Chapter Five

Conclusion

This chapter mainly summarizes the findings of the present study. Then, some pedagogical implications will be discussed. In the end, limitations of the study and suggestions for further research will also be provided.

5.1 Summary of the Results

The major findings have been analyzed and discussed in detail in Chapter Four. In this section, the results of the experimental study will be summarized and discussed in accordance with the hypotheses presented in Chapter Three.

First, the subjects in the experimental group did perform better than those in the control group on all the word quizzes, inclusive of four immediate word quizzes, four delayed word quizzes, and the vocabulary section in the first periodical exam. In addition, the experimental group performed even significantly better than the control group on immediate word quiz 3 and 4 and all the delayed word quizzes. Besides, all the students gained more scores in the recognition part of all the word quizzes than in the production part.

Secondly, the students interviewed in the experimental group showed positive attitude toward the current study. Almost everyone interviewed regarded drawing as a helpful and interesting way in learning vocabulary. They stated that pictures they had drawn had helped them recall the meaning of the target words more easily. When they did the word quizzes, the pictures they had drawn would come to their mind and helped them retrieve the target words more successfully. In sum, most of them thought of the current study as an effective way in learning vocabulary.

The results of this research are generally congruous with the findings of the studies mentioned earlier in Chapter Two concerning learning strategies (Kudo, 1999;

Jiang, 2001; Huang, 2001; Wang & Yeh, 2001; Lu, 2002). Previous studies indicate that it is effective in vocabulary acquisition to apply vocabulary learning strategies such as the keyword method, analyzing word parts, guessing word meaning from context, and the pictorial method, etc.

For example, Wang and Yeh (2001) found that it was most effective to present text plus picture annotation on the computer at the same time. The current study also found that the subjects experienced a kind of dual coding of the words' meaning, i.e., drawing plus reading the text, and thus could memorize and store the lexical items into long-term memory much more easily (Craik & Lockhart, 1972; Paivio, 1986; Lu, 2002). The result indicated that the experimental group did benefit greatly from the strategy. Therefore, after practicing applying the strategy to learning vocabulary for some time, the subjects even performed far better on immediate word quiz 3 and 4, and all the delayed word quizzes. In a word, when the subjects could apply useful and suitable learning strategies such as the current study, i.e., drawing plus reading the text, they could acquire much more vocabulary and memorize them deeper and longer. It is important to choose and make use of suitable vocabulary learning strategies in vocabulary learning and acquisition.

Furthermore, it has also been found that both groups performed better on the recognition part, i.e., writing down the Chinese equivalents of the target words, than on the production part, i.e., spelling the missing words in the sentences. It might be that to know a word productively requires much more lexical knowledge than to know a word receptively (Nation, 1990; Melka, 1997). To do well on Part A, the subjects needed only the receptive word knowledge; however, to do well on Part B, they needed not only the receptive word knowledge but the productive word knowledge, the extension of the receptive word knowledge. Therefore, they did more poorly on Part B than on Part A. Also, from the responses of the subjects, they thought that

sometimes they understood the meaning of the word but they still failed to write down its correct orthography because they had difficulties in pronouncing it. Hence, they thought that drawing might be more helpful in the recognition part than in the production part.

To sum up, seen from the above-listed results as well as the responses of the participants in the study, drawing plus reading the text indeed could be looked upon as another interesting and useful vocabulary learning strategy. The learners could acquire much more lexical items and memorize them deeper and longer through the process of dual coding, i.e., drawing plus reading the text. Besides, most learners with high, middle, or low level English proficiency thought that they regarded the experimental treatment, i.e. drawing plus reading the text, as an interesting and useful vocabulary learning strategy and greatly benefited from it in learning vocabulary. As a consequence, from both quantitative and qualitative point of views, we can assume that drawing plus reading the texts can be regarded as another important learning strategy for EFL learners to choose from in acquiring vocabulary

5.2 Pedagogical Implications

The teaching of lexis has been neglected for decades; however, now both native and non-native language learners regard it central to any language learning process (Taylor, 1990; Nation, 1990; Laufer, 1997; Schmitt, 1997; Nation & Waring, 1997; Sokmen, 1997; Lin, 1999; Kudo ,1999; Jiang, 2001; Huang, 2001). Without sufficient vocabulary, no matter how well the students learn grammar or how successfully they master the sounds of L2, it is out of the question for them to express a wider range of meanings or to communicate with others in a meaningful way (McCarthy, 1990). In other words, "knowing words is the key to understanding and being understood" (Vermeer, 1992).

Moreover, senior high school students in Taiwan have to acquire much more vocabulary than do junior high school students in order to do well on their exams and have successful communication with foreigners. Therefore, it is urgent to help them to acquire vocabulary effectively. According to the findings in the previous section, we propose some pedagogical implications for vocabulary learning as follows:

First of all, it is worth introducing interesting and helpful learning strategies to motivate and help the students in learning vocabulary. Some teachers often pay little attention to guide the students to utilize other vocabulary learning strategies; they tend to encourage their students to do only rote learning, i.e., one of the cognitive strategies repeatedly. However, according to Chamot (1998), different learners, successful or not, have different ways to use the strategies. Moreover, most learners are capable of learning to use vocabulary learning strategies in an effective way. Consequently, they need more strategies to choose from and solve the difficulties they have in learning English. In this way, the students would become more independent in learning after they are skillful in using vocabulary learning strategies. In a word, the teachers should motivate the students in learning English by offering them useful vocabulary learning strategies and guide them to use those strategies for effective learning.

Secondly, strategy employment in learning vocabulary depends on the learner's language proficiency, cognitive maturity or the learner's attitude (Lu, 2002). For example, TPR might be more suitable for kindergarten or elementary school students. If it is applied to senior high school students, it might not be appropriate. On the contrary, if a learning strategy requires the learners to experience deep mental process, e.g., the keyword method, the analysis of word parts or guessing word meaning from context, it might be more suitable for students who are more mature mentally or for those who are advanced learners (Nation, 1990). In the current study, drawing might be more suitable for older learners than younger ones. Since senior high school

students are more mentally mature than junior high school ones, they are likely to have greater understanding toward the meaning of the new words, especially abstract words and then use their imagination to draw a picture presenting the word's meaning more easily.

Thirdly, drawing provides positive effects on not only word recognition but also word production, but it might be less effective on word production. From the results of the word quizzes and the responses from the students, drawing seems to provide more help for word recognition. The scores in the recognition tests were much higher than the production tests. Moreover, some students expressed that when they saw the target words, they could easily combine the target words with the pictures they had drawn and guess the meaning of the words, but they still had difficulty in spelling the exact orthography of the words.

Fourthly, drawing seems to provide more help for learners to acquire concrete words than abstract ones. To draw for abstract words requires greater imagination. For some students who have poor understanding or imagination, drawing for abstract words seems to be a difficult task to deal with. However, once they can overcome the obstacle and try to draw a picture for an abstract word, they might remember the meaning of the word for a long time. The teacher might encourage them not to give it up when they encounter a bottle neck in drawing for abstract words. On the other hand, the teachers could have some students with greater imagination draw their pictures on the blackboard. In this way, all the students can learn abstract words through sharing pictures with others.

Fifthly, pronunciation is an important factor for L2 senior high school students to acquire a word successfully. According to the responses from the interviewers in the study, the researcher found that most students have difficulty pronouncing a word fluently even though they have already learned how to pronounce words in junior

high school. Besides, most of them felt that pronunciation was quite important in helping them spell the word correctly. Some of them didn't perform well on the production part because they didn't know how to pronounce the word and thus could not spell it exactly. Phonological awareness is very much related to successful orthography in L2 learning (Chien & Chen, 2002). Therefore, the teacher should lead the students to read the new words many times in order to enable them to pronounce the words and take advantage of the grapheme-phoneme correspondence in L2 vocabulary learning.

Sixthly, the instructor's attitude toward the applications of new lesson plans might influence whether the new lesson plans could be successful or not. At the beginning of the study, most of the students didn't show much interest and confidence in the study. They thought it was difficult and time-consuming to draw pictures for the words they learned. However, with the confidence and insistence the instructor demonstrated throughout the study, they were getting used to the new teaching pattern and found it useful and interesting. To put it in another way, they learned this new vocabulary learning strategy and most of them gained joy in English learning by means of using the strategy.

To sum up, successful vocabulary learning might not only depend on the learners' efforts, but also on the guidance of vocabulary learning strategies from the teachers. Teachers should take the learners' maturity, English proficiency, and interest into account when they implement a new strategy to the students. Even though some strategies are interesting or useful, they might not be suitable for all levels or ages of students. Besides, during the process of vocabulary instruction, the teachers have to play the role of an instructor, a facilitator, and a problem-solver. Whenever the students are faced with difficulties or problems in applying strategies to learning English, the teachers have to encourage the students to overcome the obstacles by

themselves or help them solve the problems in no time. Thus, the students will have much more confidence in using vocabulary learning strategies to acquire vocabulary.

5.3 Limitations of the Present Study and Suggestions for Further Study

The major findings of the present study revealed that pictures drawn by the students plus the word lists had remarkable effect on vocabulary acquisition. Moreover, most of the students showed their appreciation toward the study. However, an experimental research like this still has some limitations that should be pinpointed.

First of all, the subjects participating in the present study were only from two classes of one senior high school in Taoyuan County. Moreover, most of the subjects involved in the study belonged to intermediate or low level English proficiency. It is clear that such a sample can not be completely representative of senior high school students in Taiwan.

Secondly, drawing might facilitate vocabulary learning; however, the students might feel tired if they have to draw for words repeatedly. In the beginning, they might feel interested in this teaching activity; however, when they encounter more and more new words in the second or third grade of senior high school, and have to draw pictures for all the words in every lesson, they might get tired of drawing and think of it as a time-consuming job.

Thirdly, some students involved in the study had difficulty in drawing for words. Therefore, they could not do the job very well, which led to little improvement in vocabulary acquisition. Sooner or later, they might lose interest and motive in drawing for words due to their inability to draw. Thus, the present study might not be very suitable for those who are not interested in or good at drawing.

Thus, due to the limitations of the present study as mentioned above, If possible,

further research may investigate this learning strategy given to senior high school students with various levels of English proficiency from different parts of Taiwan to further verify its effectiveness on vocabulary learning. What's more, once they have got used to drawing, it is proper to have them form mental images of words in their mind instead of drawing out to save time. Moreover, in addition to drawing, researchers can explore other vocabulary learning strategies to provide students with more alternatives to acquire vocabulary successfully. As to learners who are not good at drawing, further research may think of other alternative ways to tackle this problem. For example, the learners can be divided into groups to draw pictures for words. Through brainstorming, the learners can form pictures easily for both concrete and abstract words.