การสำรวจการใช้วิธีการสอนภาษาแบบเน้นศัพท์
โดยผู้สอนภาษาอังกฤษระดับมหาวิทยาลัยในประเทศไทย
A Survey of the Implementation of the Lexical Approach
by Thai Tertiary EFL Teachers

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บทคัดย่อ

งานวิจัยเชิงสำรวจนี้ มีวัตถุประสงค์เพื่อศึกษาการใช้วิธีการสอนภาษาแบบ
เน้นศัพท์ (Lexical Approach) โดยผู้สอนภาษาอังกฤษในฐานะภาษาต่างประเทศ
ชาวไทยในมหาวิทยาลัยของรัฐในภาคตะวันออกเฉียงเหนือตอนบนของประเทศไทย
เพื่อตอบคำถามการวิจัยว่าผู้สอนภาษาอังกฤษมีการใช้วิธีการสอนภาษาแบบเน้นศัพท์
หรือไม่ ถ้ามีการใช้จริง มีการใช้ในระดับใด กลุ่มตัวอย่างคืออาจารย์ผู้สอนภาษาอังกฤษ
ชาวไทยจำนวน 140 คน ซึ่งเลือกมาโดยการสุ่มตามสะดวก จากมหาวิทยาลัยของรัฐ
9 แห่ง ใน 8 จังหวัดในภาคตะวันออกเฉียงเหนือตอนบนของประเทศไทย เครื่องมือที่ใช้
ในการรวบรวมข้อมูลได้แก่แบบสอบถามแบบปลายปิดชนิดประมาณค่า 4 ระดับ
ซึ่งทำการวิเคราะห์เพื่อหาค่าสถิติเชิงพรรณนาโดยใช้โปรแกรมสำเร็จรูป SPSS ผลการวิจัย
พบว่าผู้สอนภาษาอังกฤษระดับมหาวิทยาลัยชาวไทยได้ใช้วิธีการสอนภาษาแบบเน้นศัพท์
จริง แต่เป็นการใช้ในระดับปานกลาง มีการอภิปรายผลในส่วนที่เกี่ยวกับการใช้วิธีการ
สอนภาษาแบบเน้นศัพท์ในแง่ที่ว่าเป็นสิ่งที่ใช้เวลามาก และเป็นภาระที่หนัก แสดงถึงว่า
วิธีการสอนนี้อยู่ในระดับเกือบเป็นที่นิยม มีข้อเสนอแนะเพื่อการนำไปใช้ในการสอน
ภาษาอังกฤษในชั้นเรียนและสำหรับการวิจัยเพิ่มเติม

คำสำคัญ : วิธีสอนภาษาแบบเน้นศัพท์ ผู้สอนภาษาอังกฤษในฐานะภาษาต่างประเทศระดับ
มหาวิทยาลัยชาวไทย

Abstract

Employing a descriptive survey design, this study explored the implementation of the Lexical Approach (LA) by Thai tertiary EFL teachers in the state universities in the upper Northeast of Thailand. It sought to answer the research questions on whether the teachers implemented the LA or not, and if yes, to what extent. 140EFL teachers chosen by convenient sampling from 9 state universities in 8 provinces in the region took part in the study. A close-ended questionnaire with a 4-point-Likert rating scale was used to collect the data which were then analyzed for descriptive statistics using an SPSS program. The results revealed that the teachers did implement the LA, but the implementation was at a medium level. The results were discussed in relation to the time-consuming and arduous nature of the LA, indicating its narrow popularity. Implications for further implementing the LA in an EFL classroom setting and recommendations for future research were provided.

Keywords : Lexical Approach; Thai tertiary EFL teachers

1. Introduction

1.1 Rationale

Despite the fact that English learning has been prioritized in Thailand's educational system at all levels ranging from the primary to the tertiary level, the overall outcome is still unsatisfactory (Nicoletti, 2015). To be precise, Thai learners of English still have lower English performance in comparison with their counterparts in the neighboring countries (Kanoksilapatham, 2014; Noom-Ura, 2013). Moreover, according to the Test and Score Data Summary for TOEFL iBT Tests (ETS, 2015), the average TOEFL test score of Thailand as a whole is 74, slightly better than that of Laos and Cambodia which enjoyed 64 and 69 respectively. This has led to questions concerning the stumbling blocks to Thailand's English language learning and teaching. Some researchers have pointed out factors leading to Thai EFL learners' poor English proficiency, and these factors include a

lack of opportunities to speak English outside of the classroom (Radic-Bojanic, Topalov and Sinwonsuwat, 2015), overly large classes (Noom-ura, 2013), and a lack of qualified teachers in terms of English fluency and/or pedagogical skills (Prapaisit de Segovia and Hardison, 2008). Other researchers (Liangpanit 2002; Duadsuntia 2008) found that the cause of Thai students' difficulty in learning English was their insufficient knowledge of vocabulary. Teachers' pedagogical knowledge and skills as well as learners' vocabulary ability were; therefore, the impetus for this study.

Research abounds that supports the importance of vocabulary (Alqahtani, 2015; Gu, 2003; Nation, 2001) and vocabulary teaching methods that focus on the enhancement of learners' vocabulary (Dorkchandra, 2015; Silverman, 2007; Townsend and Collins, 2009). Of several vocabulary teaching approaches, one highly effective approach proposed by Michael Lewis (1993) known as the Lexical Approach (LA) has been around for over 20 years. The LA holds that the heart of language competence is lexis or all the words in a language, not grammar. For the learners to acquire language fluency, lexis must be taught to them, and the lexis here refers to words, poly-words, fixed and semi-fixed expressions, and collocations.

Though the lexical approach has been advanced as an effective alternative to English teaching, especially vocabulary, for over a decade, it still seems that the approach is not popular in Thailand (Boonyasaquan, 2006). On top of this, no research has been done in the Thai EFL context to investigate the implementation of this approach in the Thai university EFL setting pertaining to instruction of vocabulary. Research has confirmed the relationship between teachers' pedagogical knowledge and its application in class and learners' achievement. The author of the present investigation holds that with sufficient knowledge about the LA and decent implementation of the approach in classroom teaching, Thai university EFL teachers would be of considerable help in improving the English language competence of Thai EFL students because, as posited by Saengboon

(2013), the teachers, as direct stakeholders, affect the accomplishment of or failure in any new innovation including a teaching method.

1.2 Purpose of the study:

To explore if Thai EFL tertiary teachers implement the Lexical Approach in their classroom practice, and if they do, to what extent

1.3 Research questions:

The following research questions guided the exploration:

Do Thai tertiary EFL teachers implement the Lexical Approach in their classroom practice? If yes, to what extent do they implement it?

2. Literature Review

2.1 The Lexical Approach

Coined by Michael Lewis (1993), the Lexical Approach is a particular vocabulary teaching approach. According to Lewis, The LA puts an emphasis on developing learners' proficiency with lexis or words and word combinations. The key principle of the LA is that "language consists of grammaticalized lexis, not lexicalized grammar." (Lewis, 1993, p.17) This means that lexis is central in creating meaning, while grammar plays a secondary role in managing meaning. To quote Lewis, this approach "focuses on developing learner's proficiency with lexis, or word and word combinations." (1993, p. 95). Confirming this view in the book Implementing the Lexical Approach: Putting theory into Practice, he states, "Fluency is based on acquisition of a large store of fixed and semi-fixed prefabricated items, which are available as the foundation for any linguistic novelty or creativity (1997, p. 15).

Lexis in this approach is broadly divided into four categories:

1. words or polywords: Words such as pen, teacher; polywords such as by and large, by the way, and

2. collocations: e.g. strong coffee (not powerful coffee , heavy smoker (not strong smoker)

3. semi-fixed expressions: e.g. the purpose of....is to......; when it comes to....., ...

4. fixed expressions: e.g. There's no accounting for taste.

2.2 Some Key Principles of the Lexical Approach

2.2.1 Language consists of grammaticalised lexis, not lexicalised grammar.

According to Lewis (1993), language is made of lexical elements besides grammar, positing that emphasis should be put on structures made of word, clusters of words or lexical chunks rather than grammatical structures.

2.2.2 The grammar/vocabulary dichotomy is invalid: much language consists of multi-word 'chunks'.

Lewis opines that vocabulary cannot be differentiated from grammar. Every word has its own grammar and it is not appropriate to create a distinction between vocabulary and grammar. Instead of viewing language as simply words and grammar, language should be viewed as consisting of multi-word chunks. Language acquisition is faster facilitated when it is learnt in chunks rather than in isolated individual words

2.2.3 A central element of language teaching is raising students' awareness of, and developing their ability to 'chunk' language successfully.

Lewis upholds that noticing lexical chunks in the language is a requirement for learning language. In this regard, increased awareness helps in converting input to intake. Added to consciousness-raising, he affirms that importance should be given to developing in a learner the ability to chunk the language.

2.2.4 Collocation is integrated as an organizing principle within syllabuses.

Collocations are central to the Lexical Approach because the way words combine in collocations is fundamental to all language use. Lewis emphasizes the importance of learning the patterns of collocations since much of the spoken and written language constitutes them. Thus, proficiency in a language is greater when focus is on collocations.

2.2.5 Evidence from computational linguistics and discourse analysis influences syllabus content and sequence.

Advances in computer-based studies of language, such as corpus linguistics, have provided huge databases of language corpora. Teaching language based on the real-life situations is recommended. Corpus concordances are authentic language that can show the learners what language really works and is used.

2.2.6 Successful language is a wiser concept than accurate language:

The Lexical Approach, like other communicative approaches, which stresses communicative proficiency, also highlights the importance of successful communication rather than the production of accurate language. It upholds that acquisition of lexical chunks makes a learner's communication more effective.

2.2.7 The primacy of speech over writing is recognized; writing is acknowledged as a secondary encodement, with a radically different grammar from that of the spoken language.

Emphasizing speaking over writing, the lexical approach holds that the learners at first should speak fluently in the language before they could learn writing. Lewis believes that any learner can acquire a language trying to emulate the ways adopted by a native speaker.

2.2.8 It is the co-textual rather than situational elements of context which are of primary importance for language teaching.

Lewis stresses that co-textual elements of language are more important for language learning than contextual elements. To put it in a nutshell, co-text is more important context. While contexts aid the learner

in comprehending the situation of utterance and the situation of occurrence of the speech, co-texts help in knowing the discourse preceding and following a particular word. The awareness of the co-texts makes us understand the co-occurrence of various words which in turn leads to effective learning.

       2.2.9 Grammatical error is recognized as intrinsic to the learning process.

       Lewis is feels that any learner is susceptible to making grammatical mistakes while learning a language. Production of erroneous sentences inevitable part of leaning. Unlike traditional approaches which do not encourage the production of incorrect language, the lexical approach welcomes mistakes in speech and considers them as intrinsic to the process of learning.

       2.2.10 Task and process, rather than exercise and product, are emphasized.

       As in the task-based, procedural syllabuses of Communicative Language Learning, the lexical approach prioritizes the importance of the process of learning rather than product.

       2.2.11 Receptive skills, particularly listening, are given enhanced status.

       The Lexical Approach posits that reception of a language leads to its production. The amount of exposure to a language shapes the production of a language. Therefore, it stresses the need to enhance the listening skills of the learners which play a pivotal role in language acquisition.

       2.2.12   The Present-Practice-Produce paradigm is rejected, in favour of a paradigm based on the Observe-Hypothesize-Experiment cycle.

       Rejecting the Present-Practice- Produce paradigm since it is similar to the rote repetition of a language, the Lexical Approach is not a teacher-centered paradigm, but the Observe-Hypothesize-Experiment cycle that makes the learners engage themselves in the activities assigned to them.

They are given a chance to probe into the language and make predictions and experiment on it in their own way. This paradigm provides them with considerable freedom to apply their knowledge in the process of acquiring a language.

2.2.13 Recycling and reviewing the language taught.

The Lexical Approach chooses the strategy of recycling and reviewing to teach the language. Lewis believes that learners should be first taught to recognize and produce the chunks of language. They should be given chances to revise what has been learnt before. Then, through repetition, he they will be able to produce those chunks eventually with some automaticity, thereby improving fluency. Recycling should be done in an interesting and refreshing way, so that learners' interest is still engaged. Keeping a lexical notebook is therefore suggested as an effective way to implement this principle.

2.3 Studies relevant to the Lexical Approach in Thailand

In Thailand, most LA-related research works focus on particular aspects of the LA rather than the overall knowledge about the LA and the extent to which the lexically-based exercises are used. The first aspect of the LA on which most research focuses is collocation, especially collocational error analysis (Wangsirisombat, 2011; Yumanee and Phoocharoensil, 2013) and collocational competence (Mongkolchai, 2008; Phoocharoensil (2014). Investigating the ability of Thai learners in using collocations, the types of collocational errors, and strategies used to produced collocations, Wangsirisombat (2011) found that the participants had low level of English collocational ability and their collocational erros centered on Adjective + Noun, Verb + Noun, and Verb + Adjective. Yumanee and Phoocharoensil (2013) found in their study that the high and low-proficiency students' collocational errors were attributed to some factors including the synonymy strategy, the learners' creative invention and the strategy of analogy, the paraphrasing strategy, and low knowledge

of collocational skills. Enhancing learners' collocational competence is the implications from the studies. In the same vein, Phoocharoensil (2012) found that relying on L1 impacted high-proficiency leaners' English collocational production.

Noticing collocations and teaching students to notice collocations is another LA-related research well-documented in Thailand. Dorkchandra (2015) taught 28 Thai students of English to notice English collocations focusing on reading the news stories printed from the VOA news.com website, and found in his study that the participants significantly improved their collocational competence as measured by their pre-and post-test scores. Also, Chaiyaphat's (2013) study revealed that after teaching English major students collocations specially derived from a coursebook, the students significantly improved their English speaking and reading ability.

Using authentic English materials, both through prints (Tanasawate, 2013) and through corpora (Phoocharoensil, 2012) is another highly-recommended aspect of the lexical approach. Tanasawate found that students and teachers alike perceived the use of authentic materials positively for realistic English use and its benefits to increase vocabulary knowledge and global communication in real context.

The above review reveals the importance of the implementation of the LA in various contexts. However, the author of the present investigation found no research exploring the extent to which Thai tertiary EFL teachers implemented the LA in their classroom practice. To put it another way, no research has been found on the investigation of the implementation of the LA in Thailand's EFL classroom context, particularly in the higher education setting.

To fulfill this research gap, the following questions were put as a guiding direction: Do Thai EFL tertiary teachers implement the Lexical Approach (LA) in their classroom practice? If yes, to what extent do they implement the approach?

3. Methodology

3.1 Research design

This study employed a descriptive survey research design. The design was suitable for this study because it allowed freedom for the respondents to express their views regarding their implementation of the LA in their classroom practice. Bickman and Rog (1998) suggest that descriptive studies are appropriate because they can answer questions such as "what is" or "what was."

3.2 Participants

One hundred and forty EFL tertiary teachers (23.6% male and 76.4% female) participated in this study. Through convenient sampling, the participants were chosen from 9 state universities in 8 provinces in the upper Northeast of Thailand. The researcher used the convenient sampling because he knew the exact number of the population; that is the 156 Thai EFL teachers who were working as full-time lecturers in the target universities during the 1st semester of the 2015 academic year. The teachers ranged in age from 25-56, with those who were over 45 years being the majority (41.7%). Most teachers held Master's degrees (67.1%), while the rest possessed doctoral degrees (32.9%). Most participants were lecturers (79.3%), while 17.1% were assistant professors, and 3.6% associate professors respectively. As for years of English language teaching experience, the participants were divided into 3 groups: a) 0-5 years; b) 6-10 years; and c) over 11 years. Table 1 summarizes the demographics of the participants.

Table 1 : Demographic frequency summary (n = 140)

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Male	33	23.6
Female	107	76.4
Age		
25-34 years	26	18.6
35-44 years	40	28.6
45 years +	74	52.9
Educational degree		
Master	94	67.1
Doctorate	46	32.9
Academic rank		
Lecturer	111	79.3
Asst Prof	24	17.1
Assoc Prof	5	3.6
Years of teaching experience		
0-5 years	35	25.0
6-10 years	55	39.3
11 years +	50	35.7
Total	**140**	**100.0**

3.3 Instrument

For the purpose of the study, the Lexical Approach Questionnaire (LAQ) in Thai was constructed based on the salient features of the Lexical Approach delineated in Lewis'(1997) **Implementing the Lexical Approach: Putting Theory into Practice**. The LAQ comprised 12 statements which were designed to elicit the participants' agreement or disagreement. The participants responded to the questionnaire according to a 4-point Likert's scale ranging from 1 to 4 (1 = Never use; 2 = Sometimes use 3 = Often use; 4 = Always use). The participants were instructed to tick the response that

best corresponded to their frequency of use of the Lexical Approach per each statement. A short background questionnaire on gender, age, academic degree, academic rank, and years of English teaching experience was administered along with the survey. Having collected the data, Cronbach's alpha was calculated to determine the reliability of the questionnaire. Cronbach's alpha for the questionnaire (12 items) was 0.89, a value considered as a high level of reliability (Mueller, 1986).

3.4 Data collection and Procedure

The data collection was carried out in the first semester of academic year 2015. The researcher, two weeks in advance, sent via surface mail, the questionnaires and the cover letters to the head of each respective English department or English-related one at each of the 8 universities in the target area and asked for cooperation in distributing the questionnaires to his/her English teaching colleagues. To ensure all the questionnaires were collected, the researcher and his assistant team traveled to the universities to collect them. The researcher and his team collected all the distributed questionnaires.

3.5 Data analysis

Of all the 156 distributed questionnaires, only 140 questionnaires were completely answered. Therefore, 16 uncompleted questionnaires with some missing data were counted for the analysis. The data collected from the questionnaires were coded and analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) program, version 21. Descriptively, the data obtained were calculated in percentage, mean and standard deviation for easy interpretation of the information. For each statement, the responses were coded 4 for "always use", 3 "often use", 2 "sometimes use", and 1 "never use". Drawing on the criteria proposed by Ketsing (1995) with the following formula: Maximum - minimum / number of levels = expected criteria. In this regard, there are three levels of interpretation

(high, medium, and low). Thus, the maximum scale (4) minus the minimum scale (1) is 3, and the figure 3 divided by 3 levels of interpretation is 1. The mean scores were interpreted as shown in Table 2: 2.01 - 3.00 = "High", 1.01 - 2.00 = "Medium", 0.00 - 1.00 = "Low".

Table 2 Criteria for interpreting the LAQ rating scale (Ketsing, 1995)

Means	Interpretation
0.00-1.00	Low level of the LA implementation
1.01-2.00	Medium level of the LA implementation
2.01-3.00	High level of the LA implementation

4. Findings

Research question: Do Thai university EFL teachers implement the Lexical Approach (LA) in their classroom teaching? If yes, to what extent do they implement the approach?

The findings from Table 3 show that the teachers implemented the LA in their classroom teaching as well as the extent to which the teachers implemented the approach. The overall mean score of the teachers' implementation of the LA was 1.93, indicating that they implemented the LA and the level of implementation was medium. The highest score (M = 2.86, S.D. = 0.56) was recorded for the use of authentic materials such as newspaper articles in a reading class and the lowest score (M = 1.13, S.D. = 0.39) was for the use of a gapped text of short talks each student had to fill out while listening. Using commercial ELT coursebooks recorded the second highest score (M = 2.72, S.D.= .69) when compared to having students compare between Thai and English while doing a translation exercise and having students notice and highlight or underline words/word partnerships in a reading class (M = 2.42, SD = 0.49).

Table 3 Teachers' implementation of the LA (n = 140)

Statements	1 NU (%)	2 SU (%)	3 OU (%)	4 AU (%)	M	S.D.	Meaning
1. I have my students notice and highlight or underline words/word partnerships in my reading class.	0 (0.0)	81 (57.9)	59 (42.1)	0 (0.0)	2.42	.496	High
2. When I teach a new word, I always present it in a sentence.	14 (10.0)	110 (78.6)	13 (9.3)	3 (2.1)	2.04	.52	High
3. I show concordances to my students to help explain the targeted words.	111 (79.3)	27 (19.3)	2 (1.4)	0 (0.0)	1.22	.45	Medium
4. I use authentic materials such as newspaper articles in my reading class.	0 (0.0)	33 (23.6)	93 (66.4)	14 (10.0)	2.86	.56	High
5. I assign my students to keep a lexical notebook.	118 (84.3)	18 (12.9)	4 (2.9)	0 (0.0)	1.19	.45	Medium
6. I have my students consult a collocation dictionary when they speak or write to ensure correct language use.	112 (80.0)	25 (17.9)	3 (2.1)	0 (0.0)	1.22	.46	Medium
7. To teach lexically, I use ELT commercial books rather than my own materials.	0 (0.0)	58 (41.4)	63 (45.0)	19 (13.6)	2.72	.69	High
8. I tell my students to be alert for noticeable chunks when listening to English.	0 (0.0)	113 (80.7)	17 (12.1)	10 (7.1)	2.26	.58	High
9. I gap the text of a short talk and give a copy to each student to complete by listening to the talk one or more times.	124 (88.6)	15 (10.7)	0 (0.0)	1 (0.7)	1.13	.39	Medium
10. I have my students respond to questions on a text using their own language.	0 (0.0)	116 (82.9)	17 (12.1)	7 (5.0)	2.22	.52	High
11. I have my students practice reading a text in correct chunks.	104 (74.3)	36 (25.5)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	1.26	.43	Medium
12. I have my students compare between Thai and English when doing a translation exercise.	0 (0.0)	66 (47.1)	58 (41.4)	16 (11.4)	2.64	.67	High
Overall					1.93	.52	Medium

Note: NU = Never use, SU = Sometimes use, OU = often use, AU = Always use

5. Discussion

On the whole, the findings of the current study indicate that Thai tertiary EFL teachers in the upper Northeastern part of Thailand implemented the Lexical Approach in their classroom practice and the level of implementation was reported to be at a medium level. This level of implementation seems to confirm what Boonyasquan (2006) claimed that the LA was not popular among Thai EFL teachers. However, the author of the present investigation opines that the LA is almost popular given the 1.93 mean which indicates that the level of implementation was nearly high.

That the LA is nearly popular in Thailand is quite clear when the scarcity of the literature pertaining to the use and implementation of the LA in overall aspects is taken into account. The LA-related studies seemed to focus on only a limited number of particular aspects of the LA, such as collocations which mostly emphasize printed materials (Dorkchandra, 2015) authentic materials such as brochures, newspapers, and (Aromdee, 2012; Tanasavate and Chinwonno, 2013; Thanajaro, 2000). One factor might help to explain the narrow popularity interpreted from the medium level of the LA implementation found in this study. That is, the LA is a time-consuming and daunting approach. According to Lackman (2011), using the Lexical Approach requires the investigation of spoken and written language in order to notice structures that are often ignored because they do not fall into the categories determined by the traditional understanding of grammar. The teachers who want to use the LA need to be particularly industrious, circumspect, and eager to read and listen attentively. As a result, the teachers, though recognizing the effectiveness of the LA for communicative language teaching (CLT) opt not to use the approach, rather; they cling to other traditional teaching approaches (Padurean, 2014).

The use of authentic materials gained the highest mean score (M = 2.86) with the majority of the respondents (66%) reported using authentic materials in their classroom teaching. Using authentic materials is one of the core principles of the LA, and in this case the teachers might have understood

that it sufficed that they used the authentic materials without adaptation in class. However, to maximize the use of authentic materials, relevant exercises and activities must be carefully designed. But the mean score of item 1 (M = 2.42) in the questionnaire (about having the students notice and highlight/underline words/word partnerships) did not support item 4 which was the highest mean. It implies here that the teachers might not have implemented the full scale of the authentic materials.

The second highest mean was for item 7 which states that "To teach lexically, I use ELT commercial books rather than my own materials." Most of the respondents reported that they often used ELT commercial books, while many reported that they always used commercial coursebooks. This seems interesting because it is well-documented in the literature that ELT commercial books are not designed based on the LA (Harwood, 2002). Davis and Kryszewska (2012) vehemently commented that "It is not an exaggeration to say (at the time of writing) that there are at most only a handful of coursebooks that have any kind of lexical syllabus or that are based firmly on evidence from a corpus in the way they teach lexis. It is worth noting that, although many coursebooks now say on the cover that they have a lexical syllabus and refer to corpus-based evidence, when one looks inside, it is clear that this is not the case but merely window dressing (p. 14)." Selivan (2013) commented in the Guardian that what holds back the profundity of the Lexical Approach despite the lapse of over two decades was because EFL/ELT commercial materials still contain a traditional grammar syllabus. In this regard, the findings in this study indicated that Thai tertiary EFL teachers do not prefer to develop their own teaching materials based on the Lexical Approach. Rather, they preferred using commercial ELT coursebooks which do not promote the application of the LA. Hence, the implementation of the LA in the Thai university EFL setting was not high.

Interestingly, item 12 (having students compare between English and Thai when doing a translation exercise) enjoyed the third highest mean (2.64). This indicates that Thai tertiary EFL teachers still incline towards a translation

method when implementing the LA. But the translation method as meant by the LA is the one based on a comparison between the target language and the mother tongue of the learners. In doing so, some authentic resources such corpora must be used. A comparison in terms of a language pattern can be an example here, and to confirm if something is a language pattern, concordance printouts should be used. But the low mean score of item 2 (M = 1.22) appeared to contrast this (Item 12), implying that the teachers might have thought that using corpora was difficult or too demanding. The study by Saeed and Waly (2010) confirmed this claim. In fact, Tribble (2001) posits that using corpora in a classroom is a demanding task, and most teachers do not use corpora very much in their classrooms because they lack extensive experience with them. Aroonmanakun (2011) found that corpora were not widely used in ELT in Thailand, and similarly, Harwood (2002) commented that the LA was much-talked about, but not widely applied. The findings in this study were in congruence with these foregoing discoveries, indicating that Thai university EFL teachers did not have extensive experience with using corpora, or because they just did not feel comfortable and did not want to change the way they teach. In this regard, further research is needed to probe into the causes of the teachers' discomfort with the use of corpora.

As for other statements that received low means — statement 9 (Gapping a text of a short talk and having students fulfill the gapped text by listening to the talk) and statement 5 (assigning students to keep a lexical notebook) — being time-consuming and requiring much time for preparation could attribute to the teachers' not widely implementing these aspects of the LA in their classroom practice. In fact, Lewis highlighted the benefit of keeping a lexical notebook by affirming that to effectively implement the LA, encouraging learners to record selected language they have noticed in carefully designed lexical notebooks after studying a text, or doing the exercises and activities is needed. But the teachers in this study seemed not to implement this, hence the low mean was reported for Statement 5.

6. Conclusion

The questions guiding this study were "Do Thai tertiary EFL teachers implement the Lexical Approach in their classroom practice? If yes, to what extent do they implement it? The results from the study positively affirmed the first question. The results from 140 close-ended questionnaires indicated that, overall, the Thai tertiary EFL teachers in the upper Northeast of Thailand implemented the LA at a medium level. This implied that the LA was almost popular among Thai tertiary EFL teachers. The results concurred to some extent with Boonyasaquan's (2006) perception that the LA was not popular in Thailand. The aspects of the LA Thai tertiary EFL teachers reported at a high level included using authentic materials, having the students compare between L2 and L1, using commercial ELT coursebooks, and noticing word partnerships while reading, respectively. The aspects of the LA the respondents reported using at a low level included having the students fill out the gapped text of a short talk while simultaneously listening to the talk, having the students keep a lexical notebook, and having the students consult a collocation dictionary as well as use corpora, respectively. That the implementation of the LA was at a medium level was interpreted in relation to the fact that it was time-consuming and of arduous nature. The results of this study have important implications for Thai tertiary EFL teachers, as follows: First, the teachers who would like to implement the LA in their classroom practice should consider whether the ELT coursebooks available in the market are lexically-designed. Using commercial ELT materials designed based on the LA would help them reduce the time to spend designing and selecting exercises and activities. Secondl, to compensate for the lack of lexically-designed ELT coursebooks, Thai tertiary EFL teachers should use their own self-developed instructional materials to supplement the commercial coursebooks. In this regard, the teachers should consult the books that explain how to teach lexically such as the one titled **Implementing the Lexical Approach: Putting theory into practice** by Michael Lewis (1997) and **Teaching Lexically: Principles and practice** by Dellar and Walkley (2016). In line with the foregoing recommendation, the teachers would know much better and be able

to implement the teaching of English vocabulary in a more systematic and effective way. Lastly, keeping a lexical notebook by the students should be encouraged, or, if possible, required as part of an evaluation of every tertiary EFL course. The teachers should also intermittently test the students' knowledge of the recorded vocabulary in their notebooks in order that they would feel more responsible and self-disciplined in noticing, recording, revisiting, and recreating the lexical items.

7. Limitations of the Study

The study was limited on the following grounds: First, the task of collecting data especially in-depth interviews required much time and financial resources, which were not easily available to the researcher, hence only quantitative data were collected in this study. However, the researcher tried to remedy this shortcoming by reaching to a substantial number of institutions during school sessions. Second, research on teachers' implementation of the Lexical Approach in Thailand is scarce. Therefore, the study was limited by lack of sufficient local literature in Thailand. This impelled the researcher to rely more on literature from outside. The difference in social –cultural, and technological contexts might not be similar. This makes the interpretations made in this study lack sufficient local comparison on a variety of issues discussed and the conclusion drawn.

8. Recommendations for further studies

1. Future research on the implementation of the Lexical Approach should be carried out on a larger scale, for example across the country or the region, to obtain the results in a broader sense.

2. Future research should triangulate the instruments for collecting the data; that is, both quantitative and qualitative data should be collected to investigate the implementation of the LA. In this respect, the instruments to be used may include an interview and observation.

3. Further research should explore factors such as gender, age, educational degree, academic rank, and years of teaching experience that might have an association with EFL teachers' implementation of the Lexical Approach.

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