vocabulary is the first essential thing students have to know while learning a foreign language. It is the main key and a basic step to learn the skills and sub-skills of a language. It helps students understand and use the target language effectively. Nation (2001; cited by Kuntung. 2007 : 2) stated that nowadays the

consensus of opinion is that the development of a rich vocabulary component of a language course should be guided by a set of well-justified principles. These principles tend to have a major influence on content, sequencing, format and presentation, monitoring and assessment. Learning a second language involves different elements including vocabulary, grammar and pronunciation. Actually, the numbers of vocabulary for Prathomsuksa 4 were assigned in English curriculum of A.D. 2008 around 1,050 words. However, in foreign language learning, vocabulary is the most difficult because students have to acquire enough vocabulary and retain it, whenever necessary, they can use it immediately. Zimmerman (1997; cited in Duadsantia. 2008: 3) mentioned that vocabulary presents a serious linguistic obstacle to many nonnative English speaking students. For this reason, the numerous of learners seem to fail in producing proper language in communication. Learners of English as a foreign or second language need a productive vocabulary of around 2,000 high-frequency words with strategies to deal with the low-frequency words they meet (Nation. 1990; cited in Prachanant. 2006:1). Teachers should teach explicitly how to improve the students' vocabulary learning by teaching them appropriate vocabulary learning strategies in contrast to letting them learn their own ways.

In Thailand, English has been taught as a foreign language at all levels of education. However, students still struggle in the communication by listening, speaking, writing, and reading English (Kuntung. 2007: 1; cited in Srihamkan. 1982). They are poor in the sub-skills of English such as pronunciation, grammar and knowledge of vocabulary. Especially, students' vocabulary knowledge has been found the crucial problem in primary, secondary and upper levels (Kuntung. 2007: 1; cited Nusong, 1980; Aksornpim. 1981). The students cannot choose the correct words to

make the sentences, since they don't know the part of speech for each word. In addition, the researcher found that the most of teachers allow students only learn to rote many words which they got bored and cannot recognized vocabulary for a long period. As mentioned in the first stage, Thai students are shy to talk and speak English in daily life, they only communicated in Thai. For the reason, they don't do seriously to use English vocabulary in communication.

According to the policy of the Ministry of Education, the administrators of Buriram Educational Service Office Area 1 encourage teachers to study the students' learning strategies to help all students in all schools to learn better. If teachers at schools know how the students like to learn, this will be useful to support them to learn English inside and outside the classroom.

Teaching primary school is considered the same as teaching children. In this case, vocabulary is very important to be master first. For this reason, teachers should pay more attention to the teaching and learning English vocabulary to children as the learners. Teachers should choose and apply some teaching techniques and media which are suitable for the students' need based on the curriculum. The numerous research works in the field of improving vocabulary learning studied the ways to improve students' English vocabulary learning. As a consequence, vocabulary teaching is an important part of language teaching. Many vocabulary teaching methods have been used to develop students' vocabulary ability. English teachers use several methods of teaching vocabulary such as keywords, the metacognitive strategy, storytelling, miming and gesture or word cards, verbal explanations, synonyms, and roots and affixes.

An alternative method in teaching vocabulary is Total Physical Response (TPR) which was developed by James Asher. TPR is an astoundingly successful teaching method for beginners (Krashen. 1998). Commands are used as the basis for TPR, since commands can be made comprehensible to students with very limited language. The teacher or a more proficient student gives a command, demonstrates the command, and then students respond physically to the command. Students are actively involved and not expected to repeat the command, anxiety is low, and student focus is on comprehension rather than production. Hence, they demonstrate comprehension before their speaking skills emerge. Degregori and Trithart (2004) stated that TPR lessons have students complete activities by using physical motions or visual aid. They practice new material by seeing, touching, or performing the concepts taught. It seems like a really fun way to learn vocabulary. One of the reasons, TPR interests the researcher so much because many students struggle with vocabulary retention. It is expected that TPR is able to improve students' vocabulary learning in communicating skills.

Actually, the researcher found that students who learn English as a foreign language at Nongkrok School have faced the problems in using words to communicate, because they are confused and do not know translation strategy for sentences and texts. In addition, they lack lexical knowledge, especially they can not communicate in listening, reading, writing, and speaking skills, because they only communicate in Thai language in their daily life. Moreover, there are many problems in English vocabulary learning in the other schools too. Mingsakool (2003) interviewed English teachers in his research work and found that all of his interviewees have the same problems. Their students can not identify the meaning of

words while reading texts, magazines, newspapers or talking to other people in English, because of lacking vocabulary. These are the causes of low scores achievement in Ordinary National Educational Test (ONET).

As mentioned above, the researcher interests in improving students in the vocabulary learning strategy through TPR strategy. The findings from this study will support the teacher to plan the lessons to improve the students' vocabulary ability; they can listen, read, write, and speak English in the right way.

## **1.2 Purposes of the Study**

1.2.1 To compare the learning achievement with the pretest scores of Pratomsuksa 4 students' English vocabulary learned through Total Physical Response.

1.2.2 To investigate the effectiveness index of the Pratomsuksa 4 students' English vocabulary learned through Total Physical Response.

1.2.3 To explore the students' satisfaction towards the use of TPR method in vocabulary learning.

## **1.3 Research Questions**

1.3.1 Do the posttest scores of the Pratomsuksa 4 students' English vocabulary achievement higher than the pretest scores?

1.3.2 What is the effectiveness index of the TPR in improving students' English vocabulary learning?

1.3.3 What is the level of the students' satisfaction towards TPR?

## **1.4 Hypotheses of the Study**

The posttest scores of the Prathomsuksa 4 students' English vocabulary achievement are higher than the pretest scores.

## **1.5 The Significance of the Study**

This study tries to find the way to help students learn English language better. Total Physical Response (TPR) is one of interesting ways of teaching and learning process because TPR can stimulate the students and they feel eager to learn English with it. It can encourage students to improve their vocabulary learning because it is a process through which the vocabulary can be presented and reinforced in the most effective way. Moreover, TPR techniques are effective tools to make students understand commands and response their body in the natural way. These techniques are also promoted the students' positive attitudes: motivation, confidence, relaxation and enjoyment towards learning English language.

## **1.6 Scope and Limitation of the Study**

### **1.6.1 Populations and Samples**

#### **1.6.1.1 Population**

The population of this study comprised 129 Pratomsuksa 4 students in all 7 primary schools of Lamplaimat group 8, Lamplaimat District, under Buriram Primary Educational Service Area Office 1, during the first semester of the 2013 academic year.

### 1.6.1.2 Samples

The samples of the study were 12 Prathomsuksa 4 students at Nongkrok School of Lamplaimat group 8, under Buriram Primary Educational Service Area Office 1 who were studying in the first semester of 2013 academic year. They were selected by simple random sampling technique.

### 1.6.2 Variables of the Study

1.6.2.1 The independent variable is teaching English vocabulary by using the TPR.

1.6.2.2 The dependent variables are the achievement of English vocabulary test by using TPR and the level of the samples' satisfaction through the TPR.

### 1.6.3 Contents

The vocabulary lists in this study were selected from vocabulary list of English syllabus for Pratomsuksa 4 of Academic Department, Ministry of Education. Moreover, they were chosen from English Student Book Smile 4 which comprises of 4 items: The Amazing body, School day, Animals and Sport day. The whole vocabulary contained five main stories: My body, My classroom, My Pets, Food and Drinks, and Hobbies and Sports.

### 1.6.4 Duration

This study lasted for 3 weeks with 4 hours per a week. Each period took one hour. The instruction procedures included the orientation, the pre-test, English vocabulary learning and teaching process with the TPR, investigating for students'

satisfaction after learning through the TPR approach, and the post-test. The duration of the study is the first semester of the academic year 2013.

## **1.7 Definitions of Key Terms**

1.7.1 “Total Physical Response (TPR)” refers to one of the learning processes which involve the students actively in the classroom activities. As children are physically active by nature which relies on the assumption that when learning a second language or a foreign language, the language is internalized through a process that is similar to the first language development and the process allows long period of listening and developing comprehension prior to production. In this study, TPR is used at an English class, the teacher gestures, models, and says the commands to the students, and the students respond by imitating the teacher and then later produce these commands orally and in writing.

1.7.2 “Vocabulary” means the total number of words in lexical and grammatical functions used in the information of spoken and written context consisting of morphological semantics, register and collection in use. In this study, it refers to the words from the list of English syllabus for Prathomsuksa 4 of Academic Department, Ministry of Education.

1.7.3 “Vocabulary learning” used in this study refers to the learning of vocabulary based on steps of Total Physical Response (TPR). Students should know the meaning of the words, pronounce and use the words to make sentences correctly. The vocabulary lists in this study are selected from the vocabulary list of English syllabus for Prathomsuksa 4 of Academic Department, Ministry of Education.



1.7.4 “Effectiveness Index” refers to the numeric value to show the rating of learning progression from the knowledge base after the learners have treated with the TPR. The ratings of progressive learning are set at 0.50 of standard criteria.

1.7.5 “Satisfaction” means a good sense of humans receiving the response, and they achieve what they need and expect. In this study, it refers to the students’ satisfaction towards the use of the TPR method in vocabulary learning.

1.7.6 “Students” means the 129 Prathomsuksa 4 students in 7 primary schools of Lamplaimat group 8, Lamplaimat District, under Buriram Primary Educational Service Area Office 1. These students had studied in the first semester of the 2013 academic year.

## **1.8 Summary**

This chapter presents the background of the study, research purposes, research questions, hypotheses, significance, scope and limitation of the study, and definition of key terms. The next chapter deals with literature review relating to vocabulary learning strategies, and the TPR strategy.