CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION AND SUGGESTION

The purpose of this study was to investigate whether Incidental Vocabulary Learning would increase the academic reading ability of college students, and to find out students attitudes on the Incidental Vocabulary Learning environment. The target group was a class of thirty university students from different faculties at Chiang Mai University. The instruments were divided into three parts: instruction, data collection, and analysis. The instruction took twenty hours. There were ten class sessions, each class lasted two hours. The classes met two times a week. The data was collected using a pretest and posttest to measure the students' ability in reading academic English. In addition, a questionnaire was used to study students' attitudes toward vocabulary learning. The data was collected from August 1 to September 7, 2011 and analyzed by using a program called Statistical Package for the Social Science (SPSS) to determine the means and the standard deviations of the pretest, posttest and attitude questionnaire. The research results showed that the students' academic English reading ability and attitude increased after learning through Incidental Vocabulary Learning.

5.1 Discussion of the research

1) Incidental Learning Vocabulary: The results of the study show that Incidental Learning Vocabulary increases the college students' ability to read academically. The lesson plans focused on extracting main ideas and supporting details rather than on vocabulary. This is because the primary principles of Incidental Vocabulary Learning are firstly, to learn new words without trying to memorize them and secondly, to get maximum exposure to new words. Therefore, the instruction in this study aims to increase students' academic reading and vocabulary through the Incidental Vocabulary Learning where the instructional materials are not primarily

on the vocabulary itself. Moreover, the students were assigned to do homework which helped expose them to more academic reading passages and vocabulary. The students were asked to complete supplementary vocabulary handouts as homework. The vocabulary from the handouts reappears in the reading passages. The lesson plans and homework were designed to expose students to as many academic English passages as possible in order to learn new words and gain academic reading ability. The reappearing of the words means that students get more exposure without being aware. It is generally agreed that what the students learn incidentally tends to be better induced (Hulstijn 139). Through Incidental Vocabulary Learning, students were able the increase their English academic reading ability.

To promote Incidental Vocabulary Learning, the lesson plans were also based on Involvement Load Hypothesis. The three components of Involvement Load Hypothesis are *need, search,* and *evaluation. Need* is the motivational component, *search* is an attempt to find the meaning of targeted words, and *evaluation* concerns a selective decision in which a word's context is taken into account. In this research, however, *evaluation* refers to the students' answers and response to exercise and homework as well as the teacher's feedback. The TOEFL® reading course where this research took place is a paid course. Therefore, it is apparent that the students have strong *need* since they pay to be in this class. Their strong *need* leads to positive attitude and willingness to learn and gain vocabulary. Moreover, students' strong *need* encourages them to engage themselves in classroom tasks as well as to work on the assigned homework on their own after class. Students' strong *need* combined with the instructional materials designed to expose students to more vocabulary lead to students' achievement. The students in this study also have strong *search*. The lesson plans were designed to create a cooperative learning environment where students are encouraged to work in pairs. Also, the individual exercises and homework allowed students to use a dictionary to look up unknown words, which is also a learning situation that promotes the *search* element of the Involvement Load. This study also took place in a friendly classroom environment where the teacher acted as a facilitator whom students could also consult when they encounter difficult vocabulary. The peer-work, student-centered assignment, and the teacher roles in this

study have boosted students' *search*, which in turn promotes students' progression. *Evaluation* in this study is also strong. During class hours, the students were asked to compare and discuss their answers with classmates, which is a learning situation that allowed them to evaluate themselves against their peers. The teacher's role is another factor that boosts the *evaluation*. After each assignment, the teacher gave out answers and immediate feedback which helped students understand the objectives better, especially those with lower skill levels. Success in learning required both teacher and learner joining hands. By evaluating, the teacher can build good relationships that help induce positive attitudes. Giving encouragement and immediate feedback, as well as going over the answers with the students helps students evaluate their performance in a positive way. The teacher's role leads to a positive attitude toward reading academic English and to a strong *evaluation* component of the Involvement Load Hypothesis. In other words, successful lessons through Involvement Load Hypothesis require students' (1) *need* or motivation to learn, (2) *search*; a classroom setting and lesson plan that allow students to freely discuss with their peers, use a dictionary, or consult with the teacher in order to complete the assigned tasks that exposed students to English academic reading on a variety of topics, and (3) *evaluation*; a friendly learning environment where students can see their performance while the teacher goes over the answers and gives feedback. In short, in addition to students' strong *need* in this research, the teacher also had to promote *search* and *evaluation*. By allowing students to work together, discuss with classmates, use their dictionaries, and consult the teacher, the *search* element of the Involvement Load was promoted. Furthermore, after completing the exercises, students were asked to do peer-check and give each other feedback before the teacher handed out the answer. The peer-check exercise supported the *evaluation* of the Involvement Load. As students compared their answers against their peers', they had to discuss and evaluate each other. As a result, the *evaluation* element of the Involvement Load was strong, which lead to students' achievement.

Cooperative learning played another role in students' achievement. In this research, the classroom activities were set in a cooperative learning environment where students were allowed to discuss with peers and work with one another.

According to cooperative learning theory, group work is more effective than individual work. In this research, therefore, the role of the teacher was to allow students to work together. By having students discuss and compare their answers, the *search* and *evaluation* of the Involvement Load were increased. Consequently, the cooperative learning environment boosted Incidental Vocabulary Learning which led to increasing students' vocabulary and reading ability.

Lesson plans in this research were designed to expose students to a large number of academic passages. According to Depth of Processing, the more the words are exposed, the more they are remembered. Thus, the supplementary handouts and the lesson plans were designed to allow students to encounter a large amount of vocabulary in reading passages. Before reading the passages, the students were asked to complete vocabulary exercises containing words which would reappear in the passages. This exposed students to more vocabulary and helped them remember the words without focusing on remembering the meaning of words. Repetition of the words promoted Depth of Processing, which led to Incidental Vocabulary Learning.

Incidental Vocabulary Learning proved to be effective in increasing the academic reading ability of the college students. That is because when the students were exposed to a large number of academic passages, incidental learning occurred. Also, Involvement Load Hypothesis supported students' performances which in turn, boosted the effectiveness of Incidental Vocabulary Learning.

2) Students' attitude: In this research, the teacher designed lesson plans that matched the students' need. The course was TOEFL® reading, thus the materials used were a collection of TOEFL® reading passages and exercises. When students' need was met, they naturally had positive attitudes toward learning. Moreover, the cooperative learning classroom where students could discuss with friends and ask the teacher created a friendly learning environment which also led to positive attitudes.

Attitude is significantly important for language learning, as it can drive language learners to success or failure. Learners who are successful usually have a positive attitude toward learning. To create a positive attitude, the classroom

environment must be correct. The teacher has to create a relaxing and friendly atmosphere that allows students to work hard to improve their academic reading ability. Peer learning, in friendly atmosphere as well as class activities and a positive evaluation gradually increased students self-confidence. They were less anxious which, in turn, directly improved their academic reading ability. The positive attitude attributed to their achievement in this study, and will also keep the students continuously learning by themselves later on.

5.2 Suggestions

The target group in this study was able to attain achievement in English academic reading through Incidental Vocabulary Learning in limited instructional hours because they had strong motivation. Their willingness to work outside the classroom and their positive attitude towards reading a large number of long passages enhanced their achievement.

The main limitation to this study was the limited amount of time available for instruction. Consequently, not only did the students have limited class hours to do in-class exercises, but the lesson plans could only focus on reading skills. Therefore, a further study should be conducted to find out whether Incidental Learning Vocabulary is effective with students who are in the required course by the institute with longer instructional hours. In addition, this study was conducted only on English academic reading, and all exercises and activities were based only on students' reading ability. Further study should investigate whether Incidental Learning Vocabulary yields better results when conducted on integrated skills where students have to perform other areas of English proficiency rather than just reading. Furthermore, this study was done with a controlled group where participants had to reach a certain score on the assessment test in order to enroll in the course. As a result, students' proficiency skills are quite at the compatible levels. Furthermore, further study should be conducted under different classroom situations where students' English skills are more varied.