

Measuring Vocabulary Size of Thai University Students

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Abstract: This paper presents the investigation of the vocabulary size of Thai university students. The main purpose of the study is to establish the number of English vocabulary in the first 10000 most occurring words list that Thai EFL students at the university level know receptively, and to see whether or not their word knowledge increase when the proceed to the higher year of study. The participants who participated in the study were 40 EFL learners from the first year, second year, third year, and fourth year of English Major at Silpakorn University in Thailand. They were requested to complete two sets of the XK_Lex test, which is the Yes/No format of vocabulary test. After which, the data was collected and analyzed statistically through the SPSS programme. The results analysis confirmed that the participants in the group of first year students hold vocabulary knowledge around 5800-5900 words from the first 10000 most frequent word list. The results also confirmed that the students process more word knowledge as the move up to the higher year in the appropriate rate.

Keywords: XK_Lex test, EFL learners, vocabulary size.

1. INTRODUCTION

At the present day, vocabulary acquisition is widely accepted among the English teaching community around the world as one of the major parts of language studies especially in the field of Teaching English as a second language (ESL) and English as a foreign language (EFL). The increasing of the interest on vocabulary's value has led to a number of recent studies on the related. Vocabulary knowledge itself is considered the building block in language competent as Alderson (2000) claims that 'vocabulary plays a very important role in reading tests,' and that reading research has 'consistently found a word knowledge factor on which vocabulary knowledge loads highly' (Alderson, 2000: 99). Qian (1998) states that the vocabulary knowledge should no longer be viewed as the individual aspect of language but instead, it should be regarded as a multidimensional construct of language competent. Similarly, Meara (1996) suggests that the vocabulary plays important role in almost every aspect of learners' acquisition of the new language. (Staehr 2008; Milton, 2009). Wilkins (1972) points out that ever though the grammar is very important but the learners might not reach the competence stage of language without enough vocabulary knowledge. This led to the idea of measuring the vocabulary size in ESL or EFL learners which in most cases, the researchers have come up with the testing forms such as the Vocabulary Level Test (VLT; Nation, 1983, 1990), the X_Lex Test (Meara and Milton, 2003), the Eurocentre Vocabulary Size Test (EVST; Meara and Jones, 1990), and the XK_Lek Test (Masrai, 2009). These tests commonly aim to measure the breadth dimension of receptive vocabulary size of the target subjects.

The vocabulary test has proven to be very convenient to use and also required shorter time spent in completion compares to other types of instrument. Schmitt (1994) indicates that the vocabulary test is very useful instrument. It can be used in several possible purposes such as to find out whether or not, students have learned the vocabulary that have been taught and be expected to learn (achievement test) to find out where students' vocabulary gaps lie, so the specific attention can be given to them (diagnostic test), and to identify the students' level of proficiency, so they can be put place in the proper level of study (placement test).

As this study focus on measuring the breadth, receptive vocabulary size of Thai EFL learners, The XK_Lex test is selected as the instrument. The XK_Lex Test (Masrai, 2009) is the Yes/No type of vocabulary test focussing on measuring the breadth knowledge of vocabulary. It is created to be the alternative instrument apart from the older test like EVST (Meera and Jones, 1990) with the aim to measure the vocabulary in the first 10,000 most frequent English vocabulary belongs to Nation's most frequent vocabulary list (1984).

This study aim to investigate the ability of Thai EFL learners to express their knowledge of receptive vocabulary they received from the English learning. The target subjects are the undergraduate students who currently enrol in the English Major of Thai university. The study is expected to answer the following research questions:

- What is the size of English vocabulary obtained by Thai students at the undergraduate level?
- Is the size of English vocabularies of Thai university's students actually growing as they move up the level of study? (From year 1 to year 4)
- Is the XK-Lex test an effective instrument for measuring the vocabulary size?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The meaning of Vocabulary:

To illustrate the advance topics regarding vocabulary, it is compulsory to apprehend the ideas and meanings of vocabulary itself. The terms word, vocabulary item, and lexical item are often used interchangeably in literature when referring to individual words. There are many theories on how to recognize the terminology of word. The explanation of the meaning of word as described by most dictionaries is a single unit of language that has meaning and can be spoken or written. In the field of Applied Linguistics, the definition of what to count as word or vocabulary is still actively debatable. Many linguists and researchers in the field of the second language (L2) and foreign language learners (FL) came up with their own methods of counting. Milton (2009) states that vocabulary estimation can be very confusing as there are many methods of counting words. The pioneer studies on vocabulary size tended to rely on the counting method using dictionary to distinguish vocabulary. Carroll et al. (1971) agrees with the idea and suggests that words can be distinguished entirely on the basis of form which means every change of forms, even just for the capital letter is adequate to count as the different word. For example, society, Society, societies, Societies, and society's are five different words. The works of Seashore and Eckerson (1940) came up with the conclusion suggesting that 200,000 are the number of words known by native speakers of English. Diller (1978) also using the same method came up with the result that the secondary school students can learn about 20,000 words. Nation (2001) came up with the new word count method as he suggested that words can be counted as tokens which mean every single word either in speech or written text is counted as the separate word regardless of how many times they are repeated. This approach of word count is very useful when it comes to the counting the volume of words in written text such as article or essay. The second counting method suggested by Nations (2001) is counting words by types. By this method, the word is counted only the first time it appears in text. Types normally used to measure how many words a dictionary contains, number of words needed to read a book, etc. The next method is counting words as lemmas. To understand this method, it is useful to summarize the general idea of the concept of lemma. The concept of lemmas and word families are particularly analogous. Francis and Kučera (1982:1) referred to lemma as the groups of lexical forms with the same stem and belong to the same word class while word families are extended forms of lemmas. This included the derivation form of words, i.e. irregular verb forms (run and ran), noun with its inflection (house and houses). Nation (2001:7) suggested that word count by lemmas is the easier and is a more suitable method for determining vocabulary size in a large corpus. The fourth and the latest method suggested by Nation (2001) was to count words as word families. To count by the word family which focuses an extended form of lemmas, counting on every inflected and derived form of a headword that considered as a part of the same word. The example of word families is Coxhead (2000)'s the Academic Word List (AWL).

Vocabulary knowledge:

The concept of vocabulary knowledge can be explained as what it means for a language learner to know a word as suggested by Laufer and Paribakht (1998:366) cited in Masrai (2009). Knowing a word does not cover only the learners' understanding on its spelling or pronunciation. Masrai (2009) noted that typically, there are two types of vocabulary knowledge described by the researchers; Receptive, and Productive. Productive knowledge arises when a person uses the

words he has learned to produce a speech or writing sentences while receptive knowledge is the knowledge of words a person receive from reading or listening and unlike the productive, it does not have to be recreated in speech or in writing.

Table 1: Knowing a word (from Nation, 2001:27)

Form	spoken	R	What does the word sound like?
		P	How is the word pronounced?
	written	R	What does the word look like?
		P	How is the word written and spelled?
	word parts	R	What parts are recognisable in this word?
		P	What words parts are needed to express meaning?
Meaning	form and meaning	R	What meaning does this word form signal?
		P	What word form can be used to express this meaning?
	concepts and referents	R	What is included in the concept?
		P	What items can the concept refer to?
	associations	R	What others words does this word make us think of?
		P	What other words could we use instead of this one?
Use	grammatical functions	R	In what patterns does the word occur?
		P	In what patterns must we use this word?
	collocations	R	What words or types of word occur with this one?
		P	What words or types of words must we use with this one?
	constraints on use	R	Where, when and how often would we meet this word?
		P	Where, when and how often can we use this word?

(R = Receptive, P= Productive)

Breadth and Depth Knowledge of Vocabulary:

Read (1989) suggested that vocabulary knowledge should at least comprise of two dimension aspects of vocabulary breadth, or size, and depth, or quality. By this concept, Al-Falah (2010:13) notes that vocabulary breadth represents the quantity of words, the meaning of which the learner can at least understand at the superficial level while the depth of vocabulary knowledge refers to how well a learner knows a the particular vocabulary. Qian (1999) suggests that the depth vocabulary knowledge should cover various kinds of structure such as pronunciation, spelling, meaning, register, frequency, and morphological. Moreover, Chapelle (1998) also proposes that attribute vocabulary interpretation should be focusing on four paradigms: 1) Vocabulary size; 2) knowledge of word characteristics; 3) lexicon organization; and 4) processes of lexical access. Similarly, Wesche and Paribakht (1996) states that both depth and breadth knowledge of word has the close relationship with the reading competent and also the learning of words in corpus. Krashen (1989) notes, vocabulary teaching methods are not efficient when they try to do what reading does, and end up giving superficial instead of complete knowledge of a word. Cobb (1999) further explains that acquisition of vocabulary through reading could be too slow for the timeframe while list-learning leads to superficial knowledge.

The comparison of breadth and depth knowledge of vocabulary has long been discussed by many studies (Nagy and Herman, 1987; Qian, 1999; Vermeer, 2001; and Shen,2009). However, this study focuses on the breadth notion of vocabulary knowledge which is more focused by the researchers of vocabulary studies.

XK_Lex Vocabulary Test:

The XK_Lex which is selected as the instrument for this study is a Yes/No type of vocabulary size test as well. Masrai (2009) points the idea of the Yes/No vocabulary test that it is less complicated than other kinds of vocabulary tests. He notes the advantages of using this test to measure the vocabulary size of the target subjects as follow:

- It is created with the concern on measuring the learners 'vocabulary size from the first 1,000 to the tenth 1,000 word families of English.
- It is flexible to apply with both low and high level of L2 English learners.
- It provided frequency profile information for ten level of frequency instead of representing only one vocabulary size figure like some other tests which is easier to examine the learners' growth of vocabulary size and identify the weakness of the learners.
- It differentiates itself from the similar test like EVST that targets the same group of learners.

- It is also required shorter time for the participants to complete and easy to apply as it is available in both computer based and paper version. (Masrai, 2009: 33)

The XK_Lex test is composed of ten columns of vocabulary. The first five columns consist of the words belong to the first 5,000 most frequent English vocabulary selected from the Nation(1984)'s list of most frequency English words while words in the other five columns are from the list of 5,000-10,000 most frequent English vocabulary mentioned in Kilgarriff (2006). As the overestimation and guessing the words can be the significant variable in vocabulary testing (Huibregtse, Admiraal, and Meara, 2002), to avoid this problem, The XK_Lex test also provided the pseudo-words mixing with the real lexical items in every columns. To estimate the raw score of the participants, each chosen word from the real English lexical items will be counted for 100 marks while the each chosen of pseudo-word will be deducted 500 marks from the final score.

3. METHODOLOGY

Aims and Objectives:

The main purpose of the study is to investigate the breadth of receptive vocabulary knowledge that the native Thai students at undergraduate level can obtain prior their entrance to the undergraduate program and also to evaluate whether or not the students' size of vocabulary increase as they move up to the higher year of study. This study aims to answer the following research questions.

1. What is the size of English vocabulary of Thai EFL students at the undergraduate level?
2. Is the size of English vocabularies of Thai EFL students actually growing as they move up the level of study? (from year 1 to year 4)
3. Is the XK-Lex test an effective instrument for measuring the vocabulary size?

Subjects:

The subjects selected in this study are the native Thai speaker students who are currently attending the undergraduate program majoring in English at Silpakorn University, Bangkok, Thailand. The subjects are divided into four groups of ten students representing each year of the study as the post-secondary education in Thailand is designated as 4-year syllabus. Furthermore, the group of the first year and second year students are designated as the lower level section while the third year and fourth year students combined as the higher level. This grouping is due to the fact that the first and second year students are having less hours of exposing English language environment than the third and fourth year students. The first and second year English Major students are required to attend other general modules involving non-English subjects while the third and fourth year students are mainly focused on English language modules (Oranpattanachai, 2013). All of the subjects graduated from the formal upper-secondary (มัธยมศึกษาตอนปลาย Matthayom Suksa Ton Plai) schools in Thailand which means they have completed the formal English Language education for the period of twelve years prior their entrance to the program. As all of the participants are English major undergraduate students, they have received an average of fifteen to twenty hours of English language classes which is more than the average time of six hours English classes for non-English major students at the undergraduate level in Thailand. Apart from these qualifications, all the participants were asked prior taken the tests whether they have lived abroad before, they also asked if they have studied in public or private school. The underlying principle is to exclude participants who attended private schools who normally get extra English language teaching hours than those attended public schools.

Instrument:

XK_Lex Vocabulary Test:

The XK_Lex that is selected as the instrument for this study is also a Yes/No type of vocabulary size test. Masrai (2009) points the idea of the Yes/No vocabulary test that it is less complicated than other kinds of vocabulary tests. He notes the advantages of using this test to measure the vocabulary size of the target subjects as follow:

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- It provided frequency profile information for ten level of frequency instead of representing only one vocabulary size figure like some other tests which is easier to examine the learner's growth of vocabulary size and identify the weakness of the learners.
- It differentiates itself from the similar test like EVST that targets the same group of learners.
- It is also required shorter time for the participants to complete and easy to apply as it is available in both computer based and paper version. (Masrai, 2009: 33)

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The data was collected using parallel forms of the test in purpose to measure the receptive vocabulary size of the subjects. The test is available in two versions: computer base version and paper version. The paper version is chosen as the appropriate tool for this research. Two forms (A and B) were adopted from Masrai (2009).

4. PROCEDURES

Pilot Test:

The tests were initially conducted by Thai students who apparently enrol in the either pre-master or postgraduate programme at Swansea University. All of them have completed the secondary school and undergraduate programme in Thailand which is parallel with the target participants in Thailand. This procedure was done in order to estimate the time using in each test and to examine the possible problems that could happen when it comes to the time of the real testing. All participants have taken each test at the same. Nevertheless, the results of these pilot tests are not included in this research.

The Primary Tests:

40 undergraduate students of English Major from Silpakorn University, Bangkok, Thailand participated in the tests. All of them are of the similar education background. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, the subjects are divided equally into four groups. Each group represents their respective year of study from year one to year four. Every participant receipted the information document of the study and is explained the goals and procedure of testing prior taking the test. The test took place regular teaching-learning circumstance during the first semester of the academic year of 2015-2016 in the lecture rooms of Faculty of Archaeology Building, Silpakorn University Thaphra Palace Campus in Bangkok, Thailand. The participants were given test A to complete first and when they finished and handed the test to the overseer, test B were given to them to complete in the same manner right after that. The period of the tests were initially estimated to be between twenty minutes for each test according to the average times of the pilot tests. However, the average times that participants took in real tests were just between ten and fifteen minutes. After two sets of test were completed, the data is collected and the raw scores were calculated through the SPSS Statistics Software in the Statistical Analysis procedure.

Statistical Analysis:

In this procedure, the data from both set of tests were analysed through the SPSS Statistics Software based on the aims and objectives set mentioned earlier in this chapter. Using SPSS, the analysed data has given the following information:

- General results to demonstrate the means, maximum scores, minimum scores and standard deviations of the two tests (The XK_Lex A and B) that were conducted to accumulate the data for the study.
- Frequency profile results to investigate the construct and content validity of the XK_Lex test.
- T-test to compare the means of the scores that both high and low levels learners achieved.

- Correlation to compare the two versions (A and B) of the XK_Lex receptive vocabulary test.
- Results of content and construct validity as well as the internal consistency reliability.

5. RESULTS

The raw data obtained from the participants were analyzed statistically through the SPSS Statistics software. The final score is calculated in the following formats:

- Each right word from the list chosen by the participants is counted as 100 marks.
- The marks of the participants will be deducted 500 for each pseudo-word chosen.

The general results will be presented in graphs and tables and will be explained. After which, in the next chapter, which is the discussion part, the results will be discussed in more detail in aim to answer the research questions.

General Summary Results:

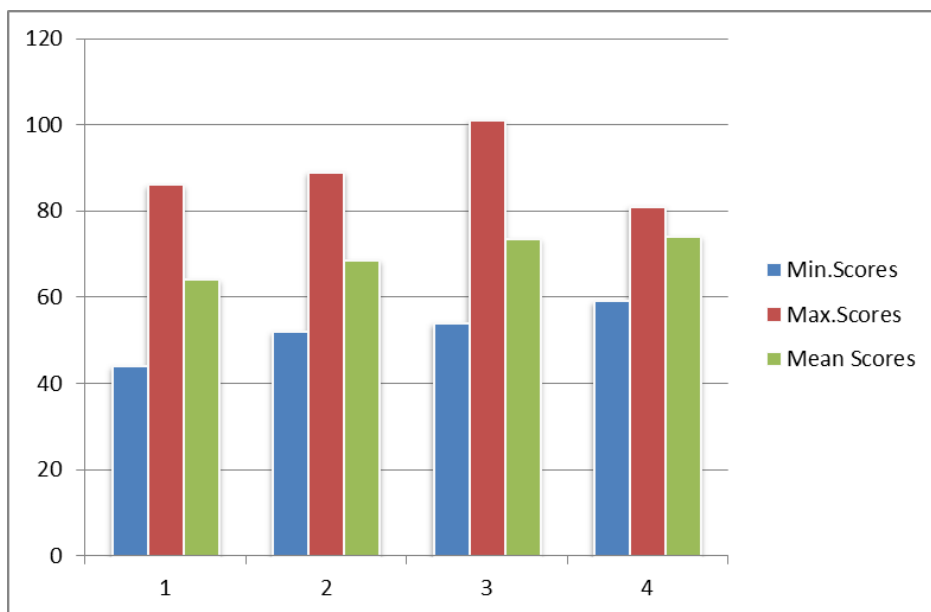


Figure 1: Summary of the raw scores of XK-Lex A for Year 1- Year 4 students indicating the raw scores of right words chosen.

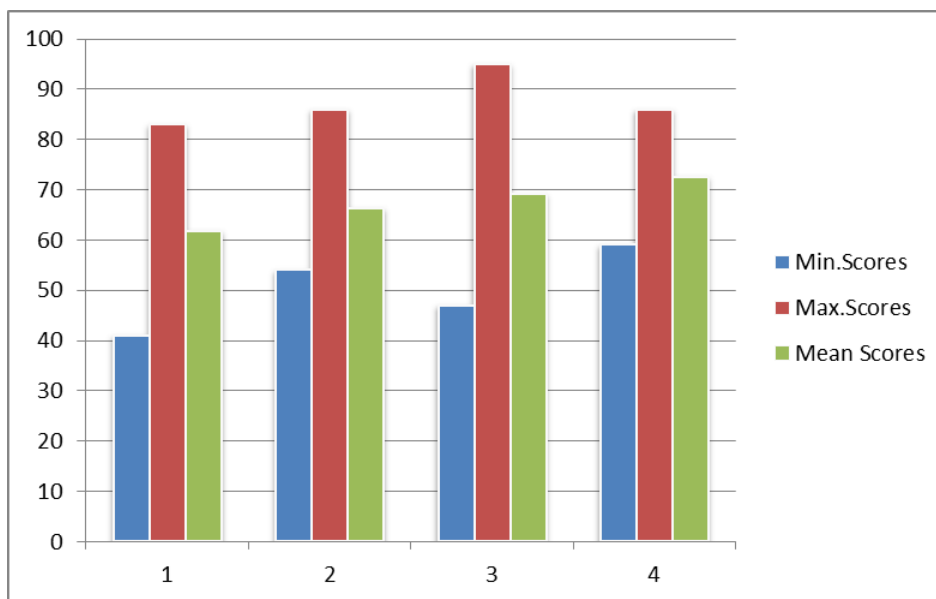


Figure 2: Summary scores of XK-Lex B for Year 1- Year 4 students indicating the raw scores of right words chosen.

Figure 1 and Figure 2 represent the scores of right words chosen by the subjects in set A and set B of the XK_Lex tests of all four groups respectively. The graphs display the minimum, maximum and means score of the participants in each group. The scores in all aspects of every group has not display the striking difference between each year, although all three bars of first year students is slightly lower than those of the higher years. The results reveal that every group came close to each other in all three aspects: the minimum, the maximum, and the means. The result also displays that on the mean aspect, students tend to know more words when they move up to the higher year of study. This result conforms to the hypothesis of the third research question that expected the size of students' size of vocabulary to go up as they move to the higher year of study. As mention earlier, the groups of participants are further combined into two groups of lower and higher level. The lower level consists of the students from year 1 and year 2 while the higher level consists of those from year 3 and year 4.

Table 4: The score of all participants separating XK_Lex Test set A and set B

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Test_A	40	4200	9600	6757.50	1169.021
Test_B	40	4100	8600	6447.50	1172.984

Table 5: The score of all groups sepertaing KX_Lex set A and set B

YEAR		N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Deviation
Test_A	Year 1	10	4400	7400	5960.00	1105.743
	Year 2	10	4200	7700	6610.00	1111.006
	Year 3	10	5400	9600	7100.00	1367.073
	Year 4	10	5900	8000	7360.00	575.809
Test_B	Year 1	10	4100	7900	5780.00	1256.804
	Year 2	10	4900	7500	6280.00	833.733
	Year 3	10	4700	8500	6470.00	1297.048
	Year 4	10	4100	8600	7260.00	863.069

Table 4 and 5 represent the score of XK_Lex test set A and set B displaying the maximum, minimum, means, and the standard deviation score of all participants. In table 4, all scores of the participants are combined and analyzed to summarize the overall results of XK_Lex set A and Set B. The results reveal that the participants perform better in the set A of test with the mean score of 6757.50 comparing with 6447.50 of set B. The minimum and the maximum score follow the trait as the minimum scores are 4200 and 4100 for set A and set B respectively, and the maximum scores are 9600 for set A and 8600 for set B.

In delve evaluation; the tables suggest that the participants in year one group perform slightly better in the set A test with the mean score of 5960 while their set B mean score is 5780. The minimum score also similar as the score in set A 4400 compare to 4100 of set B. However, the maximum score is different as they did better in the set B with 7900 to 7400 of set A. For the group of year two students, the means score display the similar outcome to the year one group. The means score of set A is 6610 compare to the set B one which is 6280. On the minimum score aspect, the year two students tend to better on Set B as they score 4900 while the set A is 4200. In contrast, their maximum score is better in set A with 7700 compares to 7500 of set B. In the group of third year students, the mean scores of both sets seems to drop drastically in set B as their mean score is 7100 while the mean of set B is 6470. Both minimum and maximum scores display the similar trait, the minimum is 5400 on set A and 4700 for set B, and 9600 in set A compare to 8500 of set B in the maximum scores. In the last group, the fourth year students, the mean score is, as expected highest compare to other group. The mean of set A is 7360 while the set B one is slightly lower at 7260. For the minimum, score better in set A with 5900 compare to 4100 in set B. And lastly, the maximum, the group score 8000 in set A while set B is better with 8600.

The results from participants in group of year one and year two will be combined to analyzed as the group of low level learners while the group of third year and fourth year students will be merged to form the high level learners group. The statistic results of these two groups are presented in table 6 and table 7.

Table 6: Summary of the low level learners' scores

Test format	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
XK-Lex A	20	4200	7700	6285	1100.58
XK-Lex B	20	4100	11100	6380	1470.58

Table 7: Summary of the high level learners' scores

Test format	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
XK-Lex A	20	5400	9600	7230	1003.54
XK-Lex B	20	4700	9300	7215	1288.52

Table 6 and table 7 display the summary of the means, the minimum, the maximum scores, and the standard deviation that represent the vocabulary level of the learners in the low level group (year 1 and year 2) and the high level group (year 3 and year 4) of learners respectively. In this study, according to the aim of the XK_Lex test, the mean score represent the number of vocabulary in the first 10,000 most frequent English vocabulary that the participants know receptively. The results show that, in the high level group, the learners tend to perform closely on both as in the Sets of XK_Lex test as the means are slightly different with only 15 marks lower in the set B of test (7230/7215). On the other hand, the gap between the means of two sets of test in the lower group is more visible. The participants of the lower group seem to perform better in the set B of test with the mean score (6380) is approximately 100 marks better than the set A score (6285). The gap between the minimum and the maximum scores also worth noting, in the low level group, the gap is visibly much larger in set B (4100-11100) while in the high level group, the gap is relatively closer. The maximum score of both sets exceed 9000 (9600 and 9300), although the minimum scores may draw the larger gap than the low level group (5400 and 4700). The more detail of the possible reasons will be discussed in the next chapter.

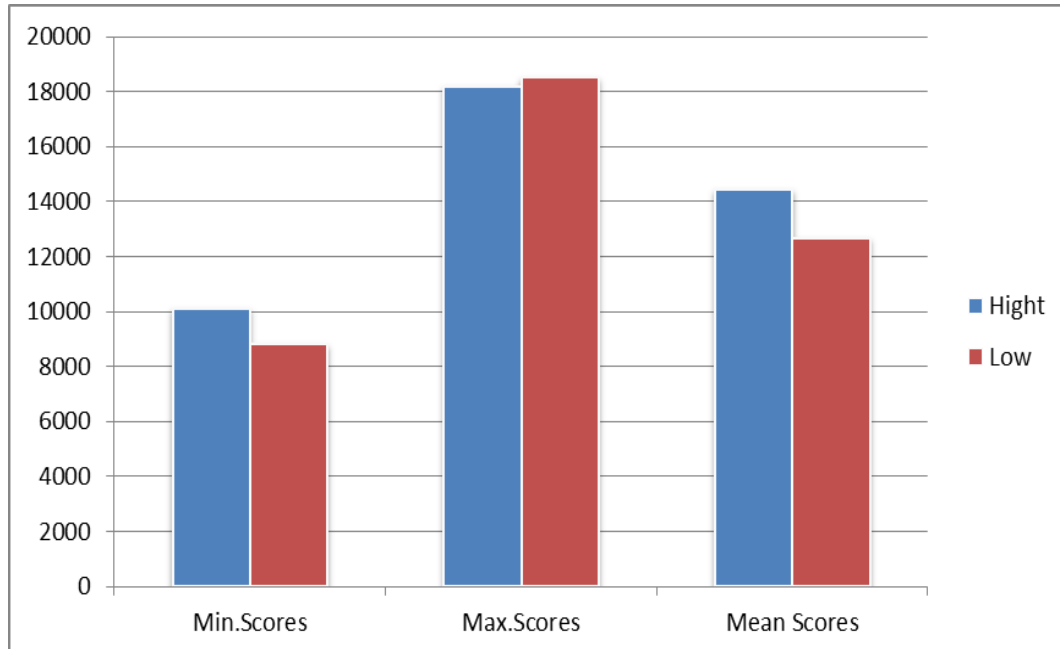
**Figure 3: Summary scores of XK-Lex A & B for high and Low level learners**

Figure 3 displays the minimum, the maximum, and the means compare the low level group of learners (year 1 and year 2) with the high level group (year 3 and year 4)

Correlations between the XK-Lex Test A and B:

In this part, the correlation between the two sets of XK_Lex Test will be point out. After running the correlation tests, the results are displayed in table 8, 9, 10, and 11.

Table 8: Correlation between set A and set B of XK-Lex Tests of year 1 group**Correlations**

		VAR00002	VAR00003
VAR00002	Pearson Correlation	1	.765*
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.010
	N	10	10
VAR00003	Pearson Correlation	.765*	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.010	
	N	10	10

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

Table 9: Correlation between set A and set B of XK-Lex Tests of year 2 group**Correlations**

		VAR00002	VAR00003
VAR00002	Pearson Correlation	1	.674*
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.032
	N	10	10
VAR00003	Pearson Correlation	.674*	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.032	
	N	10	10

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

Table 10: Correlation between set A and set B of XK- Lex tests of year 3 group**Correlations**

		VAR00002	VAR00003
VAR00002	Pearson Correlation	1	.861**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.001
	N	10	10
VAR00003	Pearson Correlation	.861**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.001	
	N	10	10

**.. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 11: Correlation between set A and set B of XK- Lex tests of year 4 group**Correlations**

		VAR00002	VAR00003
VAR00002	Pearson Correlation	1	.796**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.006
	N	10	10
VAR00003	Pearson Correlation	.796**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.006	
	N	10	10

**.. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 8, 9, 10, and 11 display the correlation between set A and set B of the XK_Lex test in each group of the subjects. The overall results display that the correlation between both sets of test is without a doubt significant and in all groups $p < 0.05$, especially in the groups of high level learners (year 3 and year 4) that the correlation is significant at the 0.01 level.

6. DISCUSSION

The results and findings from the analyzed data answer research questions proposed for this experiment.

1. What is the size of English vocabulary of Thai students at the undergraduate level?
2. Is the size of English vocabularies of Thai university's students actually growing as they proceed to the higher year of study? (from year 1 to year 4)
3. Is the XK-Lex test an effective instrument for measuring the vocabulary size?

The general results from the study reveal that the native Thai year 1 students of EFL programme know approximately 5,800 to 5,900 English lexical items in the first 10,000 most frequent English words. These words are likely obtained from their previous English learning in primary and secondary school. As explained in the previous section, the testing took place during the second month of the first semester of Thailand's university academic year, which means the subjects in year 1 group are likely to obtain their word knowledge from the previous English learning prior their entrance to the university. However, this is not the case for all other groups since they have been studying EFL in the university for much longer period. Their word knowledge are likely to be received from the ELT curriculum of the university. The previous studies focusing on vocabulary size of L2 learners purpose many average number of word needed to be known by the learners. For instance, Nation (2001) suggests that the receptive knowledge of the 2,000 most frequent word families is needed for the learners in order to understand up to 90% of the words in verbal conversation while Laufer (1992) claims that the learners are required to know at least 3,000 word families of the most frequent ones to understand the more advance academic text, and Hirsh and Nation (1992) indicated the number of 5,000 word families are necessary to be known by the learners for the comprehensive reading. By the measure of these studies, Thai students are likely to qualify for all qualifications.

To answer the second research question, the analysed data reveals that the English word knowledge of Thai students actually increasing as they proceed to the higher year of study. It is revealed that the rate of vocabulary knowledge goes all the way up from year 1 until year 4. In year 1 group, the subjects maintain around 5,800 to 5,900 words while the group of second year 2 students, the rate is between 6300-6600 words. Next, the size of the third year group falls between 6500, and 7100, and for the senior year group, the number of the vocabulary is as high as 7300-7400. These results are somewhat impressive and should make the pedagogues satisfy since the vocabulary size of Thai students at university level is significantly larger than the students in many other EFL countries according to the previous studies. First example is Nurweni and Read (1999) which examines the word knowledge of the first year Indonesian university students and comes up with the result that the average number of English words known by the Indonesian native student is 1226. Second, Cobb and Marlise (1999) which observes the receptive English vocabulary ability of two groups of Hong Kong university students (first year and second year), and the finding suggest that the second year students' scores only slightly higher than first year students on the test at the 5000-word level. It is also finds that no vocabulary growth occurred during a six month period in the first year group. Lastly, Masrai (2009) which investigates the size of vocabulary of university students in Saudi Arabia, also using XK_Lex, comes up with the range of 1650 and 3000 words for the low level group (first year EFL students), and between about 3000 and 5000 for the last year students. According to all namely studies, this is not a bad sign for ELT in Thailand. Theoretically, this should shed the bright light in the future of Thailand's ELT. However, there are some points regarding the background of ELT and the situation of English language in Thailand as a whole worth discussing.

As reveal earlier in the literature review, Thailand's present law of education require all students to take English language course as the fundamental module from as early as grade 1 and continue to the end of their enrolment in the school system (grade 12). With over a decade of learning English formally, the expected number of word knowledge should be better. The learning habit of students is commonly cited as the main factor to make the vocabulary acquisition or language acquisition as the whole to be less effective as it should be. Thai students are traditionally taught to not being productive. They are expected to memorize everything from the grammatical structures, linguistic functions to the meanings of vocabulary. If they have questions, they may ask the teachers only when the teacher let them ask. Furthermore, it is unacceptable in Thai culture if the student expresses his concern over whether what teacher explain is right or wrong

(Wongsothorn et al. 2003). These characteristics may be the main reason why the students did quite well in the test that requests the receptive knowledge. On the other hand, if the productive test is applied instead, the results may not be as high.

The fact that students are unable to transfer their language skills learned in the classroom to other situations is viewed as the main factor for the low proficiency rate among Thai students. Despite the aim to provide more English environment class, most schools, universities, and higher education institutions in Thailand only use Thai as the language of instruction, even in the foreign language class (Baker, 2008). Accordingly, English is treated as the in-class-only knowledge. Most English knowledge including vocabulary knowledge of Thai students are learned intentionally through classroom texts and other materials provided by the teachers. Pigada and Schmitt (2006) notes that in-class materials, mainly for the extensive reading seem to produce the sufficient vocabulary knowledge for the learners, nevertheless it is not consistent across all word knowledge types. Unless the students going abroad or encounter with the westerners, there is no situation where can use the English ability in daily life (Foley 2005; Wongsothorn et al. 2003). Kongkerd (2013) notes that despite making high score in tests, most Thai student still struggle to compose the functional speech. Mackenzie (2002) also notes the cultural backgrounds somewhat directly impact the proficiency of Thai students. For instance, Thai people display close to no confidence in speaking English because they do not want to let themselves lose face if they speak wrongly. This lead to the ineffective English language competent.

Is the XK-Lex test an effective instrument for measuring the vocabulary size?

The correlations of the results from two sets of tests confirm the ability of XK_Lex test as the credible vocabulary measuring instrument. Masrai (2009) claims that XK_Lex will provide a better calculation of overall vocabulary than other type of vocabulary instruments. When compare to other vocabulary test, namely EVST, the XK_Lex seems to provides more relevant results and easier to control the variability.

As mentioned before, the XK_Lex test was constructed based on the vocabulary belongs to the list of 10000 most frequent English lexicons. Masrai (2009) further investigate the construct validity of XK_Lek test by comparing two sets of test done by the Saudi university students divided into two level; high and low, and found that the XK_Lex provided the predict score which is the high level learners should perform better than the low level learners.

7. CONCLUSION

Various studies in the field of Applied Linguistic and Language Teaching recognize that vocabulary is the dependable factor for predicting learners' language acquisition ability and competent. This study tends to establish the approximate size of vocabulary knowledge of Thai university students. Receptive tests were conducted to serve the aim. The XK_Lex test which is a kind of Yes/No vocabulary test is utilized as the appropriate instrument. As the English Major students, the participants are expected to display no less than equal than the EFL students in other countries. The study also aim to clarify the question that whether or not the Thai EFL students at university level increase their vocabulary size when the move up to the higher year of study. The results analysis confirmed that the participants in the group of first year students hold vocabulary knowledge around 5800-5900 words from the first 10000 most frequent word list. The results also confirmed that the students process more word knowledge as the move up to the higher year in the appropriate rate. When compare to the similar studies on the EFL students in other countries, the result seems to indicate that the vocabulary size of Thai students is somewhat bigger than the students in Vietnam (Nation, 2011), Hong Kong (Cobb and Marlise, 1999), and Indonesia (Nurweni and Read, 1999). However, this study only investigates in the receptive vocabulary knowledge, therefore the productive word knowledge is not available to compare with other studies.

Since the research on vocabulary knowledge is relatively new to ELT researchers in Thailand, to my awareness, no study investigating the size of vocabulary of the native Thai EFL student has been done before. The researchers hope this study will ignite the awareness of the reliable of the vocabulary knowledge in the country. If more studies on the related topics happen in the future, they will be valuable to the process of English Teaching and Learning in Thailand. This study aim is to acknowledge the benefit of measuring vocabulary size among the ELT community in Thailand. It may maintain some weaknesses in some aspects, but it can be a valuable fundamental of the further investigation in future research on the related topics.

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APPENDICES

Appendix - A

English XK-Lex Vocabulary Test 1:

Please look at these words. Some of these words are real English words and some are not but are made to look like real words. Please tick the words that you know or can use. Here is an example.

Version: A

Your student number:
for your help.

Thank you

New	commerce	Organise	Accuse	Victory
Gummer	Tindle	Wookey	Candish	Skave
Word	Dust	Fountain	Tend	Jewel
Near	nonsense	Movement	Landing	Reliable
Peace	Fond	Likely	Volume	Harden
Produce	Sweat	Provide	Tube	Sorrow
You	Cap	Castle	Liner	Dial
Wife	Worry	Steam	Previous	Enclose
Do	Plenty	Steady	Style	Sneeze
Add	Guide	Pole	Outline	Apparatus
Kilp	Broy	Orrade	Plaudate	Overend
Build	Pump	Guest	Keeper	Roast
Prosecutor	addict	Gulp	Idleness	Carnation
Samphirate	treadway	Darch	callisthemia	Mordue
Referral	detachment	Thud	Blizzard	Plaintively
Illuminate	unsure	Assassin	Rut	Gurgle
Gown	reinforcement	Wrench	Incessant	Heal
Verge	enlightenment	Backdrop	Blunder	go-between
Counsellor	workman	Unfold	springboard	common-law
Skipper	feudal	Upheaval	Shrapnel	Locket
Authorise	quartet	Animation	Skip	Nudge
Sour	psychic	Banish	Bastion	Anger
Neminary	Fallity	Treggle	Snape	Tearle
Holly	appropriation	Peninsula	Maroon	Contrive

Appendix B:**English XK-Lex Vocabulary Test 2**

Please look at these words. Some of these words are real English words and some are not but are made to look like real words. Please tick the words that you know or can use. Here is an example.

Version: **B**

Your student number:

Thank you for your help.

make	Advice	generous	Cure	Victory
Anand	Trudgeon	snell	hammond	arbus
Turn	perform	rabbit	Pat	Opponent
Doubt	Luck	cough	Court	Feast
Start	Fierce	sense	reaction	item
Ready	Strict	announce	workshop	fortune
Person	Collar	prepare	leadership	simplicity
open	wire	drag	reference	overlook
Fact	Comfort	sight	emphasise	scorn
Sure	Discipline	situation	seed	respect
Widgery	Inertible	loring	craddock	encopulate
Write	Pour	dive	calculate	junction
Dependency	Convergence	cape	tireless	cylinder
Chibberv	Fallogy	atone	lebrucious	outpanner
Descendant	Alley	conscientious	eloquence	allure
Playground	Cutter	paw	spurt	atone
Attachment	Consultative	reap	recoup	ruby
Hurdle	Contamination	extremist	buoyancy	dicey
Offering	Hierarchical	adorn	squeak	coterie
Denote	cram	rejoin	sighting	conundrum
Accumulation	rivalry	admirer	Stout	chipboard
Simplify	shark	animated	Braid	barn
Proom	Skave	spalding	Coath	charlett
Binary	Severity	questionable	Breed	maggot