



Thai EFL University Teachers' Beliefs and Practices about Vocabulary Learning Strategies

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Abstract

Over the past two decades, research has increasingly accentuated the relationship between language teachers' beliefs and their pedagogical practices. Relatively few studies, however, have been dedicated to the teachers' beliefs and practices with respect to vocabulary instruction, despite the pivotal role that vocabulary acquisition plays in language learning. This mixed methods study seeks to bridge the gap by investigating intricate relationships between Thai EFL university teachers' beliefs and pedagogical practices regarding specifically vocabulary instruction. A questionnaire was administered with twenty-four teachers, five of whom subsequently participated in a follow-up semi-structured interview. The results indicate that although the teachers were aware of and employed a wide range of vocabulary learning strategies, there existed discrepancies between the teachers' perceived usefulness of strategy and the frequency of strategy use in their instructional practices. This incongruence was attributable to various contextual factors, affirming that relationships between teachers' beliefs and practices were highly controversial and complex. Pedagogical implications and recommendations for further research are also discussed based on the findings of the current study.

Key words: Vocabulary Learning Strategies, Teachers' Beliefs, Teaching Practices

Introduction

A substantial range of second language research has increasingly emphasized teachers' beliefs over the past two decades, with the aim of understanding the complex relationship between teachers' beliefs and their pedagogical practices (e.g., Andrews, 2003; Borg, 2006; Fang, 1996; Johnson, 1992; Phipps & Borg, 2009; Theriot & Tice, 2009). These studies have shed light on how teachers' beliefs expand over time as well as how they are reflected in their teaching practices. Nevertheless, relatively few studies have been conducted on second language teachers' beliefs and practices during vocabulary instruction (Borg, 2006), in spite of the prominent role of vocabulary knowledge in language learning. Put succinctly, vocabulary is the foundation of language use, and fostering students' vocabulary knowledge should be prioritized as it has become inextricably associated with knowledge acquisition and academic achievement (Laufer, 2005; Nation, 1990; Schmitt, 2008).

In the Thai EFL context, recent contributions have been made to understanding the students' use of vocabulary learning strategies (e.g., Pookcharoen, 2011; Siriwan, 2007). These studies revealed that many students' repertoire of vocabulary learning strategies was limited, which has become one of the crucial factors hindering their proficiency in English. Very little, however, is known of the teachers' perceived usefulness of vocabulary learning strategies as students themselves, and their implementation of strategies in classrooms as teachers. It is undeniable that teaching practices are related to effective classroom teaching and

student outcomes. A more profound exploration into the interplay between teachers' beliefs and practices will hence yield valuable insights into how teachers can best equip students with vocabulary learning strategies for academic success and beyond.

To bridge the gap, the present mixed methods study investigates intricate relationships between Thai EFL university teachers' beliefs and pedagogical practices regarding vocabulary instruction. The fundamental purposes of the study are threefold: (a) to identify the strategies perceived as most and least useful by the teachers (as students) and those employed most and least frequently in their teaching practices (as teachers); (b) to examine the extent to which the teachers' perceived usefulness of strategy relates to the frequency of strategy use in their teaching practices; and (c) to discover the factors contributing to the teachers' inability to teach vocabulary learning strategies that they consider useful.

Literature Review

Vocabulary Learning Strategies

In attempts to investigate and classify language learning strategies, some previous studies scrutinized the strategies specific to vocabulary learning. Adopting the definitions of vocabulary learning strategies from past studies, Catalán (2003) defines vocabulary learning strategy as "knowledge about the mechanisms (processes, strategies) used in order to learn vocabulary as well as steps or actions taken by students (a) to find out the meaning of unknown words, (b) to retain them in long-term memory, (c) to recall them at will, and (d) to use them in oral or written mode" (p. 56).

Schmitt (1997) remarked that little is known about vocabulary learning strategies despite a considerable number of articles and books published on both language learning strategies and vocabulary learning. He stressed that the few studies tended either to emphasize a very small number of strategies or to explore the strategies employed by a small number of learners. Advocating for a comprehensive inventory of vocabulary learning strategies that would be conducive to pertinent studies in this area, he compiled a taxonomy from a variety of sources. Based primarily on Oxford's (1990) classification scheme, he adopted four categories: social (helps learners to interact with other people to facilitate their learning), memory (helps learners to store and retrieve information), cognitive (helps learners to make sense of and produce new language), and metacognitive (helps learners to regulate their learning through planning, monitoring, and evaluating).

Since Oxford's system is principally concerned with language learning strategies in general and thus fails to cover certain strategies specific to vocabulary learning, Schmitt introduced a fifth category, namely determination strategies, which allows learners to discover a new word's meaning without other people's assistance. His final taxonomy comprises 58 vocabulary learning strategies under five categories. A helpful distinction proposed by Cook and Mayer (1983) and Nation (1990) was also incorporated into Schmitt's classification scheme. That is, in terms of the process in vocabulary learning, strategies fall into two groups. The first group, discovery strategies (those for the discovery of a new word's meaning), include determination strategies and social strategies. The second group, consolidation strategies (those for remembering a word once it has been encountered), include social strategies, memory strategies, cognitive strategies, and metacognitive strategies.



Teachers' Beliefs and Practices

Language teachers' beliefs are recognized to have a profound influence on their classroom practices as well as their professional growth. Despite continued attention on the concept of teachers' beliefs for decades, researchers fail to attain a consensus on its definition (Borg, 2001). Rather than provide a clear definition, scholars at the early stage introduced this concept through elaborating on its origins and classifications. Lortie (1975), for instance, proposed that teachers' beliefs derive either from their personal experiences as students or from their personal life experiences.

Pajares (1992)'s contribution to the topic of teachers' beliefs is regarded as one of the most comprehensive reviews available. His main argument was that while researchers acknowledged the influence of teachers' beliefs on the classroom decision-making process, their proposed definitions remained unclear. Also, divergent conceptualizations and varied understandings of beliefs and beliefs structures have caused difficulty in exploring teachers' beliefs. He further defined beliefs as "an individual's judgment of the truth or falsity of a proposition, a judgment that can only be inferred from a collective understanding of what human beings say, intend, and do" (p. 316).

Borg (2003) refers to teachers' beliefs by discussing teacher cognition since he defines teacher cognition as "the unobservable cognitive dimension of teaching—what teachers know, believe, and think" (p. 81). To further provide a general concept about the nature of teacher cognition and its relationship with professional education and instructional practice, Borg (2006) presents the following figure as a brief encapsulation of his framework.

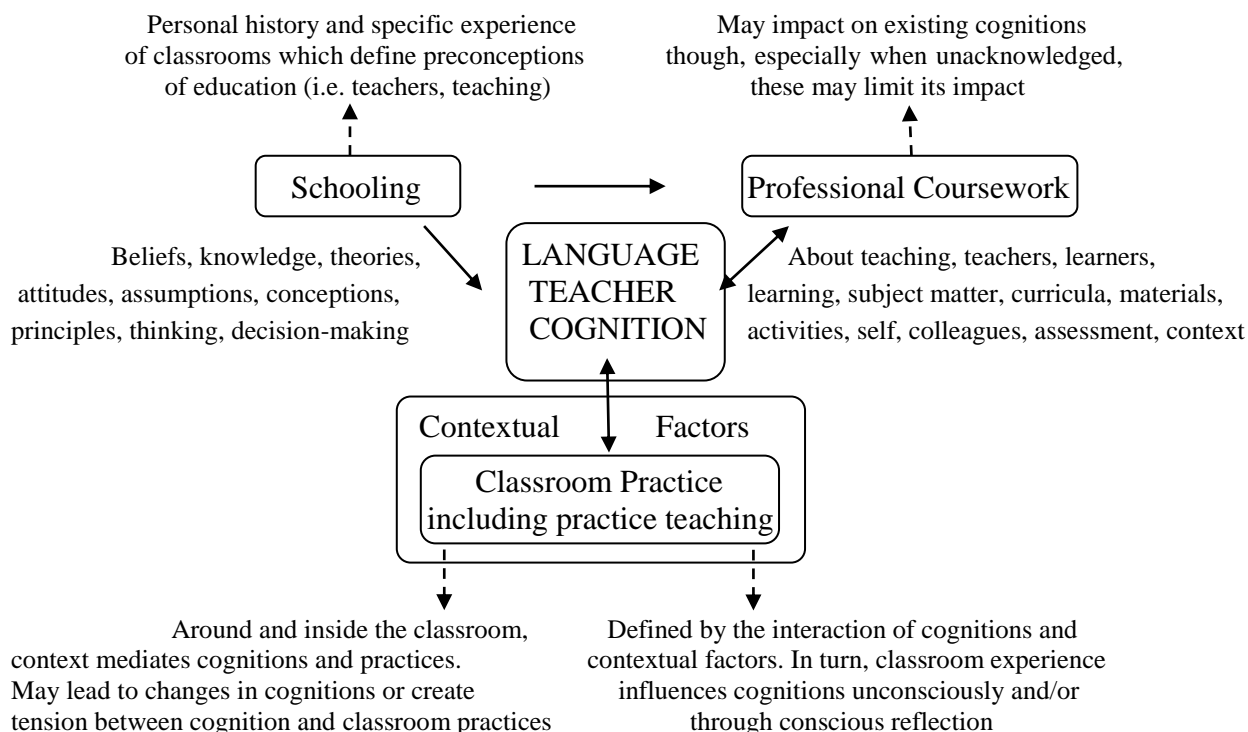


Figure 1. Elements and Processes in Language Teacher Cognition (Borg, 2006, p. 283)

Research on Language Teachers' Beliefs and Practices

A number of research studies (e.g., Bailey, 1996; Gatbonton, 1999; Golombek, 1998; Johnson, 1992) have attempted to investigate the extent to which language teachers' beliefs influence their instructional practices. Findings from these studies collectively demonstrated that relationships between teachers' beliefs and practices were controversial and complex, and they are attributed to a wide range of interacting and conflicting factors.

Similar to research on language teachers' beliefs in general, research in the realm of vocabulary teaching revealed two competing themes (i.e., consistency and inconsistency) that are recurring in relevant literature on the topic of investigation concerning teachers' beliefs and their actual teaching practices. To illustrate, Yu-Ling (2005) surveyed the awareness, beliefs, and teaching practices with regard to vocabulary learning strategies of 20 senior high school EFL teachers in Taiwan. The results indicated that the English teachers were aware of a selection of vocabulary learning strategies. Nevertheless, not only did some of their pedagogical practices fail to conform to research-informed orientation, but there also existed certain discrepancies between the teachers' perceived usefulness and the frequency of strategy use in their practices in classrooms.

More recently, Gerami and Noordin (2013) conducted a qualitative study to determine vocabulary teaching approaches and challenges among EFL Iranian high school teachers. It was revealed in their findings that although the teachers possessed a good knowledge of English vocabulary instruction, their adopted teaching approaches were found to be incongruent with their actual beliefs. Based on their findings, they further concluded that some major problems with vocabulary teaching were primarily associated with either the educational system or contextual factors.

It is noteworthy that while numerous studies have been conducted on the issue regarding language teachers' beliefs and practices, there is still much room for exploration as the majority of research has largely focused on grammar instruction (e.g., Basturkmen et al., 2004; Burgess & Etherington, 2002; Farrell, 1999; Farrell & Lim, 2005). In an attempt to bridge the gap, further studies on other aspects of language teaching, including vocabulary, are therefore deemed necessary to address the broad field of teachers' beliefs and pedagogical practices.

Research Questions

Building on previous research, the current study seeks to extend the focus of investigation to include Thai EFL university teachers revealing their beliefs and instructional practices of vocabulary learning strategies, and attempts to address the following research questions:

1. What are the strategies perceived as most and least useful by the teachers (as students) on the one hand, and those used most and least frequently in their teaching practices (as teachers) on the other?
2. To what extent does the teachers' perceived usefulness of strategy relate to the frequency of strategy use in their teaching practices?
3. What are the factors contributing to their inability to teach vocabulary learning strategies that they consider useful?



Methodology

Participants and Context

The participants of the study were 24 Thai EFL teachers who taught an upper intermediate reading course at a large university located in a suburban area near Bangkok during the first and second semesters of the 2015 academic year. Designed for students who have acquired fundamental reading strategies and need practice to strengthen them, this course also emphasized a wide selection of vocabulary learning strategies. The teachers were diverse in terms of age and academic backgrounds. Their teaching experiences ranged from 4 to 30 years. Of all the surveyed teachers, five further participated in the in-depth interviews. Table 1 below displays the demographic information of these selected teachers:

Table 1. Selected Teachers' Demographic Information

Pseudonym	Gender	Age	Years of teaching	Qualifications
Thidarat	Female	59	28	Ph.D. in English
Kanokwan	Female	46	12	Ph.D. in Language Education
Areeya	Female	37	14	M.Ed. in TEFL
Nattawut	Male	37	9	M.A. in Language and Communication
Patcha	Female	32	4	M.A. in English-Thai Translation

Instrumentation

To collect data on teachers' beliefs and practices on vocabulary learning strategies, a survey questionnaire was developed based on Schmitt's (1997) taxonomy of vocabulary learning strategies (see Appendix A). Six strategies in the five categories, namely determination (DET), social (SOC), memory (MEM), cognitive (COG), and metacognitive (MET), were included in the questionnaire. The teachers' personal choices made as students themselves and as teachers were measured by five-point Likert scales. In addition, the respondents were asked to explain the factors preventing them from introducing strategies to their students although they considered them useful as students themselves.

In the subsequent phase of the study, a one-hour semi-structured interview was conducted with each of the five teachers who volunteered to provide detailed insights into their beliefs about vocabulary learning strategies and their actual teaching practices (see Appendix B).

Data Collection and Analysis

The researcher asked for cooperation from the 24 English language teachers who taught a reading course in which vocabulary enhancement was one of the important elements. Each of them responded to the questionnaire on vocabulary learning strategies. Although not timed, the entire questionnaire took approximately 20 minutes to complete. Descriptive statistics (i.e., mean scores and standard deviations) were calculated for the data from the questionnaire as quantitative evidence to the first research question, which revealed the most and least frequently used strategies. To address the second research question, Pearson product-moment correlation coefficients were computed to ascertain whether there were any significant relationships between the teachers' choices of vocabulary learning strategies as students and as teachers. Later, five teachers were selected to participate in a follow-up interview whose data yielded understandings into factors that led to their inability

to introduce certain useful strategies to their students. The researcher then discussed the emerging themes from both the questionnaires and the interviews as qualitative evidence to the third research question.

Results

Research Question 1: What are the strategies perceived as most and least useful by the teachers (as students) on the one hand, and those used most and least frequently in their teaching practices (as teachers) on the other?

Table 2 below demonstrates the means and standard deviations of the strategies perceived as most and least useful by the teachers. The value of the mean refers to the usefulness of strategy which ranged from 1 (not useful) to 5 (very useful) with 3 as moderately useful.

Table 2. Teachers' Perceived Usefulness of Strategy

	Strategy	Mean	SD
Most Useful			
DET	4. Guess from textual context	4.73	0.65
MET	30. Continue to study word over time	4.45	0.52
DET	6. Monolingual dictionary	4.36	0.81
COG	24. Use the vocabulary section in your textbook	4.27	0.79
DET	1. Analyze part of speech	4.27	0.90
Least Useful			
COG	22. Flash cards	2.45	1.44
COG	21. Word lists	3.00	1.34
MEM	16. Study the spelling of a word	3.00	1.18
COG	19. Verbal repetition	3.00	0.77
SOC	10. Ask classmates for meaning	3.18	0.98

As shown in Table 2, the means of individual strategies based on the teachers' personal learning experience ranged from a high of 4.73 (item 4) to a low of 2.45 (item 22) with an overall mean of 3.65. In the above ranking, three of the top five are determination strategies (i.e., guess from textual context, monolingual dictionary, and analyze part of speech). Also revealed in the table above was that the majority of the bottom five belong to the cognitive strategy category (i.e., flash cards, word lists, and verbal repetition).

Subsequent to an investigation into the teachers' perceived usefulness of strategy, the means and standard deviations of the strategies used pedagogically by the teachers are summarized in Table 3 below. The value of the mean refers to the frequency of strategy use which ranged from 1 (never) to 5 (very often) with 3 as sometimes.

**Table 3. Teachers' Frequency of Strategy Use in Teaching Practices**

Strategy		Mean	SD
Most Frequently Used			
DET	4. Guess from textual context	4.73	0.65
COG	24. Use the vocabulary section in your textbook	4.45	0.52
DET	6. Monolingual dictionary	4.36	0.67
DET	1. Analyze part of speech	4.27	0.79
MET	25. Use English-language media (songs, movies, etc.)	4.18	0.87
Least Frequently Used			
COG	22. Flash cards	1.73	0.79
COG	21. Word lists	2.55	1.29
COG	19. Verbal repetition	2.55	1.04
SOC	10. Ask classmates for meaning	2.55	0.93
MEM	16. Study the spelling of a word	2.64	1.03

The table above indicated the means of individual strategies which ranged from a high of 4.73 (item 4) to a low of 1.73 (item 22) with an overall mean of 3.44. It is noteworthy in Table 2 that the strategies in the most frequently used category were determination strategy items 4, 6, and 1, and the least frequently used category cognitive strategy items 22, 21, and 19. These six strategies were found to be identical in terms of sequence to those reported by the teachers according to their personal learning experiences, as evidenced in Table 2 aforementioned.

In addition, based on the means indicated in the two tables above, this study found that the teachers' perceived usefulness of strategy ($M = 3.65$) comparatively outperformed their pedagogical use of strategies ($M = 3.44$). This postulated that slight discrepancies existed between the teachers' beliefs and their vocabulary teaching practices.

Research Question 2: To what extent does the teachers' perceived usefulness of strategy relate to the frequency of strategy use in their teaching practices?

To address this question, the means, standard deviations, and correlation coefficients of the top five strategies achieving the strongest correlations were first calculated and presented in Table 3 below.

Table 4. Strategy Items with the Strongest Correlations

Strategy	Usefulness		Frequency		r	Sig
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
4. Guess from textual context	4.73	0.65	4.73	0.65	1.0000	0.00001*
15. Connect the word to its syn. and ant.	4.00	0.63	4.00	0.63	1.0000	0.00001*
2. Analyze affixes and roots	3.82	0.98	4.09	0.70	0.8988	0.00016*
1. Analyze part of speech	4.27	0.90	4.27	0.79	0.8692	0.00050*
3. Analyze pictures or gestures	3.64	1.03	3.45	1.13	0.8475	0.00098*

*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

As displayed in the table above, the teachers' perceived usefulness of strategy had strong and significant correlative relationships with the frequency of strategy use in their teaching practices. To illustrate, the strongest correlation ($r = 1.0000$) was achieved by two strategies (i.e., item 4 *guess from textual context*, and item 15 *connect the word to its synonyms and antonyms*). Strategy item 2 *analyzing affixes and roots* reaches the second strongest correlation ($r = 0.8988$), followed by item 1 *analyze part of speech* ($r = 0.8692$), and item 3 *analyze any available pictures or gestures* ($r = 0.8475$), respectively.

After the strategy items with the strongest correlations were examined, Table 5 below summarizes the means, standard deviations, and correlation coefficients of the strategy items with the weakest correlations.

Table 5. Strategy Items with the Weakest Correlations

Strategy	Usefulness		Frequency		r	Sig
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
9. Ask teacher for a sentence	3.27	0.79	3.45	0.93	-0.3218	0.33452
8. Ask teacher for paraphrase or syn.	3.36	1.36	3.91	0.70	-0.1715	0.61411
	3.73	0.65	3.18	0.98	0.0859	0.80171
13. Image word's meaning	3.00	0.77	2.55	1.04	0.2493	0.45974
19. Verbal repetition	4.09	0.94	3.55	1.04	0.2511	0.45640
23. Take notes in class						

The table above identified two social strategies—item 9 *ask teacher for a sentence including the new word* ($r = -0.3218$), and item 8 *ask teacher for paraphrase or synonyms of new word* ($r = -0.1715$)—as the strategies with the weakest correlations between perceived usefulness and frequency of use. Out of the bottom five, the other strategies included item 13 *image word's meaning* ($r = 0.0859$), item 19 *verbal repetition* ($r = 0.2493$), and item 23 *take notes in class* ($r = 0.2511$).

Following an exploration into the individual strategies, Table 6 below addresses this research question by presenting the means, standard deviations, and correlation coefficients of the five strategy categories.

Table 6. Correlations between Categories

Category	Usefulness		Frequency		r	Sig
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
Determination Strategies	4.09	0.96	3.95	1.04	0.7591	0.00674*
Cognitive Strategies	3.39	1.23	2.97	1.30	0.7118	0.01401*
Memory Strategies	3.59	1.02	3.30	1.08	0.6707	0.02389*
Metacognitive Strategies	3.91	1.00	3.61	0.97	0.6077	0.47338*
Social Strategies	3.29	0.97	3.38	0.96	0.2942	0.37985

*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).



The perceived usefulness and frequency of use were related to each other with varying degrees of correlation, as indicated in Table 6 above. According to this ranking, the category achieving the strong correlation was determination strategies ($r = 0.7591$), followed by cognitive strategies ($r = 0.7118$), memory strategies ($r = 0.6707$), metacognitive strategies ($r = 0.6077$), and social strategies ($r = 0.2942$).

Research Question 3: What are the factors contributing to their inability to teach vocabulary learning strategies that they consider useful?

For responses to this research question, the data were principally gathered from the semi-structured interviews in which each of the five teachers volunteered to provide detailed insights into their beliefs about vocabulary learning strategies and their actual teaching practices. As evidenced in the previous research questions, the teachers were aware of and employed a wide range of vocabulary learning strategies. Nevertheless, there existed discrepancies between the teachers' perceived usefulness of strategy and the frequency of strategy use in their instructional practices. This incongruence was attributable to the influence of various contextual factors primarily associated with the students, the teachers, and the overall teaching context.

The following section delineates the issue by documenting each factor that contributes to the teachers' inability to teach vocabulary learning strategies that they consider useful. Five factors, namely students' English proficiency, students' motivation, teachers' knowledge, teachers' instructional approaches, and in-class time constraints, are revealed in the findings of the current study.

Students' English Proficiency

According to the teachers' remarks in their interviews, adequate English proficiency is deemed a prerequisite for students to employ a wide range of vocabulary learning strategies. Without this required component, students inevitably encountered difficulties when attempting to tackle the complex task of vocabulary learning without the assistance of teachers or more knowledgeable peers. The following quotes stress the point:

Poor learners often have difficulty, especially when it comes to guessing word meanings from context. They don't understand the whole sentence or even paragraph. They get stuck on all the words used in the context. When faced with difficult structures like complex sentences and reduced adjective clauses, they get totally confused. Some students do not know what parts of speech are. Others have problems with understanding definitions in English-English dictionaries (Thidarat, interview).

I think it has something to do with the level of language proficiency of my students. Although I ask them to guess word meanings using grammatical knowledge, they don't retain that knowledge anymore. That's the case for non-English majors or non-language majors. This problem forces me to spend a lot of time reviewing it. Or sometimes, depending on context to guess meanings is already hard for them because they don't have a strong vocabulary bank (Patcha, interview).

Students' Motivation

As witnessed by both academic research and personal experiences, motivation plays a prominent role in learning, and vocabulary development is no exception. Students' limited level of motivation accounted for the teachers' failure either to introduce certain useful vocabulary learning strategies or to ascertain the students' independent use of strategy. One of the teachers clearly illustrated the point as follows:

One of the things that cannot be taught is the students' curiosity. I can teach them strategies, but I can do little when students are not eager to learn nor apply what they have been taught. Some students feel unmotivated to learn the language, so they do not want to apply the strategies introduced in class. I sometimes encourage my students to read a lot, but they don't do it. That's useless. What's more, some students do homework simply to get points (Nattawut, interview).

Teachers' Knowledge

In addition to some learner factors aforementioned, the teachers articulated their legitimate concerns regarding their own confidence with some aspects of vocabulary knowledge. Having regarded their knowledge as insufficient, some teachers expressed reluctance to introduce certain vocabulary learning strategies with which they found relatively unfamiliar. The following quote provides a clarification:

When I was a student, I went to a tutorial school and studied word formation, and it really worked for me. Breaking long words into parts did help me learn vocabulary. But now I'm a teacher, I lack confidence as I don't remember all of them, like which one is Greek and which one is Latin. I'm sort of able to explain it, but not thoroughly. All in all, I don't teach this strategy because I don't feel confident myself. But that doesn't mean that I find it useless (Areeya, interview).

Teachers' Instructional Approaches

This finding is considered in light of some teachers' interview data which show how unconfident they were about their instructional approaches, particularly those specific to vocabulary teaching. According to the teachers, this lack of confidence raised questions as to how best to not only create a positive learning atmosphere in classrooms, but also equip their students with an extensive vocabulary repertoire. One of the teachers asserted:

Another thing is that, frankly speaking, I can't make my teaching fun when dealing with word formation or word parts, for example. How can I make my presentation interesting? I feel like if I go through all the word parts, I won't know when the students will get a clear picture and apply this knowledge into practice. So I choose to give them an introduction as I obviously don't know how much to teach (Areeya, interview).

In-Class Time Constraints

Based on the interviews with the teachers, in-class time constraints emerged as an important context factor, aside from both student factors and teacher factors previously mentioned. Even though the teachers attempted to incorporate the teaching and practice of vocabulary learning strategies, the fact that they had limited class time prevented them from doing so. Some teachers explicitly reflected on this challenge they were faced with as follows:

It has something to do with limited class time. I have only 15 sessions with up to five or six chapters to cover, not to mention quizzes and stuff. So I choose not to spend much time teaching how to use dictionaries. My students then have to go ahead and do it themselves, even though I find it very useful. In other words, because of limited class time, I assume that it is the students' responsibility to learn how to do it independently. As university students, they should be able to make use of some strategies themselves (Kanokwan, interview).



One strategy I tend to skip or teach very little is how to use prefixes, suffixes, and roots. While focusing on such strategies as finding main ideas, and writing outlines, I often run out of time in class and have to skip this word part strategy in order to devote more time for reading strategies. In conclusion, due to time constraints, I intentionally choose to teach context clues as it is essential to learn, but I have to ask my students to study word parts by themselves as I see it more like an extra strategy (Nattawut, interview).

Discussion and Conclusion

The first two research questions are closely related. The first question explored the strategies perceived as most and least useful by the teachers (as students) and those employed most and least frequently in their teaching practices (as teachers). The analysis revealed that three of the top five are determination strategies (i.e., guess from textual context, monolingual dictionary, and analyze part of speech), and three of the bottom five are cognitive strategies (i.e., flash cards, word lists, and verbal repetition). Interestingly, these six strategies were found to be identical in terms of sequence to those reported by the teachers according to their pedagogical practices. The second question examined the extent to which the teachers' perceived usefulness of strategy relates to the frequency of strategy use in their teaching practices. The results indicated that these two variables were related to each other with varying degrees of correlation, and that slight discrepancies existed between the teachers' beliefs and their vocabulary teaching practices.

In light of these two questions, the specific result concerning the determination category is consistent with that of previous research in the Thai EFL context (e.g., Pookcharoen, 2011; Siriwan, 2007) in that most learners tended to favor the use of context clues when dealing with unfamiliar words. Unless sufficient clues were provided, they resorted to other reference materials, including dictionaries. On the other hand, in contrast with findings from past research, the teachers in the current study, as highly proficient and motivated learners of English, overwhelmingly considered cognitive strategies to be of little value to the task of vocabulary learning.

The third research question identified the factors contributing to the teachers' inability to teach vocabulary learning strategies that they consider useful. This incongruence, as pinpointed in the previous questions, was attributable to the influence of various contextual factors primarily associated with the students, the teachers, and the overall teaching context. These findings were in alignment with other previous studies (e.g., Borg, 2003; Gerami & Noordin, 2013; Yu-Ling, 2005) which postulated that practices in English language classrooms are shaped by contextual influences. These include, but are not limited to, curriculum, learners' level of language proficiency, teacher's knowledge and perceptions, time constraints, and examinations and syllabus requirements.

Implications of the Study

In consideration of the findings, this study proposed implications for Thai EFL teacher education and teaching programs. The first implication would contribute to the teacher education curriculum in which no substantial attention has been witnessed to vocabulary teaching and learning. As reflected in the participants' articulation of their beliefs and practices, such programs should incorporate more emphasis on vocabulary instruction, particularly in the Thai educational settings. Teacher education programs should contemplate the practicality of the courses offered, which

are expected to equip teacher candidates with appropriate teaching approaches and methodologies regarding how to teach vocabulary. Practical suggestions and hands-on experiences can also facilitate the integration of vocabulary teaching and ensure that actual classrooms can be more effective in practice.

The second implication would involve the vital role of teacher educators in enhancing teacher candidates' teaching proficiency. Aside from the limited range of teaching approaches, the participants of the current study ascribed their difficulty to the dearth of vocabulary knowledge. A specific example revealed was that they explicitly expressed concerns about the word part strategy as one of the greatest weaknesses of their knowledge. This limitation could be alleviated by teacher educators expanding teacher candidates' linguistic knowledge with special respect to morphological awareness of vocabulary. Having acquired sufficient knowledge in this regard, they should be able to subsequently foster their own students' ability to decipher the meaning of unknown words through this helpful strategy.

Limitations and Recommendations for Further Research

It should be admitted that the data from the questionnaire were self-reports of the teachers, and one limitation attached to this instrument is that the participants may fail to report their actual use of strategies. Nevertheless, self-reported and interviewed strategies generally tended to match even with the varied quality of application. Additionally, while providing valuable insights into the relationships between teachers' beliefs and practices—an issue which has remained underresearched in the realm of vocabulary instruction, the present study sought to investigate one EFL instructional context. Cautions should thus be made when interpreting and generalizing the findings of the study.

In attempts to present empirical evidence as to the teachers' personal beliefs and pedagogical practices, further research should be conducted by means of classroom observation. The implementation of an extended period of classroom observation potentially enhances the reliability and validity of such pedagogical practices. Another possible further study could be to reveal similarities and differences of the beliefs and practices among teachers from different settings (e.g., high school and university level) to scrutinize the extent to which the contextual factor has affected the choice of vocabulary learning strategies employed in the actual instruction.

About the Author

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Appendix A

Questionnaire on Vocabulary Learning Strategies

The purpose of this survey is to collect information about the perceived usefulness of English vocabulary learning strategies and the frequency of use in your teaching practices. The entire survey will take you approximately 15 minutes. Your response will be confidential and anonymous. Only the researcher of this study will have access to it.

1. Gender Male Female

2. Age _____

3. Years of English teaching _____

4. For each statement below, you are requested to respond to both of the following:

a) Usefulness: To what extent do you think the strategy is useful to you as a student?

very useful	useful	moderately useful	slightly useful	not useful
5	4	3	2	1

b) Frequency: How often do you use the strategy stated to teach English vocabulary?

very often	often	sometimes	seldom	never
5	4	3	2	1

No.	Strategies	Scale	5	4	3	2	1																																																																								
		Usefulness	very useful ←→ not useful																																																																												
		Frequency	very often ←→ never																																																																												
1.	Analyze part of speech	Usefulness								Frequency						2.	Analyze affixes and roots	Usefulness								Frequency						3.	Analyze any available pictures or gestures	Usefulness								Frequency						4.	Guess from textual context	Usefulness								Frequency						5.	Bilingual dictionary	Usefulness								Frequency					
		Frequency						2.	Analyze affixes and roots	Usefulness								Frequency						3.	Analyze any available pictures or gestures	Usefulness								Frequency						4.	Guess from textual context	Usefulness								Frequency						5.	Bilingual dictionary	Usefulness								Frequency													
2.	Analyze affixes and roots	Usefulness								Frequency						3.	Analyze any available pictures or gestures	Usefulness								Frequency						4.	Guess from textual context	Usefulness								Frequency						5.	Bilingual dictionary	Usefulness								Frequency																					
		Frequency						3.	Analyze any available pictures or gestures	Usefulness								Frequency						4.	Guess from textual context	Usefulness								Frequency						5.	Bilingual dictionary	Usefulness								Frequency																													
3.	Analyze any available pictures or gestures	Usefulness								Frequency						4.	Guess from textual context	Usefulness								Frequency						5.	Bilingual dictionary	Usefulness								Frequency																																					
		Frequency						4.	Guess from textual context	Usefulness								Frequency						5.	Bilingual dictionary	Usefulness								Frequency																																													
4.	Guess from textual context	Usefulness								Frequency						5.	Bilingual dictionary	Usefulness								Frequency																																																					
		Frequency						5.	Bilingual dictionary	Usefulness								Frequency																																																													
5.	Bilingual dictionary	Usefulness								Frequency																																																																					
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No.	Strategies	Scale				
		5	4	3	2	1
		Usefulness	very useful	←→	not	
		Frequency	useful			
			very often	←→		
			never			
6.	Monolingual dictionary	Usefulness				
		Frequency				
7.	Ask teacher for an L1 translation	Usefulness				
		Frequency				
8.	Ask teacher for paraphrase or synonym of new word	Usefulness				
		Frequency				
9.	Ask teacher for a sentence including the new word	Usefulness				
		Frequency				
10.	Ask classmates for meaning	Usefulness				
		Frequency				
11.	Discover new meaning through group work activity	Usefulness				
		Frequency				
12.	Study and practice meaning in a group	Usefulness				
		Frequency				
13.	Image word's meaning	Usefulness				
		Frequency				
14.	Connect word to a personal experience	Usefulness				
		Frequency				
15.	Connect the word to its synonyms and antonyms	Usefulness				
		Frequency				
16.	Study the spelling of a word	Usefulness				
		Frequency				
17.	Study the sound of a word	Usefulness				
		Frequency				
18.	Say new word aloud when studying	Usefulness				
		Frequency				
19.	Verbal repetition	Usefulness				
		Frequency				
20.	Written repetition	Usefulness				
		Frequency				
21.	Word lists	Usefulness				
		Frequency				
22.	Flash cards	Usefulness				
		Frequency				
23.	Take notes in class	Usefulness				
		Frequency				
24.	Use the vocabulary section in your textbook	Usefulness				
		Frequency				
25.	Use English-language media (songs, movies, newscasts, etc.)	Usefulness				
		Frequency				
26.	Interact with native speakers	Usefulness				
		Frequency				
27.	Test oneself with word tests	Usefulness				
		Frequency				



No.	Strategies	Scale					
		5	4	3	2	1	
		Usefulness	very useful ←→ not useful				
		Frequency	very often ←→ never				
		Frequency					
28.	Use spaced word practice	Usefulness					
		Frequency					
29.	Skip or pass new word	Usefulness					
		Frequency					
30.	Continue to study word over time	Usefulness					
		Frequency					

5. Any other vocabulary learning strategies you use or think they are useful? (Please specify)

6. What are the factors that prevent you from teaching certain strategies you consider useful? Please explain below:

7. Are you willing to participate in the interview phase of the study?

If yes, please provide your e-mail address

■ Thank you very much for your time and cooperation ■



Appendix B

Semi-structured Interview Questions

1. Are you a good vocabulary learner?
2. What do you think are the best ways or strategies to learn vocabulary?
3. How do you actually learn vocabulary?
4. How do you teach vocabulary?
5. Do you teach your students vocabulary learning strategies that you think are useful to you as an English language learner?
6. What are the reason(s) why you are unable to teach strategies that you consider useful?
7. What problems or difficulties do you have when teaching vocabulary?
8. How do you solve those problems?
9. What do you think are some characteristics of a good vocabulary learner?
10. If someone asked for your advice on how to learn vocabulary, what would you respond to that person?