



Effects of Phonics Instruction on Thai EFL Primary Students' Word Reading Ability

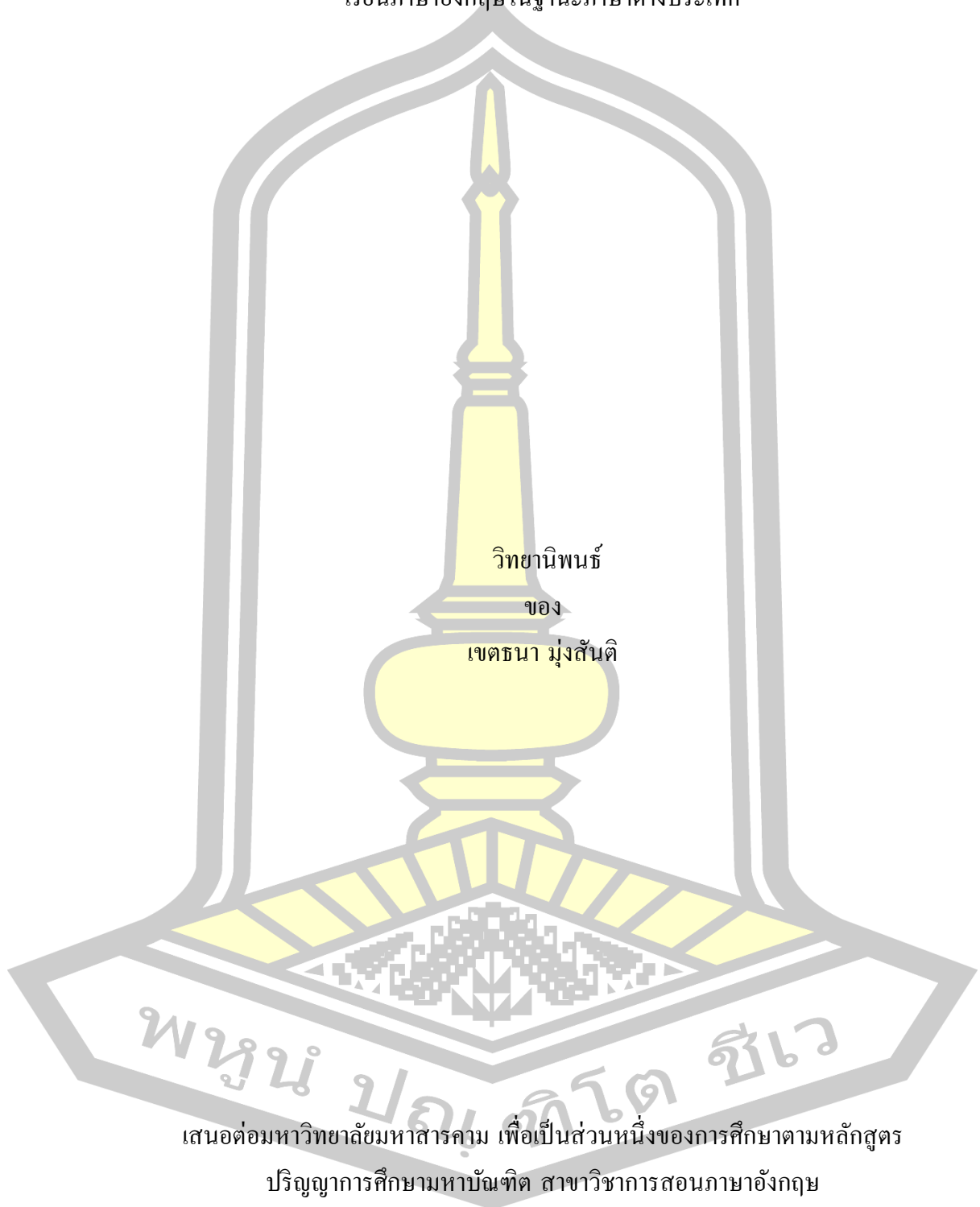
Khattana Mungsanti

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of Requirements for
degree of Master of Education in English Language Teaching

April 2024

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ABSTRACT

Word reading is crucial for vocabulary development, acting as a link between recognizing and understanding words. Phonics instruction significantly aids in word decoding, enhancing reading fluency, confidence, and vocabulary access, thus fostering overall literacy. This study examines the effects of phonics instruction on the word reading ability of 13 primary school EFL learners in Thailand, employing a convergent parallel mixed-methods approach. SPSS was utilized to analyze quantitative data, including pre- and post-test scores from two tests: The Letter-Sound Recognition Task (LSRT) and the Word Reading Task (WRT). Statistical analysis, including paired *t*-tests and ANOVA, was conducted to determine the significance of instructional impacts. The results show that post-test scores of participants are higher than pre-test score in both LSRT and WRT. However, ANOVA analysis revealed no significant differences among grade levels. The focus group yielded qualitative insight that unveiled enhanced reading confidence and a feeling of achievement among primary school students, in addition to the cognitive and academic advantages associated with phonics. However, participants also expressed challenges, such as the monotony of repetitive teaching content and difficulties with complex vocabulary. This study underscores the value of phonics instruction in enhancing EFL reading skills among young learners while highlighting areas for pedagogical refinement to maximize learner engagement and instructional effectiveness. The findings advocate integrating diverse and dynamic phonics instruction strategies within EFL curricula to address varied learner needs and preferences.

Keyword : phonics instruction, word reading, word decoding, Thai EFL primary school learners

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Khattana Mungsanti

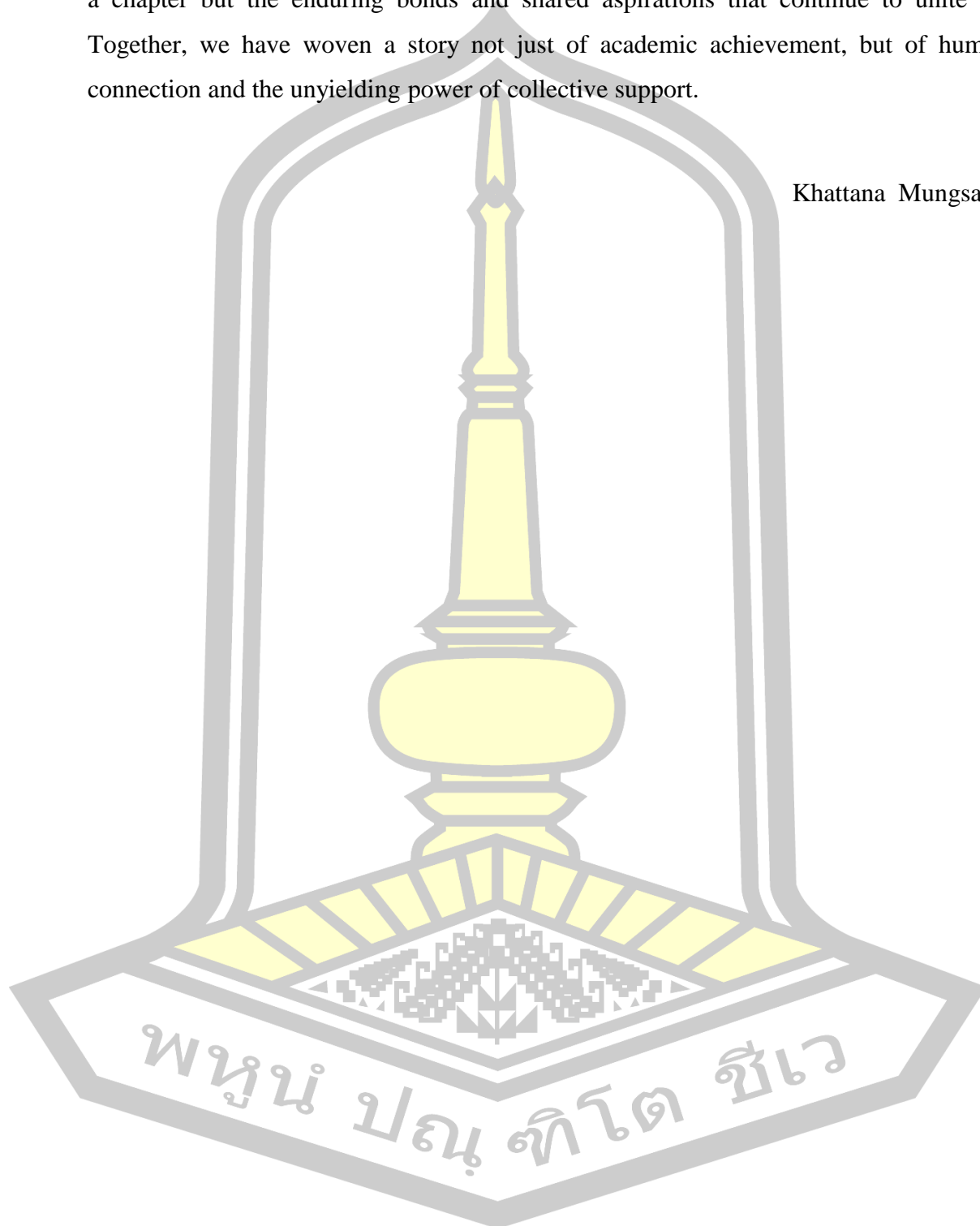
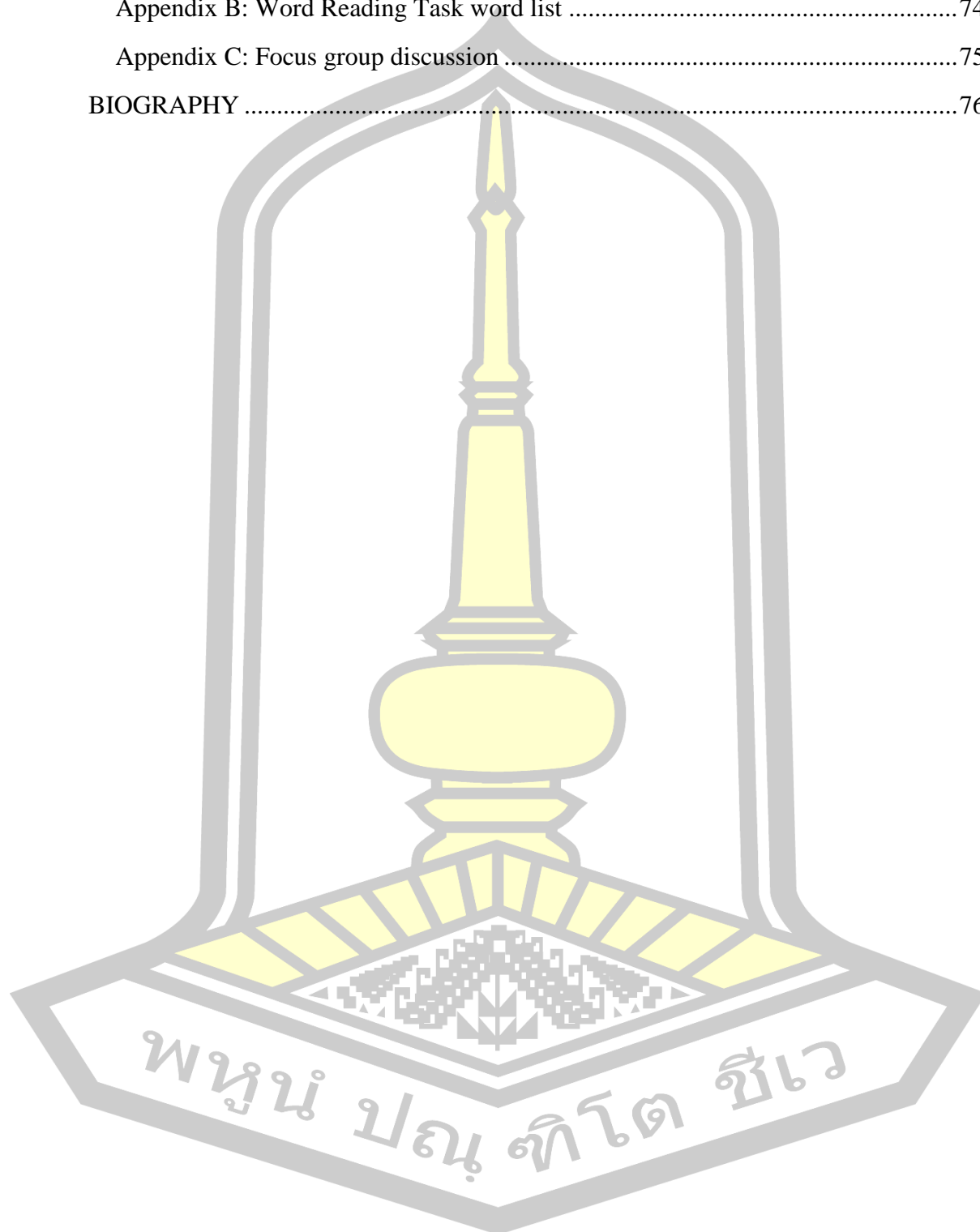


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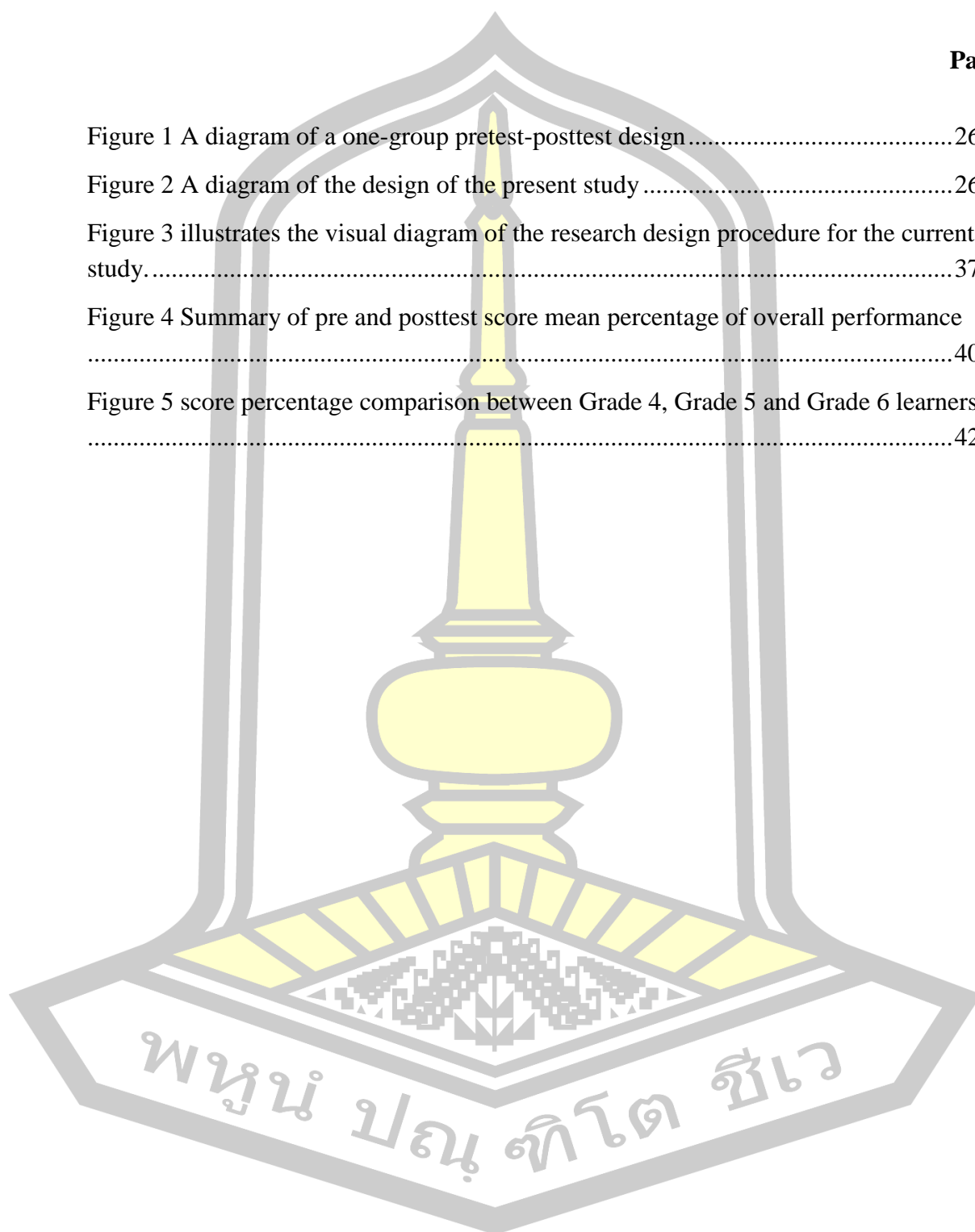
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter briefly introduces the study area into which the current study ventures. The chapter includes the background of the study and the research purposes. The chapter also consists of the scope of the study, the significance and definitions of key terms. The chapter ends with a summary of the chapter.

1.1 Background to the study

Vocabulary development is crucial in learning to read and is pivotal for reading comprehension (Nation, 2022; Magnussen & Sukying, 2021). Most words are learned indirectly through daily conversations and reading activities, and learners often expand their vocabulary through incidental learning (Laufer & Hulstijn, 2001). Several studies underscore the efficacy of deliberate vocabulary teaching methods (Bubchaiya & Sukying, 2022; Elgort & Nation, 2010; Hulstijn, 2003; Nation, 2007; Magnussen & Sukying, 2021; Yowaboot & Sukying, 2022). Moreover, the frequency and variety of words heard in spoken language can significantly enhance a learner's vocabulary, leading to a more substantial knowledge base (Schmidt, 2010).

The importance of vocabulary extends to reading comprehension; understanding text is contingent upon knowing the meanings of the words within it (Nation, 2022). As learners encounter more complex texts, acquiring new words not previously located in spoken language becomes essential. The process of learning vocabulary is significantly enhanced when new words are introduced along with their spellings, pronunciations, and meanings, fostering the development of letter-sound associations (Ehri, 2014).

Employing strategies encouraging learners to pronounce unfamiliar words aloud while reading can activate spelling-sound mappings, expanding their vocabularies. These letter-sound connections, once established, are retained in memory and play a critical role in the processing of phonological elements and the phonological memory of words, underpinning the development of reading skills and comprehension (Nation, 2022).

Vocabulary development is crucial for learners, especially those acquiring English as a second or foreign language (L2). According to vocabulary researchers (Nation, 2022; Schmitt, 2008; Sukying, 2023), a robust vocabulary is a crucial component of English language proficiency for L2 learners. However, the path to expanding one's vocabulary is fraught with challenges. Learning disabilities, limited exposure to the English language, the readability of words, and a lack of understanding of effective vocabulary learning strategies are significant barriers that learners often encounter (Sukying, 2021; Yunus et al., 2016). To overcome these obstacles, educators can employ a variety of instructional methods. Techniques such as the use of word lists and word cards and incorporating reading activities have been proven to enhance vocabulary acquisition. These approaches introduce new words and provide contexts that aid in reinforcing and retaining vocabulary. Additionally, these strategies create valuable opportunities for learners to deepen their understanding and application of new words, thereby solidifying their vocabulary knowledge (Magnussen & Sukying, 2021; Yowaboot & Sukying, 2022).

Studies indicate that deliberate methods for teaching and learning vocabulary, such as analyzing word parts and utilizing word cards, significantly benefit second language (L2) vocabulary acquisition (Nation, 2022; Magnussen & Sukying, 2021). Furthermore, intentional vocabulary learning has been specifically highlighted as effective for young learners, according to research by Bubchaiya & Sukying (2022), Chaowarat & Sukying (2023), and Methapisittikul & Sukying (2023). Naturalistic language learning opportunities are scarce in contexts where English or another language is taught as a foreign language. In contrast, intentional learning strategies often involve focused repetition or memorization and can expedite the vocabulary development process. These strategies allow learners to engage in targeted study sessions, often yielding higher retention rates than incidental learning methods (Hulstijn, 2003). This underscores the value of deliberate vocabulary study.

Schmidt's (1990) noticing hypothesis further supports this view by asserting the importance of conscious awareness for L2 vocabulary acquisition. Learners need to actively notice and reflect on lexical features within the language input, making the connection between form and meaning more explicit to enhance learning outcomes.

This principle is echoed in studies advocating for focus-on-form instruction, which involves explicit and direct teaching of specific lexical or linguistic forms (Lightbown & Spada, 2013; Long, 1996; Matwangsang & Sukying, 2023; Methapisittikul & Sukying, 2023; Tomita & Spada, 2013). Such instructional strategies are crucial in foreign language classrooms to mitigate the effects of limited linguistic exposure and resources.

However, Nation (2022) cautions against the over-application of explicit vocabulary instruction methods, suggesting that an over-reliance on teacher-directed vocabulary tasks could potentially hinder the holistic development of language skills. This perspective highlights the need for a balanced approach to vocabulary teaching that incorporates intentional learning while fostering a rich and engaging language learning environment.

Therefore, phonics instruction that aims to teach students about grapheme-phoneme relationship explicitly could be beneficial for students' learning. Especially synthetic phonics instruction where learners have opportunities to practice blending phonemes together actively.

Phonics serves as a foundational technique for teaching vocabulary, particularly to beginners in English as a Foreign Language (EFL). Adams (1994) defines phonics as a method that relies on the alphabetic principle, emphasizing the instruction of the correspondences between letters or letter groups and their sounds as a central component (p. 50). Lane and Pullen (2004) differentiate phonemic awareness from phonics but acknowledge that instruction in both areas often intersects. Through phonics instruction, students learn the relationship between sounds (phonemes) and the letters or groups of letters (graphemes) that represent those sounds. This learning process is bidirectional: phonemic awareness instruction enhances phonics skills, and conversely, proficiency in phonics can improve phonemic awareness (Lane & Pullen, 2004, p. 102). Summarily, phonemic awareness is the ability to identify, hear, and manipulate the individual sounds in spoken words. In contrast, phonics explicitly teaches the relationship between sounds and their corresponding letters or letter patterns, facilitating the development of decoding and spelling skills (Ehri, 2022, p. 53).

The impact of phonics instruction on enhancing students' reading abilities has been a focal point of extensive research, revealing its efficacy across various aspects of literacy. Shenoy, Iyer, and Zahedi (2022) discovered that students who underwent phonics instruction exhibited superior performance in a range of literacy skills compared to their counterparts who did not receive such instruction. In a study conducted by Wichayut and Sitthitikul (2019), young Thai students demonstrated notable improvements in letter-sound correspondences, decoding, and blending skills, further emphasizing the effectiveness of phonics instruction.

Moreover, phonics instruction has proven advantageous in refining pronunciation skills and facilitating language acquisition. Dandee and Pornwiriyaakit (2022) observed that drills based on the English phonetic alphabet significantly boosted the accuracy of English sound pronunciation among EFL students. In a similar vein, Hania, Fauzi, Pangestu, and Rosyada (2022) reported marked enhancements in Arabic reading capabilities following phonics instruction, illustrating its versatility across different languages.

The benefits of phonics instruction extend to second language learners as well, with Li and Woore (2021) uncovering positive outcomes in phonological decoding and vocabulary learning among L2 learners. The advent of digital technology has also paved the way for innovative approaches to phonics instruction. Studies by Akpojotor and Nkechi (2021) and Srimanothip and González (2021) highlighted the success of digital-based phonics programs in advancing reading abilities and English Phonics achievement, suggesting the potential for technology to augment traditional teaching methods.

Furthermore, Vanden Bempt et al. (2021) demonstrated the significant impact of early phonics interventions on pre-reading kindergarteners at risk for dyslexia, indicating the critical role of timely phonics instruction in mitigating reading difficulties. These findings underscore the comprehensive benefits of phonics instruction, improving fundamental reading skills and enhancing pronunciation, facilitating language learning, and supporting early interventions for learners at risk of reading challenges.

The research underscores the role of phonics instruction in bolstering students' reading capabilities. By focusing on literacy fundamentals such as letter-sound

correspondences, decoding, and blending skills, phonics instruction has proven to be a powerful tool in enhancing literacy outcomes. Its impact extends beyond basic reading skills, including pronounced improvements in pronunciation accuracy and overall language learning. The positive effects of phonics instruction are also evident among second language learners, facilitating significant advancements in phonological decoding and vocabulary acquisition. Recent investigations into digital-based phonics interventions have revealed their efficacy in furthering reading abilities and English phonics achievement, offering promising avenues for engaging and effective learning strategies. Moreover, early phonics interventions have been recognized for their potential to support pre-reading kindergarteners, especially those at risk for dyslexia, underscoring the importance of phonics instruction in the early stages of education. In summary, phonics instruction emerges as a fundamental component in developing essential reading skills and language acquisition, highlighting its critical role in educational settings.

While substantial research underscores the efficacy of phonics instruction in vocabulary acquisition, there is a discernible scarcity of studies exploring its specific impact on the word reading ability of Thai EFL primary school learners, leaving an essential aspect of language acquisition in this context underinvestigated.

In Thai primary schools, challenges with word reading ability often stem from limited exposure to effective phonics instruction, insufficient practice with diverse vocabulary, and a lack of tailored reading materials that cater to varied learner levels. These issues can hinder students' ability to decode words, affecting their overall reading proficiency and comprehension. Addressing these challenges requires a focus on phonological awareness, integrating engaging and level-appropriate phonics activities, and providing ample opportunities for reading practice within and beyond the classroom setting.

1.2 Purposes of the research

While previous research has demonstrated the positive effects of phonics instruction on word reading and vocabulary acquisition among second language learners, limited attention has been given to its impact on young English as foreign language (EFL) learners in a primary school context. By investigating the relationship between

phonics instruction and vocabulary acquisition, the study sought to answer the following research purposes:

1. To examine the effect of phonics instruction on Thai EFL primary school learners' word reading ability and
2. To explore Thai EFL primary school learners' perception of phonics instruction to improve word reading ability.

To achieve the purposes established, the following research questions were formulated to guide the study:

1. How does phonics instruction affect Thai EFL primary school learners' word reading ability?
2. What are the perceptions of Thai EFL primary school learners about phonics instruction in vocabulary learning?

1.3 Scope of the research

The research explored the effects of phonics instruction on word reading and vocabulary acquisition in EFL learners from grades four to six at a small, rural elementary school near Surin City, Thailand.

The research adopted a convergent parallel mixed-methods design, incorporating both quantitative and qualitative methods. This research adopted quasi-experimental design to assess primary school students' word reading capabilities through the Letter-Sound Recognition Task (LSRT) and Word Reading Task (WRT), designed to measure vocabulary knowledge and reading proficiency, respectively. The aim was to analyze the influence of phonics instruction on students' ability to read words.

The study also integrated qualitative methods to delve into participants' views on phonics instruction through semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions, aiming to capture a wide range of opinions and attitudes. Conducted in a small elementary school with 13 participants out of 52 students, this comprehensive approach ensured the data's reliability and quality, focusing on individual and collective learner experiences with phonics instruction. The students participated in this research were taught through memorization where the students are required to remember how each word's is read out.

The study recognized its methodological limitations, such as using a one-group pretest-posttest design without randomization. It sought to mitigate these by integrating qualitative data to enrich and contextualize the quantitative findings. It aimed to assess the effects of phonics instruction on the word reading abilities and vocabulary of young EFL learners in a Thai primary school, considering their perspectives on this educational strategy. The research hoped to contribute valuable insights to guide effective teaching practices and interventions in similar educational contexts.

1.4 Significance of the Study

These research findings underline the importance of phonics instruction for vocabulary and reading enhancement in EFL contexts, advocating for a focus on phonological awareness to make learning more efficient. It highlights phonics instruction's role across educational spectrums and suggests its effectiveness in improving reading skills. Aligning with existing literature, the study confirms phonics as a crucial educational strategy for advancing reading abilities, showcasing significant gains in learners' word reading capabilities post-instruction. It further validates the theoretical perspectives on explicit vocabulary teaching and the systematic application of phonics in language learning. The present study yielded fruitful information for practitioners, including teachers, learners, course designers, and language assessors.

1.5 Definitions of terms

In the current study, technical terms are used. To ensure understanding, the researcher has defined vital terms as follows:

1. **Knowledge of the spoken form of a word** refers to the ability to recognize or produce a word's sound.
2. **Receptive knowledge of a word** refers to the ability to recognize a word's sounds.
3. **Productive knowledge of a word** is the ability to pronounce the word correctly.
4. **Word reading ability** refers to the ability to blend phonemes of graphemes to create a word.

5. **Phonics instruction** is the teaching that teaches learners about grapheme (letter) and phoneme (sound) relationship, blending phonemes together to produce a word and identifying phonemes in each word.

1.6 Thesis Organization

This thesis consists of five chapters. Chapter I delves into an in-depth exploration of the significance of vocabulary knowledge in language learning, with a particular focus on its pivotal role in English Language Teaching (ELT). This chapter discusses the challenges and strategies in vocabulary acquisition and instruction contextualized within the broader landscape of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) education. Chapter I lays the groundwork for the study by outlining its objectives, defining key terms, and emphasizing the research's potential to contribute valuable insights into effective vocabulary teaching practices.

Chapter II delves into the theoretical underpinnings essential for the study and explores word knowledge, phonics, and their impact on reading proficiency. It reviews various instructional approaches, including digital-based methods, and examines empirical studies highlighting phonics' effectiveness across educational contexts. Additionally, it discusses learners' and educators' perceptions of phonics instruction, emphasizing the need to consider their perspectives for enhanced teaching strategies and better literacy outcomes.

Chapter III meticulously outlines the research methodology employed in this study. It begins by elucidating the chosen research paradigm and design, followed by a comprehensive overview of participant demographics and research settings. Additionally, this section expounds upon the chosen instrumentation, meticulously detailing the methodology employed. Moreover, it delineates the meticulous procedures for data collection and articulates the analytical techniques utilized for data analysis.

Chapter IV presents a comprehensive exposition of the study's findings, supplemented by an initial discussion. The results are approached from a dual perspective, integrating descriptive and inferential statistical analyses to interpret quantitative data while employing thematic content analysis to glean qualitative insights.

Chapter V provides an in-depth examination of the research findings, situating them within the established scholarly discourse. Additionally, it offers nuanced interpretations of the findings, highlighting their theoretical and pedagogical ramifications. This chapter concludes by delineating the significance of the findings and their contributions to the field, providing practical recommendations for pedagogical implementation, and identifying potential avenues for future research.



CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter presents a general overview of word knowledge (see 2.1) and the role of word reading in vocabulary learning (see 2.2). The chapter also conceptualizes the notion of phonics (see 2.3) and approaches to phonics instruction (see 2.4). The chapter ends with the related studies on phonics instruction and its related literature (see 2.5), and finally, the chapter summary (see 2.6).

2.1 Word knowledge

A word is not a solitary element of the language but a component of numerous related linguistic systems. As a result, there are many different levels and things to know about each given term (Nation, 2022). Simple memorization of a word's form can help one learn to recognize it. One can also learn to distinguish a word's written or spoken form by comprehending the language's systematic sound-spelling correspondences. By using some of the spelling rules, the word can be recognized. There has been much debate over some parts of the intricate relationship between item knowledge and system knowledge, which affects students' learning to read. What can be learned about a word is the subject of the next section.

2.1.1 Word form

Vocabulary form can be categorized into spoken form, written form, and word parts (Nation, 2022). The spoken form includes two aspects: recognizing the word when heard and being able to produce the word to express the meaning. Creating the spoken form of an English word involves the ability to pronounce the sounds in the word. And determine the appropriate syllables in the sound to stress when the word has multiple syllables. (Nation, 2022).

Spelling is an essential aspect of becoming familiar with the written form of words. The way learners represent the phonological structure of a language has the most significant impact on their spelling ability. There is a strong connection between spelling and reading, with some models suggesting that changes in spelling strategies are linked to changes in reading strategies. Proficiency in reading can also influence spelling skills, and evidence indicates that literacy impacts how learners perceive and represent the sounds of a language (Nation, 2022).

The learning difficulty of word spelling is influenced by factors such as the similarity between the first-language and second-language writing systems, the regularity of the second-language writing system, and learners' familiarity with the spoken forms of vocabulary in the second language. Understanding a word can involve recognizing its components, such as affixes and a stem, which can appear in other words.

2.1.2 Word Meaning

Nation (2022) has divided word meaning into three aspects. The three aspects are composed of, firstly, form and meaning connection—secondly, concepts and referents; and lastly, associations. First is form and meaning connection; typically, learners associate knowing a word with being familiar with its spoken and written forms and meaning. However, it is not enough for learners to merely know the form and meaning of a word separately; they also need to establish a connection between the two. It is possible for a learner to know the form of a word without understanding its meaning, or they may be familiar with the form and possess the appropriate concept but fail to establish the connection between the two. Nation (2022) suggested that each successful retrieval of the form or meaning of a word strengthens the relationship between the two.

The concept and referents are notable characteristics of words in their multitude of meanings, mainly when being looked upon in a dictionary. This is particularly true for high-frequency words. The dictionary entries for a single, ubiquitous word can span an entire page or even more. When examining the range of meanings associated with a single word, it becomes apparent that some can be pretty distinct.

Thirdly, associations could be explained with Nation's (2022) work, which provides an in-depth exploration of the semantic relationships among many English words. Their research highlights the importance of differentiating between speech parts to effectively describe the lexicon's structure.

2.1.3 Word use

Nation (2022) divided word use into different aspects of knowing word use: grammatical functions, collocations, and constraints on use. Knowing the part of speech and grammatical patterns of words is essential for its proper usage. Recent linguistic studies highlight the significant role of the lexicon in grammar. Nation

(2022) suggests that the choice of words, particularly vocabulary, largely determines the grammatical structure of a sentence. Nation (2022) also acknowledges the inclusion of grammatical knowledge within the lexicon in his description of speech production. The ease of learning grammatical aspects of words depends on the similarities between the second language and the learner's first language and the parallel grammatical behavior of words with related meanings (Nation, 2022).

Knowing a word goes beyond its meaning; it also involves understanding the typical word combinations it forms. Nation (2022) argues that fluency in speaking one's native language and one's ability to choose word sequences that sound natural is due to one's extensive storage of memorized word sequences in our brain. Instead of constructing these sequences from scratch whenever we need to communicate, people often rely on readily available combinations. The concept of collocation involves various factors, such as the strength of association between words (lexical collocation), the type of words involved (function words with content words), the proximity of collocates (expressing one's own honest opinion), and the wide range of possible collocates (Nation, 2022).

Words generally do not have strict rules on how they can be used. However, sometimes, there are limits or restrictions on their usage based on language and culture. These limitations can be understood by looking at word translations or the context in which they are used. Various factors determine when and where certain words can be used. It's essential to observe these factors to avoid misusing words.

2.2 The Role of Word Knowledge in Word Reading

Word knowledge, encompassing receptive and productive spoken forms of a word, is significant in enhancing students' word reading (letter-sound blending). Understanding the orthographic features, such as letter-sound relationships and spelling patterns, plays a fundamental role in accurate and fluent word reading (Ehri, 2022). Additionally, vocabulary knowledge, including morphological awareness and breadth of vocabulary, predicts decoding, listening comprehension, and reading comprehension (Xie, Cai, & Yeung, 2022). Furthermore, a strong correlation exists between vocabulary knowledge and L2 reading and listening comprehension, highlighting its importance in L2 language development (Zhang & Zhang, 2022).

Vocabulary depth, language skills, and phonological awareness influence early reading development (Dickinson, Nesbitt, & Hofer, 2019).

Firstly, Incidental learning refers to the acquisition of knowledge or skills in one context while focusing on another. This can occur through various means, such as observations, discussions with colleagues, encountering mistakes, or reading. Additionally, it's common for learners to expand their vocabulary through incidental learning (Laufer & Hulstijn, 2001). Laufer and Hulstijn (2001) suggest that vocabulary encountered incidentally tends to be retained in long-term memory and utilized with greater confidence across diverse situations. However, it's noted that incidental learning is particularly effective for advanced-level learners.

Several studies underscore the efficacy of deliberate vocabulary teaching methods (Bubchaiya & Sukying, 2022; Elgort & Nation, 2010; Hulstijn, 2003; Nation, 2007; Magnussen & Sukying, 2021; Yowaboot & Sukying, 2022). For instance, Magnussen & Sukying (2021) found that deliberate learning activities, such as songs and total physical response (TPR), significantly improved preschoolers' vocabulary acquisition in a Thai EFL context. Similarly, Yowaboot & Sukying (2022) demonstrated the effectiveness of digital flashcards in enhancing English vocabulary knowledge among Thai primary school children. Furthermore, Bubchaiya & Sukying (2022) showed that word part strategy instruction led to better vocabulary outcomes in primary school students in a Thai EFL setting. These findings highlight the importance of deliberate vocabulary teaching for EFL learners and suggest its careful consideration in instructional planning.

However, the information processing theory posits that individuals actively engage in processing the information received through their senses, such as hearing and sight. Learning ensues as the brain receives, encodes, adjusts, and stores this information. Language acquisition progresses through three stages within this framework: input, processing, and output. Schmidt (1990) emphasizes the necessity for learners to initially focus on aspects of the language they aim to acquire or produce. This input encompasses anything that occupies the learner's mental processing capacity and contributes to learning, regardless of whether the learner is consciously aware of it. Initially, learners allocate most resources to understanding keywords in a message,

freeing cognitive resources to gradually attend to other language aspects, which eventually become automatic. Numerous researchers have explored information processing approaches to second language acquisition (SLA). The noticing hypothesis originates in two case studies by Richard Schmidt. In the initial study, Schmidt observed that Wes, a U.S. immigrant from Japan, excelled in various language skills but struggled with the accurate use of morphology and syntax. Consequently, Schmidt inferred that adults learning grammar likely require conscious awareness for comprehension (Schmidt, 2010).

To elaborate, deliberate vocabulary learning is more effective than incidental learning because the latter often requires long-term and extensive exposure to linguistic input. Besides, natural language learning conditions are uncommon in English as a foreign language (EFL) or other foreign language learning contexts. By contrast, deliberate learning of vocabulary enhances learners' vocabulary development process. This is due to the focused repetition or memorization strategies, which can be completed individually in a short period of time. Arguably, deliberate vocabulary learning retention rates are generally higher than those obtained with incidental learning (Hustijn, 2003), showing that deliberate attempts to learn vocabulary are effective and worth the effort. The research concludes that the direct and intentional learning method is a more effective way to learn and retain new words for L2 learners (Nation & Meara, 2013).

Numerous studies have examined the relationship between word knowledge and word reading ability, shedding light on the crucial role of vocabulary in reading development. Ehri (2022) conducted a comprehensive study exploring the process of learning to read and the significance of orthographic knowledge in word reading ability. Her research demonstrated that orthographic knowledge, including knowledge of letter-sound relationships and spelling patterns, plays a fundamental role in word reading ability. The study emphasized the importance of explicitly teaching these orthographic features to promote accurate and fluent word reading. Xie, Cai, and Yeung's (2022) study focused on Chinese children learning English as a second language (L2) and investigated the impact of word knowledge, specifically

morphological awareness and vocabulary, on L2 reading comprehension. Their findings revealed that word knowledge measured at Time 1 significantly predicted decoding, listening comprehension, and reading comprehension at Time 2, emphasizing the importance of focusing on word knowledge to enhance L2 reading comprehension at an early stage of reading development.

A meta-analysis conducted by Zhang and Zhang (2022) explored the relationship between L2 vocabulary knowledge and L2 reading/listening comprehension. Their analysis of over 100 individual studies involving nearly 21,000 learners revealed a strong correlation between vocabulary knowledge and L2 reading comprehension ($r = 0.57$) and between vocabulary knowledge and L2 listening comprehension ($r = 0.56$). These correlations accounted for a significant portion of the variance in L2 comprehension, highlighting the importance of vocabulary knowledge in L2 reading and listening. Likewise, Dickinson, Nesbitt, and Hofer (2019) conducted a study to explore the relationships between language and code-related abilities in preschool and grade one children. They found significant positive correlations among language, phonological awareness, and letter-word knowledge measures, indicating the interconnections between these constructs. The study emphasized the influence of vocabulary, particularly vocabulary depth, on early reading development.

Recently, Al Qunayeer (2021) investigated the breadth and depth of vocabulary knowledge and its impact on reading comprehension among EFL learners. The study revealed a significant relationship between vocabulary breadth, vocabulary depth, and reading comprehension, emphasizing the importance of developing both dimensions of vocabulary knowledge in EFL classrooms. Röthlisberger, Zangger, and Juska-Bacher (2023) focused on children with German as a second language and examined the role of vocabulary breadth and depth in reading comprehension. Their longitudinal study revealed that children with German as a second language performed lower in reading and vocabulary tests than native German speakers, with vocabulary depth showing a more significant impact on reading comprehension. Furqanul, Feisal, and Burhan Eko (2020) investigated the vocabulary knowledge, skimming skills, and scanning skills of EFL learners in Indonesia. Their findings indicated a significant

correlation between vocabulary knowledge and scanning skills, while no significant correlation was found between vocabulary knowledge and skimming skills. These results highlight the stronger influence of vocabulary knowledge on scanning skills compared to skimming skills. Kang (2020) conducted a study with Korean EFL learners and examined the contributions of vocabulary breadth, vocabulary depth, and reading fluency to reading ability within an augmented Simple View of Reading (SVR) model. The study highlighted the significant, unique contributions of listening comprehension and vocabulary depth to reading ability in EFL learners.

2.3 Concept of Phonics

Phonics is the systematic study of the relationship between letters and sounds. It is beneficial for decoding written language and developing strong reading and spelling skills. Through explicit instruction, phonics equips learners to decode words and enhances overall language proficiency, playing a vital role in literacy development. The concept of phonics is based on the alphabetic principle and phonological awareness.

According to Byrne (1998) in the book “The Foundation of Literacy: The Child’s Acquisition of the Alphabetic Principle,” the alphabetic principle refers to the concept that the letters in the written text represent the individual sounds in spoken language. Byrne further emphasizes that the ability to decode the alphabet is essential for reading (Byrne, 1998). However, Foorman et al. (2003) research suggests that employing alphabetic instruction without incorporating learners' phonological awareness leads to lower effectiveness than using alphabetic instruction with learners with phonological awareness. In addition, the teacher's experience, knowledge, and teaching skills also play a vital role in effectively teaching the alphabetic principle and phonological awareness. Furthermore, classroom activities should involve segmenting sounds in spoken language, blending sounds in spoken language, and establishing explicit and systematic connections between phonemes and corresponding graphemes (Foorman et al., 2003).

According to Anthony and Francis (2005), phonological awareness is the ability to recognize, discriminate and manipulate the sound of a language, regardless of the size of the word part being in focus. Phonological awareness involves blending sounds,

segmenting words, and identifying familiar sounds in words. Phonological awareness is its cognitive ability, which can be measured through skills. Phonological awareness refers to the ability to understand and manipulate the sound in language regardless of the word unit size. Phonological awareness is a crucial factor in learning to read and write. Recent studies indicate that it is a unified ability that includes various skills related to understanding language sounds. These skills develop in a predictable sequence and are influenced by genetics, intelligence, memory, vocabulary, and experiences with spoken and written language. This developmental perspective of phonological awareness has significant implications for assessing it, identifying cognitive and achievement weaknesses, intervening early to prevent dyslexia, designing curricula, and instructing students. To accurately assess phonological awareness, it is recommended to use tests that cover multiple levels of linguistic or task complexity. Matching the specific skills being assessed with a child's level of phonological development leads to more valid and reliable results. Improved assessment practices can aid in identifying children at risk of reading difficulties early, informing educational diagnosis, planning instruction, and allocating resources.

Additionally, the broad conceptualization of phonological awareness allows for developmentally appropriate interventions to be provided to young children at risk before they struggle with reading. Research has shown that phonological awareness training improves phoneme awareness, reading, and spelling, particularly with letter instruction.

2.4 Approach to Phonics Instruction

Phonics instruction is a teaching that teaches learners about phoneme and grapheme relationships. There are two approaches to phonics instruction: synthetic phonics, where the teaching process is bottom-up, and analytic phonics instruction, where the teaching process is top-down.

Analytic phonics, previously widely used in the UK, involves teaching letter sounds after the reading has commenced, with initial reading relying on sight recognition. In Scottish schools, a substantial period was dedicated to learning letter sounds, typically starting soon after school entry and lasting until Easter of the first year. During this phase, children were presented with whole words sharing a familiar initial letter sound

(e.g., 'milk,' 'man,' 'mother'), highlighting the sound at the beginning of the words. While the children had some understanding of the usefulness of letter sounds at the beginnings of words, they recognized the rest of the words holistically, often selecting complex words. The teacher would introduce a letter (e.g., /m/), ask for words starting with that sound, and write them on the board. This exercise aimed to demonstrate a word family sharing the letter 'm' rather than focusing on phonetic readability.

Once all the letter sounds were covered, attention shifted to sounds at the ends of words. Eventually, children learned about vowels in the middle of consonant-vowel-consonant (CVC) words. Contrary to the belief that analytic phonics excludes the sounding and blending of letters to read unfamiliar words, our classroom observations revealed that this was a common practice in such programs. Teachers in the study followed a prescribed progression for phonics teaching, and this step occurred towards the end of the first year, where children were taught to sound and blend CVC words (e.g., /c/ /a/ /t/ → cat).

When comparing analytic and synthetic phonics, the question arises: what sets them apart? Synthetic phonics, as the name suggests, focuses primarily on combining letter sounds to pronounce unfamiliar words. In this approach, children learning synthetic phonics start sounding and blending shortly after starting school, beginning with a few letter sounds. New letter sounds are quickly acquired, and children practice sounding and blending words that can be formed with the taught letters.

On the other hand, analytic phonics in the UK typically introduces sounding and blending for reading later, or sometimes not at all. Learning letter sounds is slower, with an extended period dedicated to teaching only the initial sounds of words. Phonics teaching can be seen as a continuum, with analytic phonics without blending and synthetic phonics on the other. The UK's approach to analytic phonics falls somewhere in the middle, often called analytic-then-synthetic phonics. The Progression in the Phonics program aligns with this analytic-then-synthetic approach, as it introduces sounding and blending later. On the other hand, Playing with Sounds leans closer to synthetic phonics but with early sounding and blending as a secondary activity, while the main focus is on segmenting spoken words for spelling (Johnston and Watson, 2007).

Children's early reading development depends on their acquisition of the sound-letter relationships that underlie written English words. Many children with reading difficulties benefit from explicit and systematic instruction in these sound-letter relationships, commonly known as phonics. Children with reading difficulties benefit from a sequence of phonics instruction that allows them to apply the relationships they learn to the reading of simple words and passages (Carnine, Silbert, & Kameenui, 1997; Chard, Simmons, & Kameenui, 1998).

Typically, phonics instruction is either explicit or implicit. In explicit phonics instruction, the sounds associated with individual letters are identified and blended to form words. The teacher informs students directly of the sound represented by each letter. As an illustration, "The letter 'l' produces the sound /l/". When students have mastered multiple correspondences, including one or two vowels, they can blend the sounds of the letters to read words. For instance, students who learned the sound-letter correspondences /c/ /a/ /t/ and can use a blending strategy to read "cat".

By contrast, implicit phonics instruction involves assisting students in identifying the sounds associated with individual letters within the context of whole words instead of in isolation. Typically, students are required to determine the sound of a letter based on a word or group of words containing that letter. For instance, when teaching the m sound, the teacher is instructed to write the word 'bin' on the board or computer screen and underline the letter 'b'. Then, have the students say the word 'bin' and listen for the beginning sound. Elicit from the students that the letter 'b' makes the sound /b/. In implicit phonics, students are frequently encouraged to use context and visual cues or aids to determine the meaning of unfamiliar words in text selections. Most supplementary programs or lessons implement explicit instruction.

2.5 Related studies

2.5.1 Related Studies on word knowledge and word reading relationship

The relationship between word knowledge and reading comprehension has been extensively studied, particularly in second language (L2) learners. Studies show a positive correlation between L2 vocabulary knowledge and reading comprehension. Additionally, vocabulary breadth and depth have been found to influence reading comprehension in diverse populations. Moreover, word knowledge has been linked to

other reading abilities, such as scanning skills and listening comprehension. Factors beyond word knowledge, including early language skills and morphological awareness, have also contributed to reading ability. This literature review explores the relationship between word knowledge and reading comprehension, considering its implications for instruction and development across different populations and reading abilities.

The relationship between word knowledge and reading ability has been extensively explored. Several studies have examined the impact of vocabulary knowledge on reading comprehension abilities among various populations. Masrai (2019) investigated the role of vocabulary knowledge in second language (L2) reading comprehension and found a positive correlation between L2 vocabulary knowledge and reading comprehension. This finding was further supported by Zhang and Zhang (2022), who conducted a meta-analysis of over 100 individual studies, revealing a significant correlation between L2 vocabulary knowledge and L2 reading comprehension. Additionally, Xie, Cai, and Yeung (2022) focused on Chinese children learning English and emphasized the importance of word knowledge, particularly vocabulary breadth and depth, in influencing L2 reading comprehension. Al Qunayeer (2021) also explored the breadth and depth of vocabulary knowledge among EFL learners and highlighted their impact on reading comprehension. These studies collectively highlight the significance of word knowledge, encompassing vocabulary breadth and depth, in contributing to reading comprehension skills across different populations and language contexts. Learning vocabulary should be considered a crucial aspect of reading instruction to improve reading comprehension abilities.

The relationship between word knowledge and various reading abilities has been investigated in numerous studies. Furqanul, Feisal, and Burhan Eko (2020) examined the vocabulary knowledge, skimming skills, and scanning skills of English education department students in Indonesia. They found a significant correlation between vocabulary knowledge and scanning skills, indicating that vocabulary knowledge has a stronger influence on scanning skills than skimming skills. Similarly, Röthlisberger, Zangger, and Juska-Bacher (2023) explored the academic performance of children

with German as a second language and native German speakers in countries where German is an official language. Their study revealed that vocabulary depth, in particular, significantly influenced reading comprehension, highlighting the importance of considering vocabulary depth in relation to other reading abilities. Kang (2020) investigated the contributions of vocabulary breadth, vocabulary depth, and reading fluency to the reading comprehension of secondary Korean EFL learners. The findings indicated that vocabulary depth and listening comprehension significantly contributed significantly to reading comprehension. These studies collectively demonstrate the relevance of word knowledge, including vocabulary breadth and depth, to other reading abilities, such as scanning skills, reading fluency, and listening comprehension.

In addition to word knowledge, various other factors have been identified as contributors to reading ability. Dickinson, Nesbitt, and Hofer (2019) conducted a study exploring the relationships between language and code-related abilities in preschool and grade one children. Their research highlighted the significance of early language skills, such as vocabulary, and their effects on later code-related skills and reading performance. The study found that early language skills impacted later code-related skills and reading performance in grade one, while code-based skills also influenced language abilities. Moreover, vocabulary emerged as a central factor, exhibiting the strongest association with early reading. These findings challenge the assumption of the Simple View of Reading and emphasize the interconnected nature of language and code-related abilities in reading comprehension. The study suggests that focusing on vocabulary and early literacy skills in early education can significantly contribute to reading development in English among Chinese children (Xie, Cai, and Yeung, 2022). Their research emphasized the role of word knowledge, specifically morphological awareness and vocabulary, in L2 reading comprehension. The study revealed that word knowledge measured at Time 1 significantly predicted decoding, listening comprehension, and reading comprehension at Time 2. Structural equation modeling demonstrated that vocabulary influenced reading comprehension thoroughly through its effects on decoding and listening comprehension. At the same time, morphological awareness partially impacted reading comprehension through its influence on vocabulary and decoding.

Similarly, Al Qunayeer (2021) investigated the relationship between vocabulary breadth and depth and L2 reading and listening comprehension among EFL learners. The study found significant correlations between vocabulary knowledge and L2 reading and listening comprehension, highlighting the importance of different levels of vocabulary mastery and vocabulary depth knowledge in understanding L2 comprehension. Furthermore, the modality of vocabulary knowledge measures, such as orthographical and auditory measures, also significantly predicted L2 reading and listening comprehension. These studies emphasize the significance of factors beyond word knowledge, including morphological awareness, modality of vocabulary measures, and other aspects of vocabulary depth, in enhancing reading ability in second language learners.

2.5.2 Related Studies on the Effect of Phonics Instruction

Phonics instruction is widely recognized as a key approach for developing early reading skills, improving decoding abilities, and enhancing overall reading proficiency. This literature review aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the effects of phonics instruction on reading skills by incorporating findings from various research studies conducted in diverse educational contexts.

Multiple studies have demonstrated the positive impact of phonics instruction on early literacy skills. Shenoy, Iyer, and Zahedi (2022) conducted a study in a private middle-cost school in Mumbai, India, and found that students who received one or two years of phonics instruction outperformed those who did not receive any instruction in various literacy skills. This challenges the traditional rote memorization approach used in many Indian schools. Similarly, Wichayut and Sitthitikul (2019) implemented a phonics instruction program called Letters and Sounds in Thailand. They observed improvements in letter-sound correspondences, decoding skills, and blending skills among young Thai students.

Phonics instruction has also shown benefits in improving pronunciation skills and language learning. Dandee and Pornwiriyaakit (2022) conducted a study with EFL students and found that English phonetic alphabet drills significantly enhanced their accuracy in pronouncing English consonant and vowel sounds. Hania, Fauzi, Pangestu, and Rosyada (2022) investigated phonics instruction to teach Arabic

reading skills and reported significant improvements in students' reading abilities. The phonics method effectively enhanced reading skills among beginner-level students in Aşwat learning.

Phonics instruction has proven to be beneficial for second language learners as well. Li and Woore (2021) explored the effects of phonics instruction on phonological decoding and vocabulary learning in L2 learners. Their study revealed that the phonics group outperformed the comparison group in decoding skills and vocabulary memorization, emphasizing the positive impact of phonics instruction in L2 learning contexts.

Recent research has explored digital-based phonics instruction and its impact on reading skills. Akpojotor and Nkechi (2021) conducted a study using digital-based synthetic phonics instruction and observed improved reading ability among primary school pupils. Srimanothip and González (2021) implemented computer-assisted phonics games and reported significant improvements in listening proficiency and English Phonics achievement among Kindergarten 2 students. Another study by Vanden Bempt et al. (2021) examined a preventive digital game, GraphoGame-Flemish, to enhance reading-related skills in pre-reading kindergarteners at risk for dyslexia. The study results indicated significant improvements in explicitly trained skills, such as letter knowledge and word decoding, suggesting the potential of early interventions like phonics instruction to provide a head start on literacy skills.

Regarding examining perceptions towards Phonics instruction, several studies present consistent findings across diverse educational contexts. Similarly, Caviness (2021) interviewed ten elementary teachers to explore their perceptions of using explicit Phonics instruction for English Language Learners (ELLs). Utilizing a basic qualitative research approach, Caviness found that teachers perceived consistent Phonics instruction, delivered at a dedicated time each day, as crucial for ELLs' English language learning. Meanwhile, Zhong and Kang (2021) surveyed 213 primary school English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers in China to understand their perceptions of Phonics teaching. Their study revealed that most teachers view Phonics positively, considering it primarily as a word-attack skill.

Moreover, Zhong and Kang noted that teachers with higher levels of education tend to have a more effective Phonics teaching approach, but they also require systematic Phonics knowledge. In contrast, Simmons (2021) delved into the perceptions of students and teachers regarding the effectiveness of the "Really Great Reading" Phonics program in a second-grade classroom. Employing in-depth data collection methods, including surveys, interviews, and pre-and post-assessments, Simmons uncovered four main themes that illuminate the participants' perspectives: the program's systematic approach, the need for differentiated instruction, positive perceptions of student progress, and the importance of foundational Phonics skills lessons. Lastly, Sanden, MacPhee, and Hartle (2022) addressed concerns about instructional mandates in K–2 Phonics instruction. They conducted a survey to understand the current status of phonics instruction among K–2 teachers, finding that the vast majority of these teachers teach phonics systematically, contradicting media claims of inadequate phonics instruction. These studies collectively highlight the importance of systematic Phonics instruction, tailored approaches to meet diverse learner needs, and informed decision-making by educators and policymakers to optimize Phonics instruction and support student literacy development (Caviness, 2021; Simmons, 2021; Sanden et al., 2022; Zhong & Kang, 2021).

2.6 Chapter Summary

Teaching students about the relationship between phonemes and graphemes constitutes the concept of phonics instruction. There are two approaches to teaching phonics: synthetic phonics, which emphasizes bottom-up instruction, and analytic phonics, which emphasizes top-down instruction. Analytic phonics teach letter sounds after beginning to read words. Whereas synthetic phonics teach letter and sound correspondences first and let learners start reading and blending words. Several studies have been conducted in different educational contexts that have shown the positive impact of phonics instruction on literacy skills, challenging traditional approaches. Moreover, phonics instruction has proven effective in improving pronunciation, language learning, and reading abilities among learners of different languages, including Arabic and English as a second language. Digital-based phonics instruction has also yielded positive outcomes, enhancing reading abilities and listening proficiency.

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH METHODS

This chapter presents the research methodology of the study. It begins with the research paradigm and design (see 1), including participants and setting (see 2). The chapter also provides detailed descriptions of research instruments and techniques (see 3), teaching steps (see 4), data collection procedures (see 5) and data analysis (see 6). The chapter conceptualizes the study by highlighting it with the chapter summary (see 7).

3.1 Research Paradigm and Design

Researchers often start a study by looking at the realm of the research paradigm, which provides a broad framework for their worldview. Quantitative research design typically looks at any topic with a large population and sample size to establish relationships between variables. The data collected in quantitative research are numerical and statistical, describing the relationships being investigated. On the other hand, qualitative research design explores a topic with a smaller population and sample size, aiming to generate theories or describe phenomena. Qualitative research data are rich and do not lend themselves to numerical analysis or statistical procedures.

Mixed-methods research design combines both quantitative and qualitative approaches. This design is typically employed when research questions cannot be addressed through numerical analysis alone. In contrast, quasi-experimental research design, although similar to proper experimental design, lacks randomization and laboratory settings. It aims to establish relationships between an independent variable and one or more dependent variables. Experimental research, as explained by Khaldi (2017), involves manipulating variables under controlled conditions to investigate their effects.

In this study, the researcher aimed to meet various research goals. However, capturing the views of learners on the use of phonics instruction through numerical data proved challenging. As a result, the researcher chose to use a one-group pretest-posttest design in convergent parallel mixed research design to see the effect of phonics instruction on word reading skills of primary school students in a local school setting.

This approach involved a single group of students undergoing an intervention, with assessments conducted both before and after this intervention. This method resembles classroom action research, where the goal is to enhance student learning by applying phonics activities identified to potentially solve an existing issue (Burn, 2009). Figure 1 presents a schematic of the one-group pretest-posttest design.

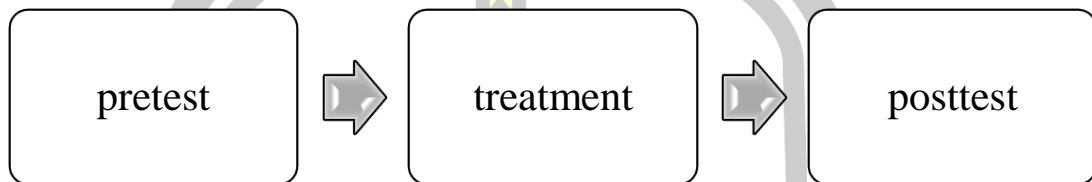
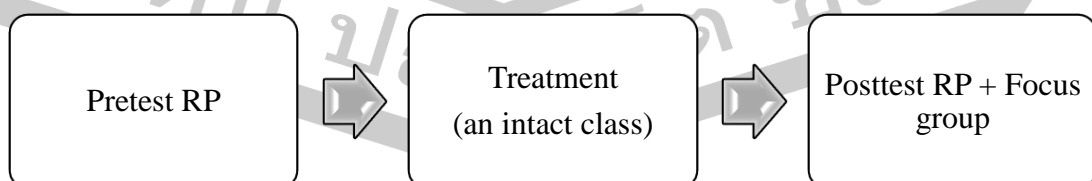


Figure 1 A diagram of a one-group pretest-posttest design

The researcher compared the pretest and posttest scores of participants to assess if there was a notable enhancement in their performance. A paired-samples t-test, a type of parametric test, was employed to analyze the group's mean scores under the assumption that other variables like pre-existing skills, attitudes, and motivation remained unchanged across participants. Nevertheless, it was recognized that several variables could interact with the primary variable of interest—phonics instruction—and thus affect the primary outcome variable, which was the ability to read words.

The study's design was acknowledged by the researcher to be insufficient for establishing a cause-and-effect relationship or the effect of the treatment, primarily due to the lack of randomization. The research was conducted within an existing class, making it challenging to control for all possible variables. Consequently, qualitative data was also gathered through focus group method to provide a deeper understanding and explanation for the quantitative findings that required further investigation. Figure 2 shows the structure of the current study.



Note: R = receptive knowledge; P = Productive knowledge

Figure 2 A diagram of the design of the present study

3.2 Participants and Setting

This research was conducted in an elementary school located approximately five kilometers from Surin City, Thailand, which was classified as rural due to environmental and socio-economic factors. This small-sized school, lacking a director, comprised 52 students, five teachers, and an administrative officer and operated in the context of English as a foreign language (EFL).

This study focused on the second level of education in Thailand, specifically students in grades four through six. The participants were chosen through convenience sampling from three intact classes, culminating in a group of 13 students—comprising five females and eight males, aged between 9 and 12 years. The 13 students are comprised of 4 grade 4 students, 6 grade 5 students and 4 grade 6 students. These students, all in good health and without any diagnosed disabilities.

The academic focus for these participants had been English, a subject they had been studying for at least three years, with an annual allocation of approximately 80 hours of instruction. Their learning strategies depended on rote memorization and mimicry, reflecting the educational challenges in resource-limited settings.

In preparation for this study, a comprehensive briefing was provided to all participants, ensuring they were informed about the research's objectives and procedures. Moreover, obtaining parental consent was a prerequisite for participation, underlining the commitment to ethical research practices and the importance of informed consent in educational research. This approach underscored the study's dedication to conducting meaningful, responsible research that respected the rights and well-being of its participants.

3.3 Research instruments

To address the established research questions, the following research instruments were developed and applied to collect the data:

3.3.1 Letter-Sound Recognition Task (LSRT)

The Letter-Sound Recognition (LSRT) Task is a diagnostic tool designed to evaluate the receptive understanding of spoken word forms among primary school participants. This assessment comprises 22 items, where participants are instructed to identify a word pronounced within an audio track curated by the researcher. For each item, the

audio track articulates the word three times, incorporating a 5-second interval between pronunciations. This spacing is chosen to enhance auditory comprehension, allowing test takers sufficient time to process each word. Following the pronunciation of each word, a 10-second pause is provided. This pause serves a dual purpose: giving students the opportunity to select their answer and to prepare for the introduction of the next word. To facilitate an equitable testing environment, the audio track is broadcasted through a wireless speaker placement at the center of the testing room, ensuring that all participants have an equal chance to hear the pronunciations clearly. The word pronounced in the track was generated through google translate to ensure consistency in pronunciation.

The vocabulary for the Letter-Sound Recognition Task (LSRT) was selected from “Smile 4,” “Smile 5,” and “Smile 6,” which are textbooks widely adopted in Thai educational settings. The criteria for word selection were twofold: compatibility with phonics guidelines and inclusion within the first 1000 words of the General Service List, ensuring the relevance and accessibility of the test content. Participants were awarded points for each correctly answered item, facilitating a straightforward assessment of their phonetic understanding.

Ensure the reliability of the LSRT Task, the test underwent a rigorous validation process conducted by a subject matter expert. This step was done to confirm the test’s efficacy in measuring students’ receptive knowledge accurately. A pilot version of the test was then administered to a sample group. The feedback obtained from this preliminary round was invaluable, providing insights that led to refinements and enhancements of the test format and content.

The conceptual foundation of the LSRT test is developed by the Test of Word Reading Efficiency (TOWRE), developed by Torgesen and colleagues in 1999. This connection highlighted the LSRT’s alignment with established methodologies in educational psychology and language acquisition research. The scoring outcomes of the LSRT Task, which detail the performance metrics and analytical data, are systematically presented in Table 1, offering a comprehensive overview of test takers’ competencies in receptive word knowledge

Instruction: Choose the item you hear (คำชี้แจง: เลือกข้อที่นักเรียนได้ยิน)

1. A. Bus B. Bass
C. Bud D. Bin

Table 1 illustrates the marking criteria of the Letters and sound task

The pronounce word	The chosen word by a test taker	The score marked by the researcher
bus	bus	1
bus	bass	0

3.3.2 Word Reading Task (WRT)

The Word Reading Task (WRT) is used to assess students' proficiency in reading words, developed based on Nation's (2022) principles of vocabulary spoken forms productive knowledge. Its objective is to assess participants' knowledge of the relationship between phonemes (sounds) and graphemes (letters), alongside their competency in blending these phonemes to form coherent words. This task involves each participant reading aloud a sequence of 22 words, presented in a random order, to measure their word reading ability.

For a word to be considered for this task, it must meet specific criteria: it should be pronounced according to standard phonetics, be listed in the textbooks Smile 4, Smile 5, and Smile 6—materials widely used in the educational curriculum, and be part of the first 1000 words in the General Service List (GSL). The WRT was conducted three days after the treatment, with each participant engaging in the task individually in a controlled environment.

During the task, the researcher presented 22 words to the participant, one at a time, in a randomized sequence. The participant was then required to read each word aloud. The scoring system was the following, correct pronunciation earned the participant two points. If a participant pronounced the word slightly, for example, inaccurate ending sound, they received one point. Conversely, no points were awarded for pronunciations that could not read the word or read the word completely incorrectly.

A unique aspect of the scoring system was the treatment of hesitation; if a participant spent more than one minute on a word, it was marked as unread, thereby earning no points. This criterion aimed to discern the ability to read and identify potential reluctance or difficulties in reading recognition that a participant might not openly acknowledge.

The selection of words for this assessment was curated from the Smile series textbooks (Smile 4, Smile 5, and Smile 6), ensuring alignment with the initial 1000 words of the General Word List (GWL) and adherence to phonics guidelines. This task's design was inspired by the Test of Word Reading Efficiency (TOWRE) developed by Torgesen et al. (1999), signifying its robust foundation in literacy assessment. The scoring outcomes for the Word Reading Task are systematically documented in Table 2.

Table 2 illustrates the scoring criteria of the Word reading task

Instruction: Read each word you drawn (คำชี้แจง: ให้นักเรียนอ่านออกเสียงคำที่จับสลากได้)

The target word	The sound pronounced	Score
hat	/hæt/	2
hat	/hæd/	1
hat	/hid/	0

3.3.3 Focus group

The focus group discussion was orchestrated to delve into the participants' attitudes towards phonics instruction, with an emphasis on identifying its perceived benefits and drawbacks. To ensure a thorough exploration of these perspectives, the discussion was structured to allow participants unlimited time, facilitating an environment conducive to detailed and thoughtful responses. The participants were stratified into two distinct groups based on their performance in the Word Reading Task (WRT): a "low group," consisting of participants who scored lower on the task with an average performance of 50% or below, and a "high group," comprising those who demonstrated better performance of 50%.

The discussion was guided by a set of four questions designed to elicit nuanced insights into the participants' experiences with phonics instruction. Initially,

participants were prompted to reflect on any changes in their word reading abilities post-treatment, aiming to gauge their own perceptions of progress. Subsequently, they were asked to assess the degree of improvement in their word reading skills, providing a quantifiable perspective on their development. The third question sought to uncover any negative experiences or disadvantages stemming from the treatment, while the final query encouraged participants to articulate the specific advantages they perceived from the phonics instruction.

Recognizing the young age of the participants, the questions were simplified and translated to be in participants' first language before the commencement of the focus group discussion, ensuring that the queries were accessible and understandable. To facilitate the collection of responses, each group was provided with pencils and sheets of paper to document their answers. Throughout the discussion, a camera phone was deployed to record students' utterance, and the students were instructed not to speak up at the same time. Upon completion of the discussion, the researcher collected the recorded responses with a commitment to maintaining confidentiality. This methodological approach was designed to capture a comprehensive understanding of the participants' viewpoints on the efficacy, benefits, and potential limitations of phonics instruction in enhancing their word reading capabilities.

3.4 Teaching steps

In this study, the researcher sought to explore the impact of phonics instruction on enhancing word reading abilities among participants. To systematically introduce this independent variable—phonics instruction—into the learning environment, the methodology adopted a structured teaching approach based on the framework proposed by Wichayut and Sitthitikul (2019). This instructional method was segmented into three distinct steps: Introduction, Blending, and Decoding, each designed to build upon the previous to facilitate a comprehensive understanding and application of phonics among learners.

Introduction Step: This initial phase was focused on familiarizing students with the grapheme-phoneme relationships that form the foundation of phonics. Each session began with the presentation of weekly grapheme-phoneme relationships, with students learning approximately 5-6 of these relationships per class. In this step the concept of

alphabetic principle were introduced to the students. This step was crucial for setting the stage for more complex phonics tasks by ensuring that students had a solid grasp of the basic building blocks of phonics instruction.

Blending Step: Following the introduction, the Blending Step aimed to develop student's skills in phoneme blending—combining individual phonemes to form words. This practice was designed to help students read unfamiliar words by applying the phoneme relationships they had learned earlier. This step let the student practice blending skill from the phonological awareness conceptual framework, improving their ability to blend phoneme together. Through repeated practice, this step sought to enhance students' fluency in reading by enabling them to construct and recognize new words independently.

Decoding Step: The final phase of the instructional approach focused on decoding, where students were tasked with breaking down words into their constituent phonemes to understand their structure and meaning. This step was implemented after the students had become proficient in blending sounds, allowing them to apply their skills to more complex reading tasks. This step let the student practice identifying and decoding skill from the phonological awareness conceptual framework allowing them to improve their ability to identify and decode from the word they hear. The Decoding Step was pivotal in improving students' ability to read and comprehend words by analyzing their phonetic components.

Despite the structured approach to teaching phonics, the application of these instructional steps was constrained by the limited duration of English class sessions and ethical considerations. Consequently, the phonics instruction treatment was allocated only the last 15 minutes of each English class, posing a challenge to the depth of instruction possible within this time frame. This limitation underscores the need for efficient use of instructional time and highlights the challenges of integrating targeted phonics instruction into existing curriculum schedules.

3.5 Data collection procedure

3.5.1 Pre-treatment phase

Before initiating the treatment phase, a meticulous pre-assessment process was conducted to gauge the participants' baseline word reading abilities. Each participant

was individually summoned to a designated task room for this purpose. Here, they were presented with a straightforward yet effective task: randomly selecting a word from a provided word list and then vocalising it. The researcher recorded each attempt, noting the accuracy of the pronunciation. This process was repeated until the participant had attempted all 22 words on the list. After completing one participant's assessment, the next participant was invited into the room to undergo the same procedure, ensuring a systematic and fair evaluation of all individuals involved.

The focus shifted to the Letter-Sound Recognition Task (LSR) after concluding these individual assessments. For this test, all participants were gathered in a single room equipped with a wireless speaker centrally placed to ensure equal auditory access for everyone. This setup facilitated a group testing environment where participants took the LSRT. The results were scored post-completion, providing a comprehensive dataset of the participants' phonemic awareness and word recognition skills before the implementation of the phonics instruction.

Following the post-treatment data collection, a detailed statistical analysis was planned to dissect the impact of phonics instruction on the participants' learning outcomes. The primary tools for this analysis included the computation of mean and standard deviation for each data set, utilizing the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software. This step aimed to offer insights into the average performance levels and the variability within the participants' scores, shedding light on the central tendency and dispersion of the data. Additionally, an Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) would be employed to scrutinize the significance of the phonics instruction across different educational levels, identifying any statistically significant differences in the effectiveness of the instruction among the participants. Through these analytical techniques, the research aims to provide a robust evaluation of the efficacy of phonics instruction in enhancing word reading skills.

3.5.2 Post-treatment phase

In the post-treatment phase, the data collection mirrored the process undertaken before the treatment, ensuring consistency in assessing the participants' progress. Each participant, one by one, was brought into a designated task room to engage in the word reading task (WRT). They were tasked with selecting a word from the

provided list and then articulating it aloud. The researcher carefully recorded each word's pronunciation for accuracy. This procedure was repeated until the participant had attempted to read all 22 words from the list. Following one participant's completion of this task, the next was invited to participate, continuing this cycle until all individuals had been assessed.

After completing the WRT, the participants undertook the Letter-Sound Recognition Task (LSRT) in a room equipped with a centrally placed wireless speaker. This arrangement facilitated a simultaneous testing environment for all participants. After the test, the scores were tallied, providing valuable data on the participants' phonetic recognition capabilities post-treatment.

Following the LSRT, the participants were categorized into two groups based on their performance on the post-treatment WRT: a "low group" for those who scored below the average and a "high group" for those who scored above it. The division was based on the criterion that a participant's post-test WRT score must exceed the average to be considered part of the high group. Each group was then provided with paper and pencil to address questions posed in a focused group discussion. This approach facilitated a collaborative discussion and ensured that a wide range of perspectives was captured. Upon completing their responses, the researcher collected the documents from each group, maintaining the confidentiality of the participants' contributions. This comprehensive post-treatment data collection phase was instrumental in evaluating the efficacy of phonics instruction and its impact on learners' word reading abilities, complemented by an in-depth exploration of their subjective experiences and perceptions.

3.6 Data analysis

The methodology employed in this research composed of both quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis to investigate the impact of phonics instruction on participants' word reading abilities and how the students perceive phonics instruction.

In the quantitative segment of the study, the data derived from the Letter-Sound Recognition Task (LSRT) test and the Word Reading Task (WRT) during both the pre-treatment and post-treatment were analyzed using SPSS software. This involves

calculating mean values to ascertain average performance levels and standard deviation values to understand the variability or dispersion of scores among participants. Another component of this analysis is the application of a paired *t*-test, which is instrumental in determining whether there are statistically significant differences between the participants' performance scores before and after the phonics instruction. This step is important in answering the first research question by highlighting the effectiveness of phonics instruction in enhancing word reading abilities.

Moreover, an Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) is conducted to explore the significance of phonics instruction across different educational levels. This analysis aims to uncover nuanced insights into how phonics instruction affects reading abilities among various grades, thus providing a deeper understanding of its impact across the educational spectrum.

On the qualitative front, the data gathered from focus group discussions is organized and categorized using Microsoft Excel software. This organization facilitates a thematic content analysis process, identifying and analyzing patterns and themes. This qualitative analysis is essential for addressing the second research question, as it unveils the participants' perspectives, experiences, and attitudes towards phonics instruction. Through this categorization and analysis, the research aims to extract meaningful insights into how phonics instruction is perceived by learners and its qualitative impact on their reading abilities.

Together, these quantitative and qualitative analytical approaches provide a holistic view of the research findings, enabling a comprehensive understanding of the efficacy of phonics instruction in improving word reading skills among participants.

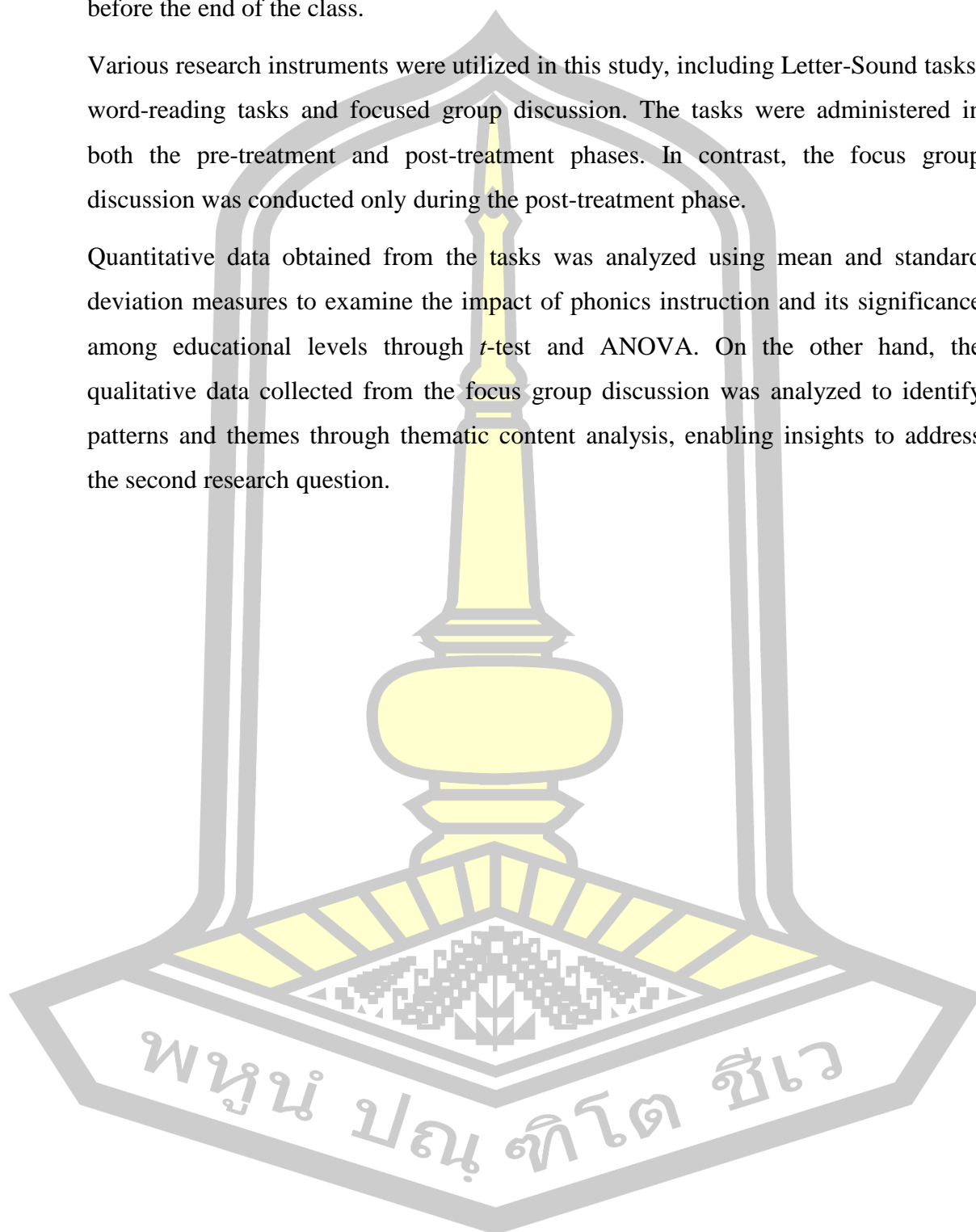
3.7 Chapter Summary

This study integrated elements from both positivist and interpretive research paradigms to answer the research questions and employed a convergent parallel mixed-method approach combining quasi-experimental and survey designs. The research was conducted in a small school in Surin, Thailand, with a participant group consisting of 13 Thai EFL primary learners from grades four to six, ranging in age from 9 to 12. The participants were selected through convenience sampling from three

intact classes and the treatment were carried out in a classroom context 15 minutes before the end of the class.

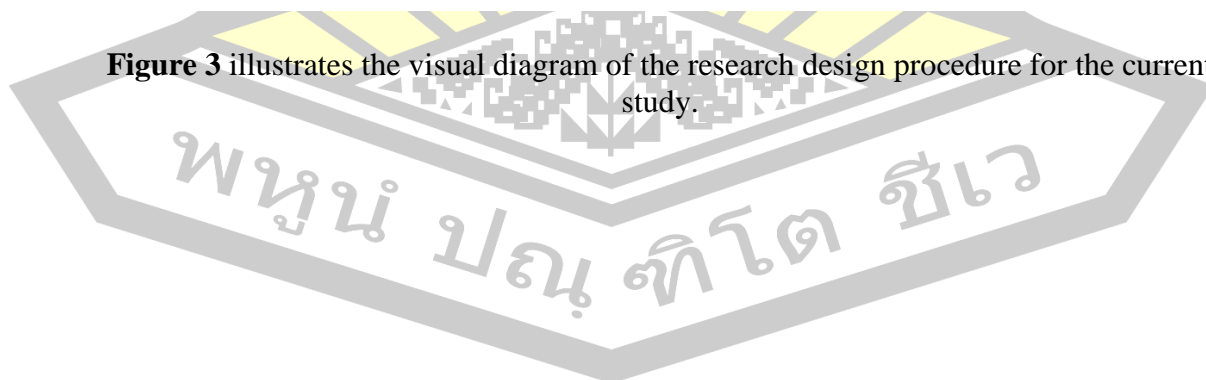
Various research instruments were utilized in this study, including Letter-Sound tasks, word-reading tasks and focused group discussion. The tasks were administered in both the pre-treatment and post-treatment phases. In contrast, the focus group discussion was conducted only during the post-treatment phase.

Quantitative data obtained from the tasks was analyzed using mean and standard deviation measures to examine the impact of phonics instruction and its significance among educational levels through *t*-test and ANOVA. On the other hand, the qualitative data collected from the focus group discussion was analyzed to identify patterns and themes through thematic content analysis, enabling insights to address the second research question.



Phase	Procedure	Product
Pilot test	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • N = 30 • Examining reliability • Examining content validity • SPSS software 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Measure of vocabulary receptive and productive knowledge (LSR task and Word Reading task)
Pre-treatment data collection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • N = 14 • Testing vocabulary receptive knowledge using LSR task • Testing vocabulary productive knowledge using Word Reading task 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Numeric data (test score)
Treatment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teaching phonics according to teaching steps using phonics instruction • Observation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Qualitative data (participants' activities engagement)
Post-treatment data collection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • N = 14 • Testing vocabulary receptive knowledge using LSR task • Testing vocabulary productive knowledge using Word Reading task • Semi-structured interview • Focus group method 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Numeric data (test score) • Qualitative data (participants' perspectives on phonics instruction)
Quantitative data analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SPSS software • Calculate mean and standard deviation value • Paired <i>t</i>-test 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Correlation
Quantitative data analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Microsoft Excel software • Frequency count • Pattern finding 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participants' perspective on phonics instruction
Mixing of quantitative and qualitative result	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explanation of the quantitative and qualitative findings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conclusions

Figure 3 illustrates the visual diagram of the research design procedure for the current study.



CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

In this chapter, the findings of the investigation, derived from systematic instruments and techniques, are presented. The chapter commences by presenting the quantitative findings obtained through the meticulous testing procedures developed by the researcher. The chapter specifically examines the impact of phonics instruction on the participating students' word reading ability. The chapter then provides an analysis of the qualitative results obtained from the focus group interviews. The qualitative findings reveal the perspectives of Thai primary school students regarding the use of phonics to teach word reading. A chapter summary concludes this particular chapter.

4.1 The effect of phonics instruction on Thai EFL primary students' word reading ability

This section provides an analysis of the receptive and productive word reading test scores of Thai primary school students. The student's performance is summarized and interpreted using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) 29.0 software tools. In particular, receptive knowledge was evaluated through the Letter and Sound Recognition Test (LSRT), whereas productive knowledge was measured through the Word Reading Test (WRT). The descriptive statistics comprised percentages, means, and standard deviations. For both tests, the raw scores were transformed into percentages. Percentages were utilized to compare performance on word reading tests that varied. Inferential statistics, such as the *t*-test for dependent samples, were used to ascertain whether a significant difference existed between two time periods within the group.

Table 3 summarizes the study results of Thai primary school students' receptive and productive word reading knowledge. Primary school students obtained an average score of 14 (63.64 %) on the RSLT pretest, which was accompanied by a standard deviation (5.97). Following this, they attained a mean score of 17 (77.27%) on the posttest, with a standard deviation 4.46. Concerning the WRT, the mean score of primary school students was 5.08 (11.54%), accompanied by a standard deviation of 7.57. Conversely, the participants' posttest performance resulted in a mean score of 8.92 (20.28%), accompanied by a 9.22 standard deviation. According to these results,

Thai primary school students do better on the receptive knowledge of word reading test than on the productive knowledge of word reading test. This result suggests that the cognitive processing required for the productive knowledge test is greater than the receptive knowledge test.

Table 3 Summary of students' performance on receptive and productive written form knowledge

Tests	Pretest			Posttest			<i>t</i> -value	<i>d</i>
	\bar{x}	%	S.D.	\bar{x}	%	S.D.		
Letter Sound Recognition test (LSR)	14	63.64	5.97	17	77.27	4.66	5.52*	0.56
Word Reading Test (WRT)	5.08	11.54	7.57	8.92	20.28	9.22	6.58*	1.83

Notes: *Significant at the 0.05 level ($p < 0.05$), $N = 13$

A dependent-samples *t*-test was performed to ascertain the statistical significance of the changes between the scores on the pretest and posttest. The results of the studies indicated that there were significant differences in the pre-test and posttest scores. The LSR had a moderate effect size ($t = 5.52$; $p < 0.05$, $d = 0.56$), and the WRT had a large effect size ($t = 6.58$; $p < 0.05$, $d = 1.83$). Additionally, these results are depicted in Figure 4.

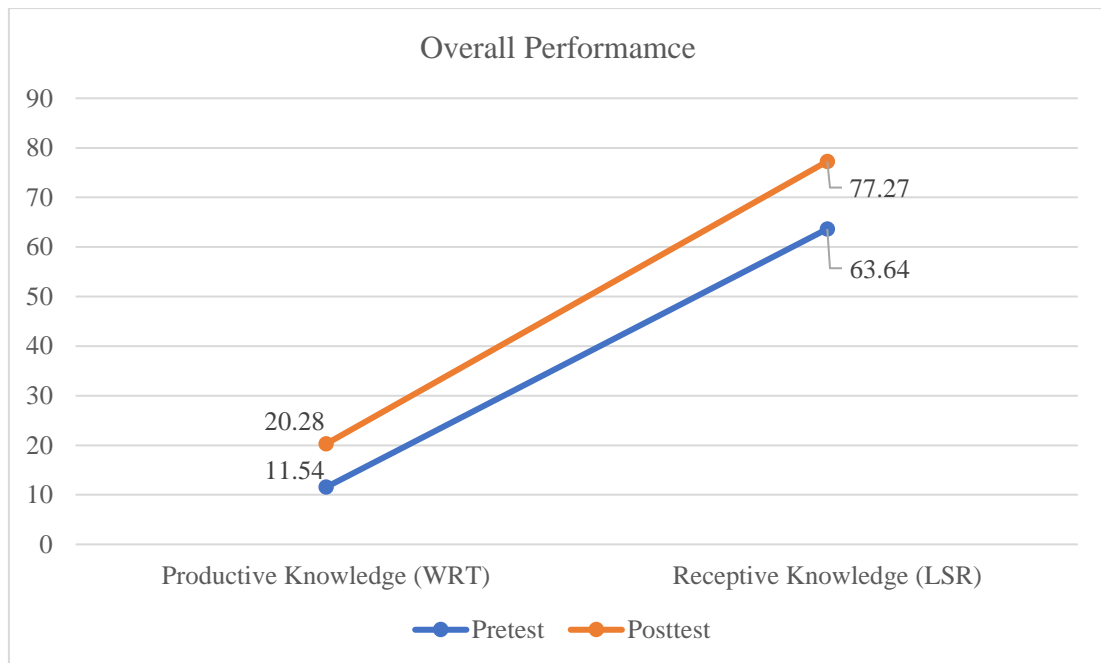


Figure 4 Summary of pre and posttest score mean percentage of overall performance

In addition, an independent samples *t*-test was conducted to ascertain the distinction across various test formats. Statistically significant differences were found between the LSR and the WRT for pretest performance ($t = 4.72$, $p < 0.05$, $d = 1.31$), as well as posttest performance ($t = 3.95$, $p < 0.05$, $d = 1.10$), according to the analysis of the results. Significant effect sizes were also seen on both occasions. Different forms of assessments necessitate distinct degrees of cognitive processing of reading information when administered to Thai EFL primary school students, as demonstrated by these data. Additional elaboration on these findings will be provided in Chapter 5.

4.2 Receptive and productive word knowledge between education levels

Table 4 presents the overview of LSR and WRT performance by level of education. On both assessments, fifth-grade students demonstrated superior performance to sixth-grade students, who also surpassed their fourth-grade counterparts. To be more specific, the mean scores achieved by fifth-grade students on the LSR pretest and posttest were 82.73% and 91.82%, respectively. Similarly, fourth-grade pupils achieved a pre-test score of 44.32% and a posttest score of 60.22% on the LSR. In a similar vein, the performance of sixth-grade pupils on the LSR pre-test was 59.09%, and on the posttest, it was 76.14%. It was a noteworthy discovery of the research that sixth-grade students achieved lower scores on the LSR than their fifth-grade

counterparts, despite the assumption that the former had greater language exposure and learning experience.

Compared to the LSRT, fourth-grade pupils obtained zero points on the pretest but 7.95% on the posttest. The posttest performance of fifth-grade children (27.27%) was superior to their pretest performance (19.09%). The average WRT performance of sixth-grade students was 13.64% on the pretest and 23.86% on the posttest. Additional pertinent data are shown in Table 4.

Table 4 portrait of each grade difference in the average test score

Grade	LSR			WRT		
	Pretest (%)	Posttest (%)	<i>t</i> -value	Pretest (%)	Posttest (%)	<i>t</i> -value
Grade 4	44.32	60.22	3.40	0	7.95	4.22
Grade 5	82.73	91.82	4.08	19.09	27.27	5.38
Grade 6	59.09	76.14	3.91	13.64	23.86	3.13

Figure 5 provides a visual representation of the performance scores of participants encompassing grades four, five, and six across the LSR and WRT assessments conducted during both the pretest and posttest phases. A meticulous examination of this figure unveils a consistent and salient trend observed across all grade levels—namely, a discernible elevation in posttest scores when compared to their corresponding pretest counterparts.

Furthermore, it is noteworthy that the participants in grade five exhibited higher proficiency across all assessment criteria. Their pre-treatment evaluations yielded an LSR score of 82.73% and a WRT score of 19.1%. After the treatment, they scored an LSR score of 91.82% and a WRT score of 27.27%.



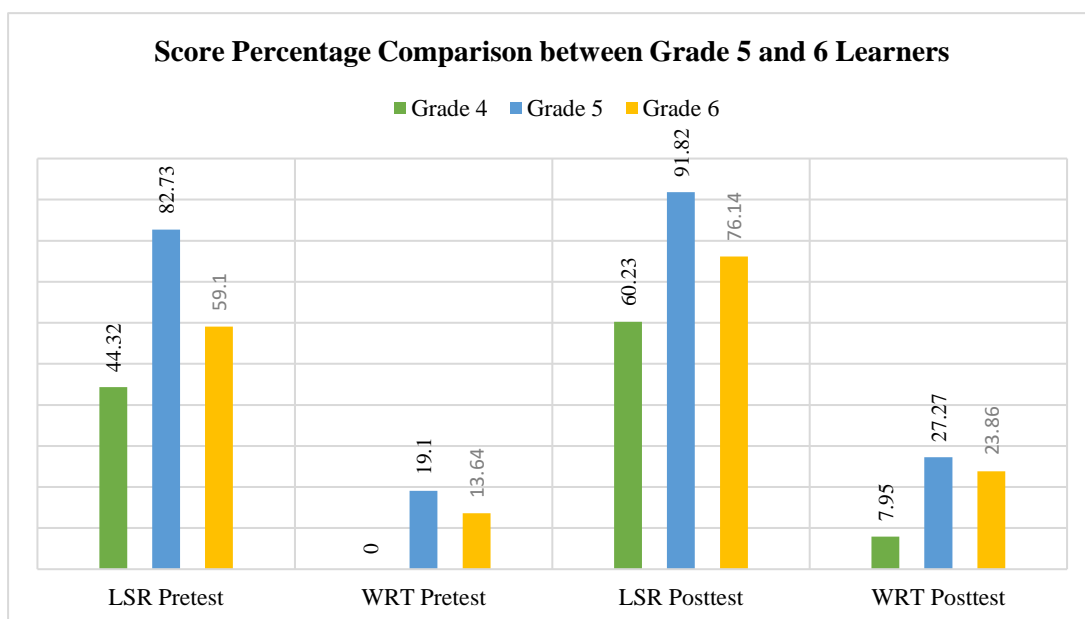


Figure 5 score percentage comparison between Grade 4, Grade 5 and Grade 6 learners

Table 5 presents the results of the analysis of variance (ANOVA), which did not identify any significant differences among the grade levels. However, scores were statistically significantly changed before and after treatment. F-values of 1.0927 ($p = 0.37$) and 0.23 ($p = 0.8019$) were obtained for LSR and WRT. Following the findings presented in Table 5, a *post-hoc* analysis was conducted, concluding that no statistically significant variations among the grades existed. This result highlights the result of the ANOVA, which indicates that while phonics instruction may improve primary school children's word reading ability, no grade level experiences more substantial advantages from this intervention than the others. Indeed, English language exposure and education level do not influence word reading ability among Thai primary school participants.

Table 5 Post Hoc Comparisons of Mean Improvements (Tukey HSD)

Comparison (Grades)	LSR Mean Difference	LSR p -value	WRT Mean Difference	WRT p -value
Grade 4 vs. Grade 5	0.5	0.9005	4.2	0.2833
Grade 4 vs. Grade 6	1.0	0.8039	7.0	0.559
Grade 5 vs. Grade 6	0.5	0.9005	2.8	0.5671

4.3 Participants' perceptions of phonics instruction

This section provides an overview of the findings about the participants' perceptions regarding phonics instruction and its impact on word reading instruction. The findings presented above are derived from a qualitative description and analysis of the replies provided by the thirteen participants in the focus group interview. The participants were classified after the intervention according to their proficiency in word reading. As a result, thirteen individuals were separated into two groups: the low group ($n = 8$) and the high group ($n = 5$).

The present study characterized student perceptions as socially created representations that mirror their emotions and actions during the process of acquiring word reading skills via phonics instruction. The variables in question were derived using a thematic content analysis of the study's qualitative findings. An analysis was conducted on the transcribed qualitative data. To bolster the credibility and dependability of the data analysis, an inter-coder was chosen and instructed in detail on how to independently assess the transcripts and textual data. The intercoder possessed over five years of experience as an English instructor. The inclusion of an additional coder was intended to validate the findings obtained from the focus-group interview with primary school students and offer an impartial perspective and analysis. The primary school participants were divided into two proficiency levels, according to their word reading test performance (see Chapter 3 for detailed descriptions).

The data analysis yielded the following patterns or themes: learning environment, phonics instruction benefits, and challenges. The learning environment comprised the ambiance of the classroom during the phonics lesson and while students participated in learning activities. Two subthemes were identified in the learning environment: positive and negative. The issue of "benefits of phonics instruction" pertains to the ways in which phonics education among primary school children in Thailand improved their ability to read words. "Benefits" comprised two subthemes in this instance: "mental benefit" and "word reading skill." The challenges associated with teaching phonics were also identified as the central theme, with engagement and limitation constituting its two subthemes. The themes and their corresponding subthemes are enumerated in Table 6.

Table 6 The salient themes for qualitative data analysis

Themes	Sub-themes	Salient characteristics
mixed feeling of learning atmosphere	positive	fun, easy, enjoyable, exciting
	negative	boring
promotion of mental well-being and literacy skill	mental benefit	confident, feel better toward English subject, calm, proud, feel good about themselves
	word reading ability	can read new words, useful, helpful
no engagement and limited effect on complex word	no engagement	boring, redundant
	limitation	take longer time to read words, doesn't help with longer words, doesn't help with meaning learning

4.3.1 Mixed Feeling of Learning Atmosphere

The mixed feeling of learning atmosphere's thematic emphasis revolved around the students' perceptions of their overall involvement in learning activities. Dual discrete sub-themes surfaced within this thematic realm. The preliminary sub-theme was described as "positive," indicating that primary school students have optimistic attitudes toward the process of learning word reading skills via phonics instruction. More precisely, within this group of eight participants who held this favorable viewpoint, there was an expressed sentiment of pleasure linked to the use of phonics training as an instructional method. They praised it as an enjoyable, straightforward, intriguing, and thrilling method.

On the other hand, the divergent views articulated by four individuals were combined in the second sub-theme, labeled "negative." The students expressed a comparatively negative perspective of the educational experience that phonics instruction enabled. Participants noted that phonics instruction bore some resemblance to their initial years in first grade. Another participant expressed feelings of boredom due to the repetition of the letters. The primary school students' perspectives on the learning environment theme are displayed in Table 7.

Table 7 Participants' statements under the subtheme 'positive'

Participants	Statements
L1	<i>I like learning this way. It's more fun.</i>
L3	<i>I prefer to learn new words like this. It's easier for me to read new words taught by this technique.</i>
L4	<i>I think it is somewhat easier for me to learn how to read new words when I learn like this.</i>
L6	<i>I think it's fun and easy to learn.</i>
L8	<i>It is interesting to put each letter of the alphabet together and create a sound of a word without remembering the whole word's sound and how it is spelled.</i>
H1	<i>I love this way of learning new words. I don't have to remember what the new word sounds like, and I can just read it out after blending the sounds. It is a lot easier to read new words through this technique.</i>
H2	<i>This technique made learning words a lot easier. Before this, I needed to remember how it is spelled and what it means, along with how to read it, but now, I don't have to remember how it is read out anymore.</i>
H4	<i>I think it was very exciting, and I liked it when we competed with each other to read the written word on the whiteboard. It's my favorite activity.</i>
H5	<i>I like this way of learning. I think it's interesting because we can read the word that we don't even know what it means, or we can just make something up and know exactly what it will sound like.</i>

Note: L= low WRT score group; H= high WRT score group

The participants' thoughts about the learning environment of phonics training are presented in Table 8. The findings revealed that participants from elementary schools held unfavorable attitudes toward phonics instruction designed to enhance word reading abilities. Notably, a subset of participants conveyed a sense of boredom, signifying that the exercise entailed many iterations.

Table 8 Participants' statements under the subtheme 'negative'

Participants	Statements
L2	<i>I think it's somewhat boring. It feels like something for grade 1 students.</i>
L5	<i>I feel bored learning alphabet sounds, but I like it when we combine them into a word and read it.</i>
L7	<i>Learning through this technique is not for me. I think it's boring, and I don't understand how to combine sounds, but I can see how people would like it.</i>
H3	<i>I don't like or dislike it. It is a little boring for me because we have to learn the alphabet again.</i>

Note: L= low WRT score group; H= high WRT score group

To present a summary of the frequency counts of participant responses about the theme of “mixed feeling of learning atmosphere” in the context of phonics instruction and its correlation with the thematic framework, Table 9 examines participants’ responses concerning the earlier theme. There are two subthemes revealed. The ‘Positive’ sub-theme, which was identified by 69.23% of the participants as dominant, represents their perception of a favorable learning environment that was marked by enjoyment, comfort, curiosity, and enthusiasm. On the other hand, the sub-theme labeled ‘Negative’ is evident in 30.77% of the responses and represents the participants’ sense of boredom during the intervention.

Table 9 Participants’ responses to phonics instruction under the theme of ‘mixed feeling of learning atmosphere’

Theme	Sub-theme	Salience	Participants (%)
Mixed Feeling of Learning Atmosphere	positive	fun, easy, interesting, exciting	9 (69.23)
	Negative	boring	4 (30.77)

4.3.2 Promotion of Mental Well-Being and Literacy Skill

The theme “promotion of mental well-being and literacy skill” pertained to the ways in which students perceived the advantages of phonics training in contrast to the conventional approach to retaining whole-word sounds. Mental advantage and word reading proficiency were found as subthemes. Six participants reported higher confidence, improved feelings toward the English subject, a sense of peace when encountering new terms, the capacity to read new words with pride, and an elevated sense of self-esteem as part of the ‘mental benefit’ subtheme. Individuals from low-accomplishment and high-performance cohorts reported increased self-esteem, enhanced confidence, and improved attitudes toward the English language.

In relation to the skill of ‘word reading ability,’ eleven of the participants reported discernible progress, with primary school pupils reporting an enhanced ease in comprehending novel vocabulary. Overall, improved proficiency in word reading was seen. To obtain a comprehensive analysis of the responses provided by participants

about phonics instruction under the theme “the benefits of the instruction,” please refer to Table 10. In addition, the statements made by the participants on ‘mental benefit’ and ‘word reading skill’ are detailed in Tables 11 and 12.

The participants’ replies to the phonics instruction, organized under the theme “promotion of mental well-being and literacy skill” are displayed in Table 10. Within the sub-theme of ‘mental benefit,’ 46.15% of the participants reported an overall improvement in their well-being, including better confidence, a more positive attitude about the English subject, increased calmness, and pride. Within the ‘word reading ability’ sub-theme, 69.23% of respondents emphasized the practicality and assistance of their newly acquired ability to read unfamiliar words.

Table 10 Participants’ responses to phonics instruction under the theme of ‘promotion of mental well-being and literacy skill’

Theme	Sub-theme	Salience	Participants(%)
promotion of mental well-being and literacy skill	mental benefit	confident, feel better toward English subject, calm, proud, feel good about themselves	6 (46.15)
	word reading ability	can read new words, practical, helpful	9 (69.23)

Table 11 presents the enhanced reading and acquisition of new vocabulary due to participants’ increased self-assurance, self-esteem, and less dependence on instructors for word reading in both the low (L) and high (H) WRT score cohorts.

Table 11 Participants’ statements under the subtheme ‘mental benefit’

Participants	Statements
L1	<i>After the technique, I feel more confident when I read new words.</i>
L3	<i>This teaching makes me feel much more confident about myself, knowing that I can read English words, too.</i>
L5	<i>It made me feel like learning English was more effortless. I feel better about English because I can now read out words.</i>
H1	<i>I sometimes mispronounced words, so I always asked the teacher how to pronounce them when I needed to present them in the morning assembly, but now, I feel calm and can read whatever word out loud proudly.</i>
H4	<i>I think it helps me read words better. Like, I no longer have to wait to ask the teacher how to read new words. I can be in my house and see a new word and just be able to read it, and that makes me feel good about myself.</i>

H5	<i>I think the teaching helps me feel better about learning new words. It made me feel confident to read the new words I learned because sometimes I forget how the new word is read, and I am too shy to ask the teacher.</i>
----	--

Note: L= low WRT score group; H= high WRT score group

The participant responses pertaining to the “word reading skill” that was acquired as a result of the instructional method are presented in Table 12. The earlier assertions highlight the higher reading proficiency, improved memory for word spellings, and perceived efficacy of the strategy in aiding primary school pupils with word reading and memorization.

Table 12 Participants’ statements under the subtheme ‘word reading ability’

Participants	Statements
L2	<i>I can read new words, but it takes me some time to try to read.</i>
L3	<i>This technique helped me understand how to read.</i>
L4	<i>I know that the teaching helped me, and I can read now.</i>
L6	<i>After the technique, I can read almost every word thrown at me. I used not to be able to read any word before, but now, at least, I can read some words.</i>
L8	<i>I think this technique is beneficial for us. It helps us read more complex words more easily.</i>
H2	<i>Compared to remembering how to read each word, I think this technique helps students to be able to read. I believe it helps us remember how it spells as well!</i>
H3	<i>I used to remember each word’s sound, and it was tough to remember every word, but now I can just read it. The technique is helpful to me.</i>
H4	<i>I think it helps me read words better. Like, I no longer have to wait to ask the teacher how to read new words. I can be in my house and see a new word and just be able to read it, and that makes me feel good about myself.</i>
H5	<i>I think the teaching helps me feel better about learning new words. It made me feel confident to read out the new words I learned because sometimes I forget how the new word is read, and I am too shy to ask the teacher.</i>

Note: L= low WRT score group; H= high WRT score group

4.3.3 No Engagement and Limited Effect on Complex Word

The theme of no engagement and limited effect on complex word pertains to the ways in which students perceive the obstacles and problems that arise throughout the intervention. Two separate subthemes were discerned within this overarching subject. The emergence of the first sub-theme, “no engagement,” was prompted by the different degrees of boredom stated by five participants on the teaching technique. The monotony expressed by these participants was attributed to the repeated nature of alphabet learning. Significantly, one participant drew a parallel between the

experience and that of a first-grade pupil. Still, another found pleasure in classroom exercises notwithstanding the perceived redundancy of the material presentation training.

Concerning the observations and remarks of four participants, the second subtheme, “limitation,” was defined. While recognizing the potential for the lesson to improve the participants’ word-reading abilities, they also identified several constraints. In particular, the participants expressed difficulty with extended reading durations, especially when confronted with more substantial vocabulary. Moreover, they voiced apprehensions regarding the restricted effectiveness of the teaching in facilitating the learning of word meanings and comprehension. Two of the participants noted a significant reduction in their reading speed, which they attributed to the instruction’s effect of increasing their self-awareness of word reading.

Please consult Table 13 for a detailed summary of the replies provided by the participants about the phonics instruction centered around the theme of “instructional challenge.” This table includes numerical data and percentages. The participant responses that provide an in-depth analysis of the “limitation” and “engagement” subthemes are displayed in Tables 14 and 15, respectively.

The participants’ responses to the phonics instruction under the theme “no engagement and limited effect on complex word” are summarized in Table 13. Within the sub-theme “no engagement,” 38.46% of the participants expressed dissatisfaction with the teaching, deeming it tedious and redundant. Within the sub-theme of “limitation,” 30.77% of the participants articulated difficulties pertaining to extended reading durations, restricted efficacy when confronted with lengthier words, and inadequate assistance in acquiring word meanings.

Table 13 Participants’ responses to Phonics Instruction under the theme of ‘no engagement and limited effect on complex word’

Theme	Sub-theme	Salience	Participants (%)
no engagement and limited effect on complex word	no engagement	boring, redundant	5 (38.46)
	limitation	take longer time to read words, doesn’t help with longer words, doesn’t help with meaning learning	4 (30.77)

The participants’ diverse perspectives on the “engagement” subtheme of learning challenges are displayed in Table 14. Some expressed pleasure in-class activities, while others voiced weariness with repeated alphabet learning.

Table 14 Participants’ statements under the subtheme ‘no engagement’

Participants	Statements
L2	<i>I think the technique is boring because we need to learn the alphabet like a Grade 1 student.</i>
L5	<i>I feel bored while teaching, but I like it when we do activities.</i>
L7	<i>The technique is boring for me. I can’t understand how each word is combined.</i>
H3	<i>I think it’s boring because we need to learn about the alphabet again and again.</i>
H5	<i>I like the teaching, but learning the same alphabet repeatedly is somewhat redundant for some people.</i>

Note: L= low WRT score group; H= high WRT score group

The concerns expressed by participants regarding the instructional technique are outlined in Table 15. These concerns encompass extended reading durations, challenges encountered when reading complex words, insufficient assistance with comprehending word meanings, and possible decreases in reading velocity due to increased pronunciation awareness.

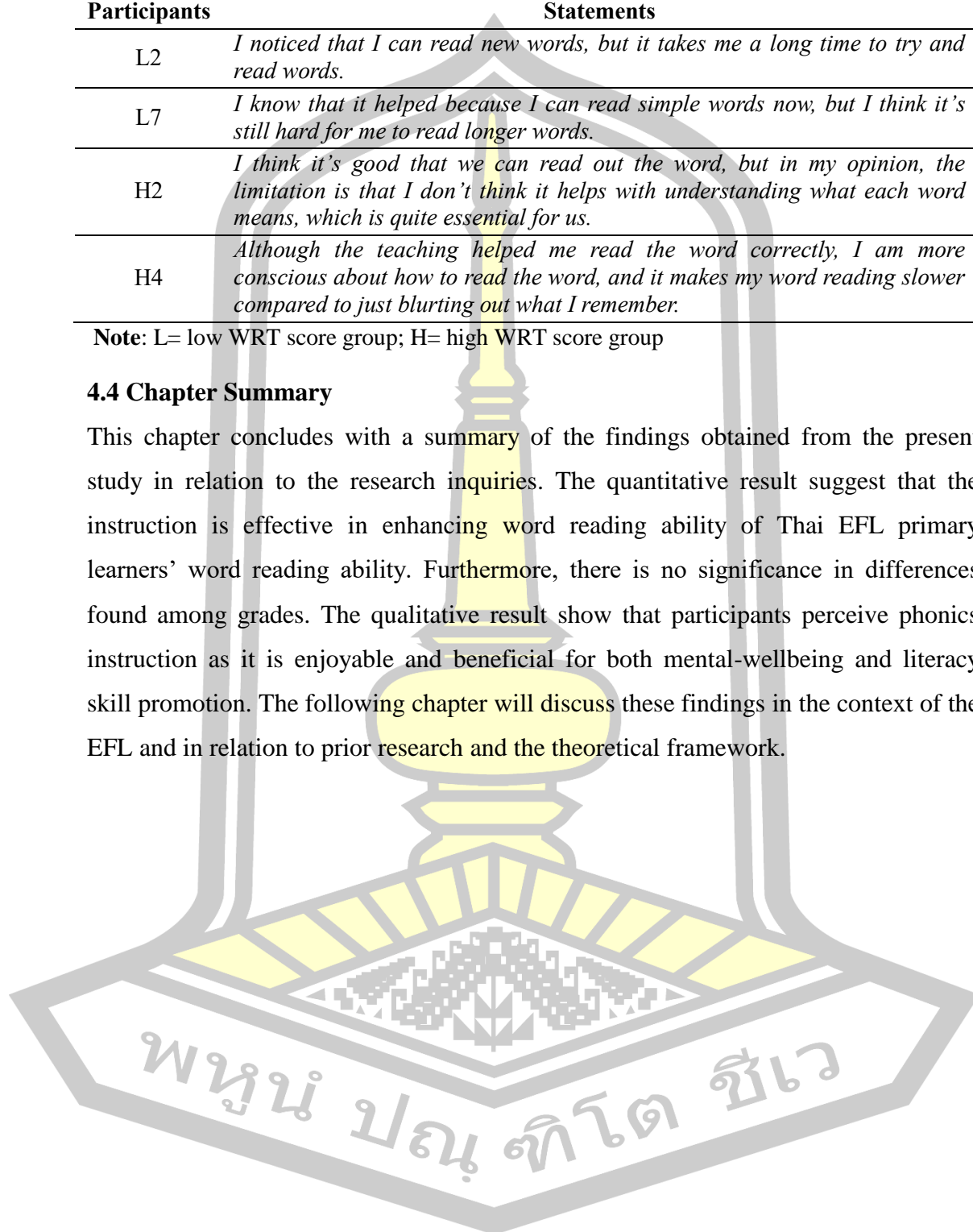
Table 15 Participants' statements under the subtheme 'limitation'

Participants	Statements
L2	<i>I noticed that I can read new words, but it takes me a long time to try and read words.</i>
L7	<i>I know that it helped because I can read simple words now, but I think it's still hard for me to read longer words.</i>
H2	<i>I think it's good that we can read out the word, but in my opinion, the limitation is that I don't think it helps with understanding what each word means, which is quite essential for us.</i>
H4	<i>Although the teaching helped me read the word correctly, I am more conscious about how to read the word, and it makes my word reading slower compared to just blurting out what I remember.</i>

Note: L= low WRT score group; H= high WRT score group

4.4 Chapter Summary

This chapter concludes with a summary of the findings obtained from the present study in relation to the research inquiries. The quantitative result suggest that the instruction is effective in enhancing word reading ability of Thai EFL primary learners' word reading ability. Furthermore, there is no significance in differences found among grades. The qualitative result show that participants perceive phonics instruction as it is enjoyable and beneficial for both mental-wellbeing and literacy skill promotion. The following chapter will discuss these findings in the context of the EFL and in relation to prior research and the theoretical framework.



CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The preceding chapter presented the statistical analysis of the findings in response to the research objectives and questions. This chapter will discuss the research results with the theoretical framework underlying the study. It will also interpret its findings with previous studies to see if any similarities or differences could be observed. The study findings might yield fruitful information to be added to the existing body of knowledge about Phonics Instruction. In addition, this chapter further delves into the deeper interpretation of qualitative findings to better gain insight into learners' perceptions toward Phonics Instruction. Other related implications and recommendations for future studies are also discussed.

5.1 The enhancement of the word reading ability

This research investigates the influence of phonics instruction on enhancing English word reading skills among Thai primary school students who are navigating the complexities of learning English as a Foreign Language (EFL). As highlighted by previous studies, the strategic choice to employ phonics instruction is rooted in its proven effectiveness across various educational contexts. Phonics instruction focuses on the relationship between sounds and their corresponding letters, a fundamental aspect of reading in English that can be particularly challenging for students from a language background as distinct as Thai. The Thai language's unique script and phonetic system pose specific challenges for learners, making phonics instruction a strategic approach to bridge these linguistic gaps.

To investigate this, researchers designed two specific tests: The Letter and Sound Recognition Test (LSRT) and the Word Reading Test (WRT), which were developed before the main study commenced. These tools were not arbitrarily chosen; they were meticulously crafted to measure the specific areas expected to improve through phonics instruction—namely, students' ability to recognize letters and sounds and their capacity to read words. This pre-study assessment phase was crucial for establishing a baseline against which the effectiveness of phonics instruction could be measured.

The study results were convincing, demonstrating significant enhancements in the primary school students' word reading ability. This was not limited to mere word recognition; the improvements spanned both receptive (understanding) and productive (usage) aspects of vocabulary, indicating a deep and multifaceted impact of phonics instruction. Such results are particularly noteworthy in the context of EFL learning, where developing a strong vocabulary base is essential for reading comprehension and overall language proficiency.

Furthermore, the study's findings resonate with and contribute to the broader academic dialogue on the role of phonics instruction in reading education. By aligning with and building upon the conclusions of prior research (Dandee & Pornwiriya, 2022; Shenoy et al., 2022; Wichayut & Sitthitikul, 2019), this research not only reaffirms the value of phonics instruction but also enriches our understanding of its applicability and effectiveness in diverse linguistic and educational settings.

In essence, this study confirms the hypothesis that phonics instruction can significantly benefit Thai primary EFL learners and advocates for integrating phonics into English language curricula. The potential for phonics instruction to facilitate English language acquisition extends beyond the Thai context, offering global insights and implications for similar EFL learning environments. The research thus represents a significant step forward in optimizing EFL learning, ensuring that learners are equipped with the foundational skills necessary for successful language acquisition and literacy development.

The process of vocabulary acquisition can account for the enhancement of word form knowledge among learners through cognitive mechanisms such as noticing, retrieval, and the creative use of new words. Specifically, learners need to initially notice the target word in the second language (L2) by directing their attention towards it. In this study, primary school learners were educated on the sounds associated with each letter of the alphabet and were trained to blend these sounds together. Additionally, they practiced recognizing the written representation (grapheme) of each sound within words, enabling them to decode them correctly. The deliberate effort to learn vocabulary through such explicit instruction has been shown to be effective and beneficial (Nation & Meara, 2013). This study's results align with prior research,

suggesting that the repeated retrieval and use of an L2 word not only enhance its meaning or definition but also facilitate a deeper comprehension of the word's various meanings as encountered by the students (Laufer & Hulstijn, 2001; Magnussen & Sukying, 2021; Yowaboot & Sukying, 2022). In summary, this study corroborates the effectiveness of phonics instruction in advancing the word reading skills of Thai learners of English as a Foreign Language

The intervention significantly enhanced the primary school participants' ability to read words, as demonstrated by the statistical analysis. This progress is mainly due to the systematic phonics instruction provided, specifically through the use of the Jolly Phonics method. By explicitly teaching the connections between graphemes (letters or letter combinations) and phonemes (the sounds they represent), and reinforcing this knowledge through extensive practice in blending (combining sounds to form words) and decoding (breaking down words into sounds), participating students were able to build a stronger foundation in word reading skills. The repeated practice across phonics categories further solidified their learning. This skill is especially crucial for primary school students, setting the stage for their continued literacy and language development. The effectiveness of this approach is reflected in the improved word reading capabilities of the participants, a core competency essential for successful communication and academic learning across all languages

The research illuminated the relationship between phonics instruction and its effectiveness across different educational and age groups among primary school students learning English as a Foreign Language (EFL) in Thailand. Utilizing ANOVA analysis, the study discovered that the impact of phonics instruction did not significantly vary across different grades, indicating its uniform effectiveness in enhancing word reading skills across all primary levels. This uniformity in effectiveness suggests that phonics instruction can be applied broadly within the primary school setting, benefiting students of varying ages and educational backgrounds equally.

Initiating an investigation into the effects of phonics instruction on EFL learners' word reading abilities, the study aimed to confirm the positive influence of such instructional methods. With the employment of assessment tools like the Letter and

Sound Recognition Test (LSRT) and the Word Reading Test (WRT), the study documented significant advancements in Thai primary school students' vocabulary and language proficiency, both in understanding and using the language. These improvements are in line with existing literature that highlights phonics instruction's role in bolstering word reading skills (Laufer & Hulstijn, 2001; Magnussen & Sukying, 2021; Nation & Meara, 2013; Yowaboot & Sukying, 2022). The systematic teaching approach was pivotal, mainly through the Jolly Phonics method, which focuses on the relationship between sounds and their visual representations while encouraging practice in blending and decoding. The standout finding of this research was the universal applicability of phonics instruction across diverse age groups and educational stages, as evidenced by the analysis. Ultimately, this study reaffirms the value of phonics instruction as a foundational element for future literacy and language development in primary education, demonstrating its broad applicability and effectiveness.

5.2 Participants' perceptions of using phonics instruction to enhance word reading ability

In response to Research Question 2, which aimed to delve into students' perspectives regarding Phonics instruction, a thematic content analysis was undertaken to group the qualitative findings into distinct themes. These themes included the learning environment, the advantages of the instruction, and the difficulties associated with it. Each of these themes had two components: the learning environment encompassed both positive and negative aspects, the benefits of the instruction included mental benefits and improvements in word reading ability, and the challenges tied to the instruction involved enthusiasm and limitations.

The present investigation is in line with previous research (e.g., Sanden et al., 2022; Simmons, 2021; Zhong & Kang, 2021) which has demonstrated the efficacy of phonics instruction in enhancing word reading proficiency. The concept of attention has been a focal point in numerous second language acquisition (SLA) theories and explained the significant acquisition of word reading ability in this study. Schmidt (1990, 2010) introduced the noticing hypothesis, positing that learning does not occur unless learners consciously attend to linguistic features. While mere noticing does not guarantee acquisition, it serves as a crucial initial step. From this standpoint, phonics

instruction facilitates participatory students' conscious awareness of individual letter sounds and their combination into word sounds. Schmidt further contends that learners must diligently attend to and discern the subtle features of input (i.e., the grapheme-phoneme relationship examined in this study) to incorporate them into their vocabulary acquisition process. By implementing the Jolly Phonics method, student participants are directed to attend to the sounds associated with each letter and practice their combination. Consequently, students recognize discrepancies in written word forms, integrate them into their memory, and proficiently retrieve them as needed.

The concept of Schmidt's (2010) noticing hypothesis could also further posit that both visual and auditory modalities are essential for second language (L2) vocabulary acquisition. Applied to vocabulary activities within the framework of the Jolly Phonics method, which allows learners to encounter and discern grapheme-phoneme relationships while practicing word blending and decoding, it becomes imperative for primary school participants to actively notice L2 features embedded within the input activities. This necessitates a deliberate focus on the written form of lexical items to optimize learning outcomes. Consequently, target words, in certain respects, are likely to be acquired and retained more efficiently. Moreover, explicit and direct vocabulary instruction, such as phonics instruction in the present study, is essential in foreign language classrooms to compensate for the limited exposure and resources available. These findings are consistent with prior research demonstrating the effectiveness of deliberate vocabulary instruction (Bubchaiya & Sukying, 2022; Magnussen & Sukying, 2021; Nation, 2011; Yowaboot & Sukying, 2022).

The focus group participants provided nuanced perspectives on the classroom learning atmosphere associated with phonics instruction, noting both positive and negative aspects. On the one hand, phonics instruction was seen as affording students abundant opportunities for reading and decoding, thereby fostering engagement with the learning process. Participants reported being thoroughly engaged and successfully acquiring the linguistic features targeted in instruction, efficiently recognizing them when necessary. The following students' excerpts could support such a claim:

“It is interesting to put each letter of the alphabet together and create a sound of a word without remembering the whole word’s sound and how it is spelled.” (L8)

“This technique made learning words a lot easier. Before this, I needed to remember how it is spelled and what it means, along with how to read it, but now, I don’t have to remember how it is read out anymore.” (H2)

The participants also conveyed a perception of Phonics instruction as “boring”. This sentiment may stem from the repetitive nature of learning about grapheme and phoneme relationships. Additionally, some students expressed difficulty in understanding how individual letters combine to form sounds. These excerpts gave evidence to support the finding:

“I think it’s somewhat boring. It feels like something for grade 1 students.” (L2)

“Learning through this technique is not for me. I think it’s boring, and I don’t understand how to combine sounds, but I can see how people would like it.” (L7)

“I don’t like or dislike it. It is a little boring for me because we have to learn the alphabet again.” (H3)

Overall, the qualitative findings revealed a mixed perception of the learning atmosphere associated with phonics instruction, highlighting both positive and negative aspects. While phonics instruction was viewed as a beneficial teaching technique that enhances word learning and fosters engagement, it was also acknowledged that the repetitiveness of learning grapheme-phoneme relationships could lead to boredom.

In relation to the ‘benefits of the instruction,’ qualitative data analyses revealed that phonics instruction not only enhances word reading ability as anticipated but also yields mental benefits. Students reported feeling increased confidence when encountering new words, experiencing heightened self-esteem, and a sense of pride. These findings suggest that phonics instruction contributes not only to academic proficiency but also to students’ emotional well-being. The following excerpts could support the claim:

“After the technique, I feel more confident when I read new words.” (L1)

“This teaching makes me feel much more confident about myself, knowing that I can read English words, too.” (L3)

“I sometimes mispronounced words, so I always asked the teacher how to pronounce them when I needed to present them in the morning assembly, but now, I feel calm and can read whatever word out loud proudly.” (H1)

Under the subtheme of ‘word reading ability’, participants expressed a positive perception of phonics instruction, noting that it enables them to read new words and can assist in tackling more complex vocabulary. These excerpts gave evidence to support the finding:

“I can read new words, but it takes me some time to try to read.” (L2)

“I think this technique is beneficial for us. It helps us read more complex words more easily.” (L8)

“I used to remember each word’s sound, and it was tough to remember every word, but now I can just read it. The technique is helpful to me.” (H3)

In summary, the qualitative findings demonstrate that phonics instruction not only enhances students’ word reading ability but also positively impacts their confidence and emotional well-being, contributing to a holistic educational experience. This suggests that implementing phonics instruction can lead to improved reading skills and increased confidence and well-being among students, creating a more comprehensive educational experience.

The third theme identified from the qualitative data analysis is ‘instruction’s challenge.’ The analysis uncovered that despite the benefits provided by phonics instruction, the instruction still encounters certain challenges, primarily related to engagement and limitations. Within the sub-theme of engagement, phonics instruction was described as potentially boring due to its focus on establishing grapheme-phoneme relationships, which necessitates revisiting alphabet learning. Consequently, some students perceived the instruction as tedious and felt like they were back in grade 1. These excerpts could provide evidence to support this claim:

“I think the technique is boring because we need to learn the alphabet like a Grade 1 student.” (L2)

“I like the teaching, but learning the same alphabet repeatedly is somewhat redundant for some people.” (H5)

Furthermore, within the sub-theme of ‘limitations’, students expressed awareness of certain constraints associated with the instruction. These limitations included the observation that Phonics instruction requires more time to read words, does not aid in understanding word meanings, and is less effective when confronted with more complex vocabulary. These excerpts could provide evidence to support this claim:

“I noticed that I can read new words, but it takes me a long time to try and read words.” (L2)

“I know that it helped because I can read simple words now, but I think it’s still hard for me to read longer words” (L7)

“I think it’s good that we can read out the word, but in my opinion, the limitation is that I don’t think it helps with understanding what each word means, which is quite essential for us.” (H2)

The qualitative analysis reveals that phonics instruction faces challenges related to engagement and limitations. Regarding engagement, students perceive phonics as potentially boring due to its focus on basic grapheme-phoneme relationships, which may feel repetitive and reminiscent of early alphabet learning. This perception contributes to a sense of tedium, with some students likening the experience to being back in grade 1. Additionally, students recognize limitations in phonics instruction, such as the time required to read words, its limited impact on understanding word meanings, and its inefficiency with complex vocabulary. These challenges suggest the need for instructional enhancements to maintain student interest and address the limitations associated with Phonics instruction.

The second language acquisition (SLA) theory could further elucidate that individual characteristics are interconnected. Additionally, the correlation between distinctive attributes and learning environments is intricate, with various learners exhibiting varying reactions to identical learning conditions. Indeed, the present findings underscore the necessity of cultivating a learning environment characterized by a diverse array of instructional activities in classroom practices.

5.3 Conclusion

This study has investigated the influence of phonics instruction on enhancing English word reading skills among Thai primary school students learning English as a Foreign Language (EFL). Through a comprehensive analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data, several key findings have emerged.

The study's statistical analysis demonstrates significant enhancements in students' word reading ability following phonics instruction. This aligns with prior research, indicating the effectiveness of phonics across diverse educational contexts. The systematic approach of phonics instruction, particularly using the Jolly Phonics method, has proven instrumental in bridging linguistic gaps and fostering a solid vocabulary base essential for language proficiency. Additionally, the study confirms the universal effectiveness of phonics instruction across different age groups and educational levels, emphasizing its importance in primary education for literacy and language development. Moreover, the qualitative analysis sheds light on students' perceptions of phonics instruction. While some students find it engaging and beneficial for improving word reading ability, others perceive it as boring and repetitive. Despite challenges in engagement and limitations in addressing complex vocabulary, students acknowledge the mental benefits of increased confidence and self-esteem gained from phonics instruction. These findings underscore the importance of creating a diverse learning environment that caters to individual learners' needs and preferences.

Overall, this research contributes to the ongoing dialogue on effective language instruction by bridging theoretical frameworks with empirical evidence. This study highlights the significance of incorporating phonics into EFL curricula by reaffirming the value of phonics instruction in promoting literacy and language development. Moving forward, instructional enhancements may be necessary to maintain engagement and address limitations, ensuring a comprehensive educational experience for all students.

5.4 Implications

The current study offers several pedagogical implications. Firstly, given that vocabulary forms the cornerstone of language acquisition and is indispensable in

language learning, educators should prioritize equipping learners with essential skills such as phonological awareness to facilitate the acquisition of more advanced vocabulary with reduced cognitive load. The insights from this study are valuable for language teachers across all educational levels, including practitioners involved in foreign language teaching, such as syllabus planners, material developers, and test developers. Furthermore, the findings are pertinent to various language skills and sub-skills, encompassing reading, pronunciation, and vocabulary. Specifically, the study demonstrates the effectiveness of employing Phonics instruction to enhance word reading skills.

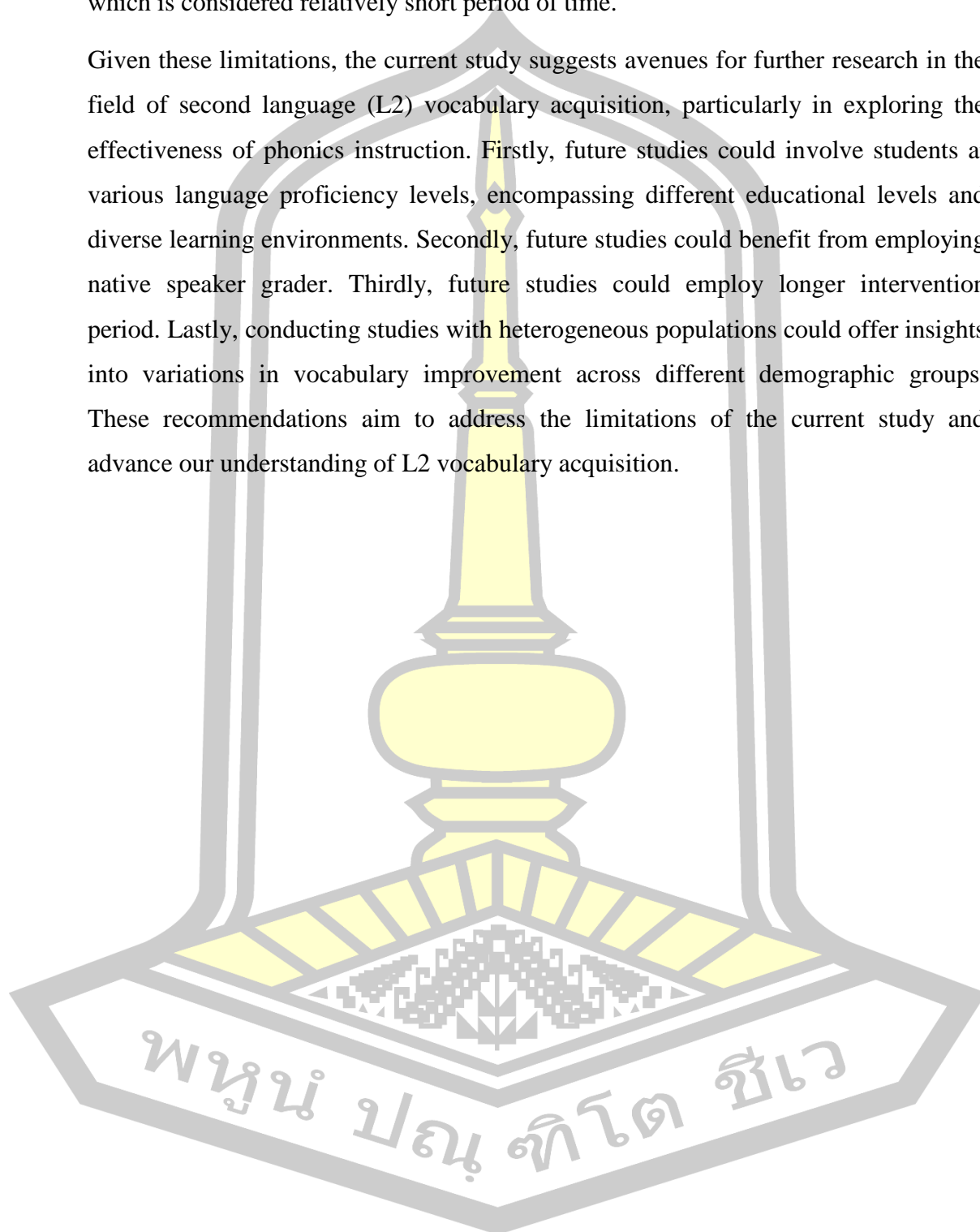
From a theoretical standpoint, the current study aligns with prior research (e.g., Dandee & Pornwiriyaakit, 2022; Shenoy et al., 2022; Wichayut & Sitthitikul, 2019) in highlighting phonics instruction as a valuable pedagogical approach that can enhance learners' overall reading proficiency. The quantitative findings reinforce the continuum of vocabulary learning by illustrating significant improvements in students' word reading ability subsequent to phonics instruction. This alignment with the theoretical framework underscores the importance of explicit vocabulary instruction and the systematic implementation of phonics in facilitating language acquisition. By measuring specific areas targeted for improvement through phonics instruction, such as letter and sound recognition and word reading skills, the quantitative analysis provides empirical validation of progress along the vocabulary learning continuum. These findings corroborate the notion that the acquisition of lexical aspects is contingent upon learners' awareness of them in the input and must be fully developed before they can effectively utilize their stored vocabulary knowledge, including aspects such as spoken and written forms and word parts, from their mental lexicon (Schmidt, 1990, 2010).

5.5 Limitations and recommendations

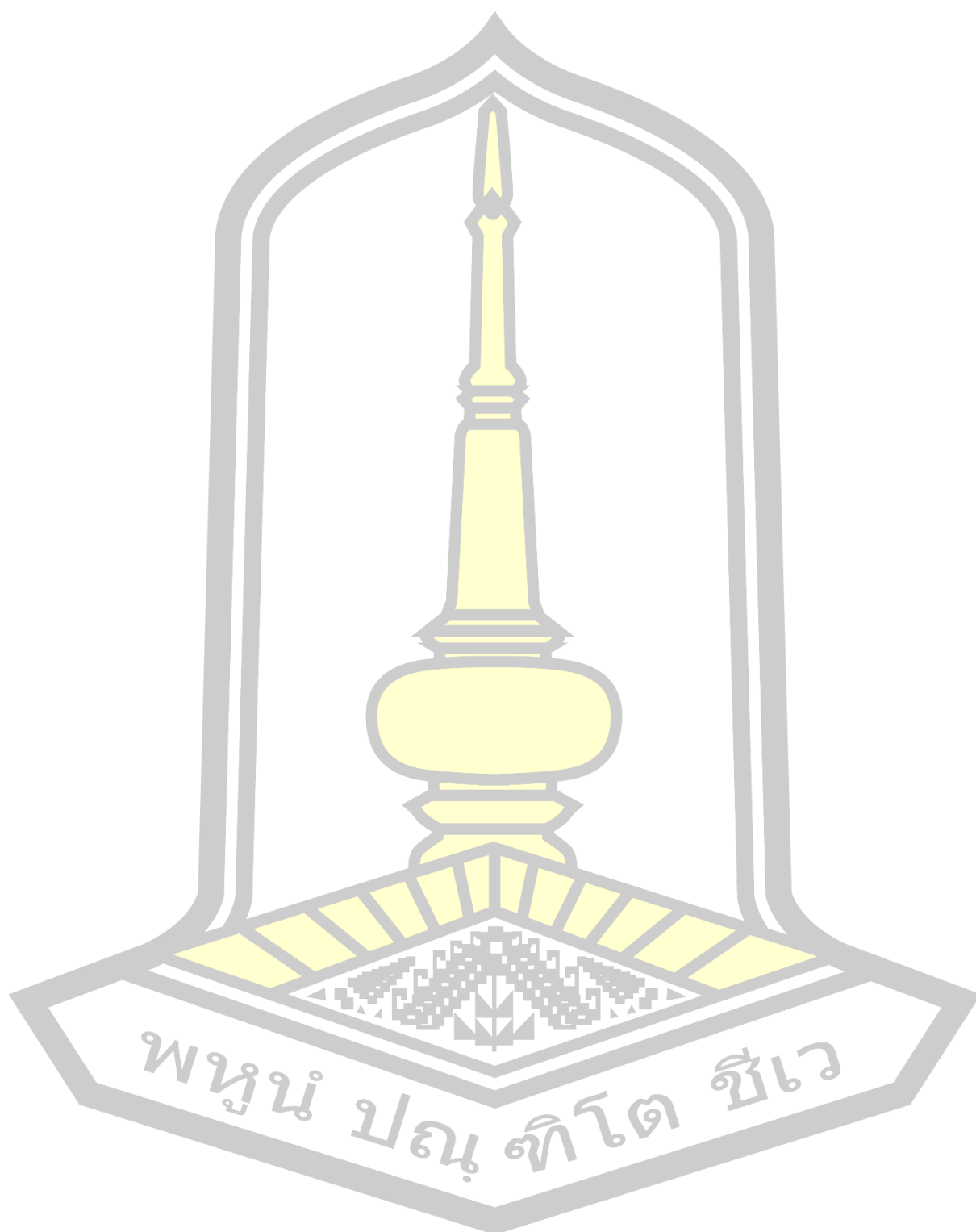
The current study is subject to certain limitations. Firstly, the convenience sampling method employed limited the study participants to a single government primary school in Surin, Thailand, thereby confining the scope of the investigation to this specific context. Secondly, the study's participant pool was relatively small due to the school's population size. Thirdly, the process of scoring the WRT task were done by

non-native speaker. Lastly, the intervention in this research covers only six weeks which is considered relatively short period of time.

Given these limitations, the current study suggests avenues for further research in the field of second language (L2) vocabulary acquisition, particularly in exploring the effectiveness of phonics instruction. Firstly, future studies could involve students at various language proficiency levels, encompassing different educational levels and diverse learning environments. Secondly, future studies could benefit from employing native speaker grader. Thirdly, future studies could employ longer intervention period. Lastly, conducting studies with heterogeneous populations could offer insights into variations in vocabulary improvement across different demographic groups. These recommendations aim to address the limitations of the current study and advance our understanding of L2 vocabulary acquisition.



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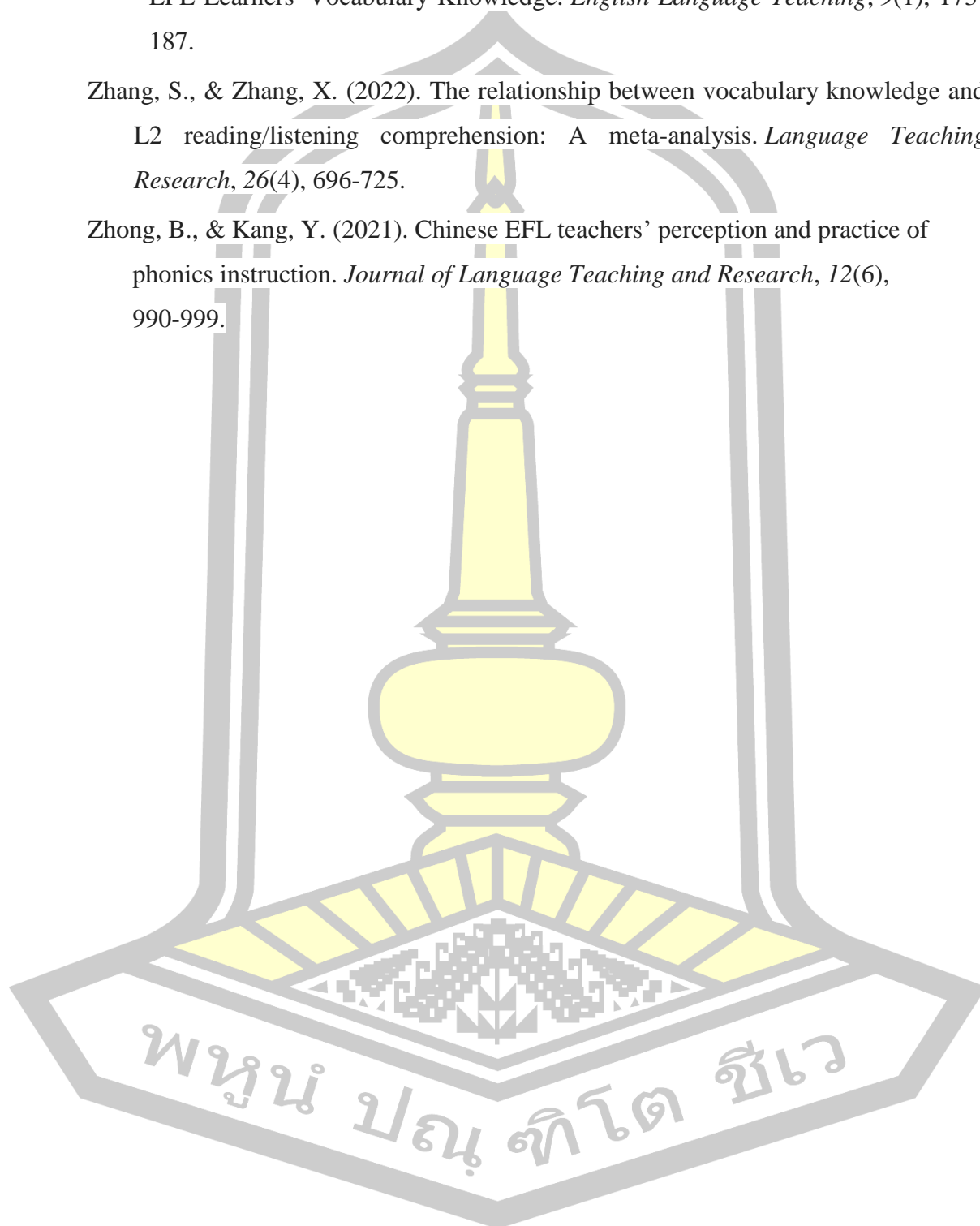
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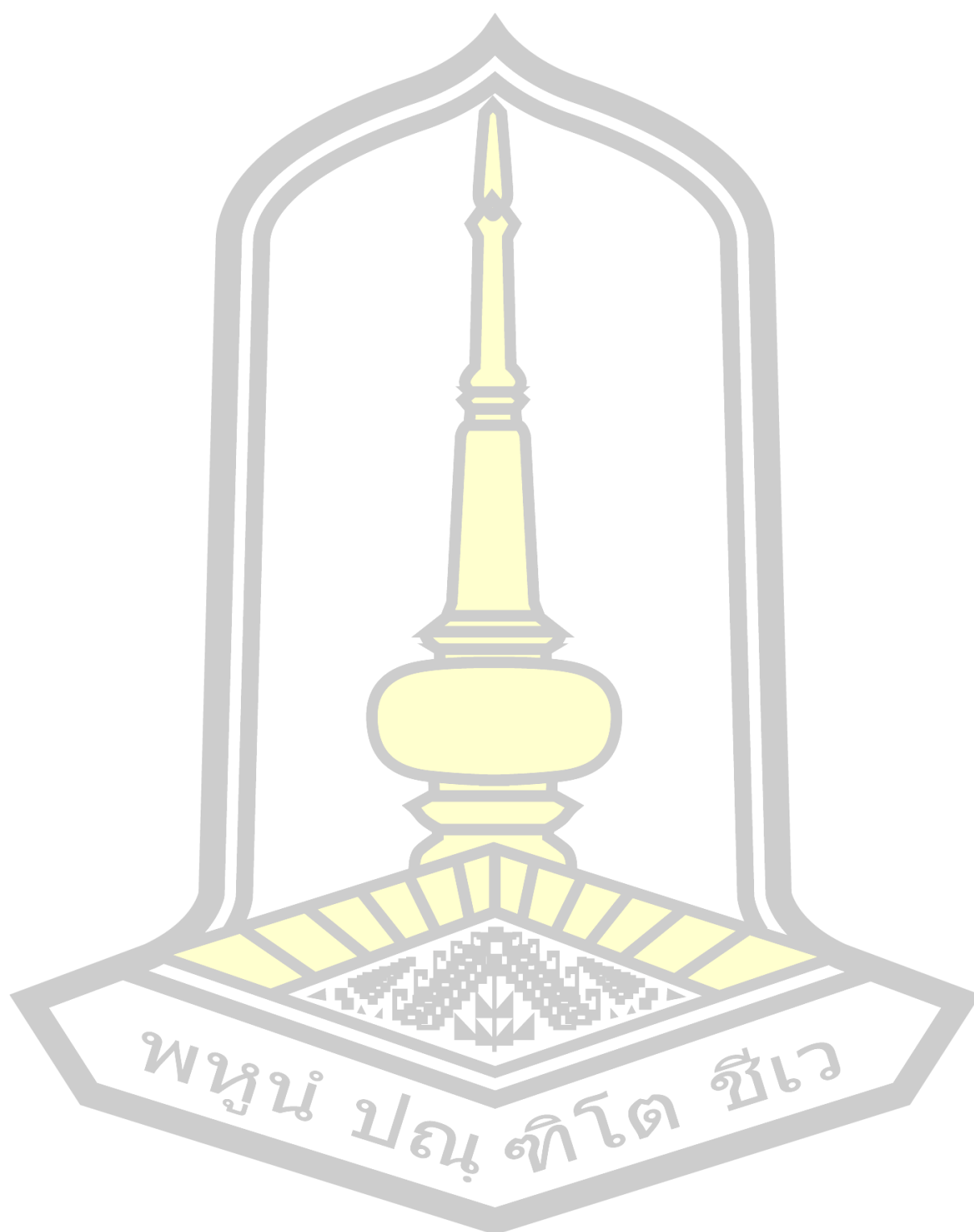
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APPENDIX

Appendix A: Letters and Sound Recognition task

คำชี้แจง ให้นักเรียนเลือกข้อที่นักเรียนได้ยินจากเทปเสียง เสียงจะถูกเล่นคำละ 3 ครั้ง

1.

A. man

C. fan

B. ran

D. can

2.

A. hook

C. look

B. cook

D. book

3.

A. zoom

C. gloom

B. bloom

D. room

4.

A. warning

C. soaring

B. morning

D. boring

5.

A. dress

C. mess

B. yes

D. bed

6.

A. moon

C. boon

B. spoon

D. soon

7.

A. reject

C. subject

B. object

D. perfect

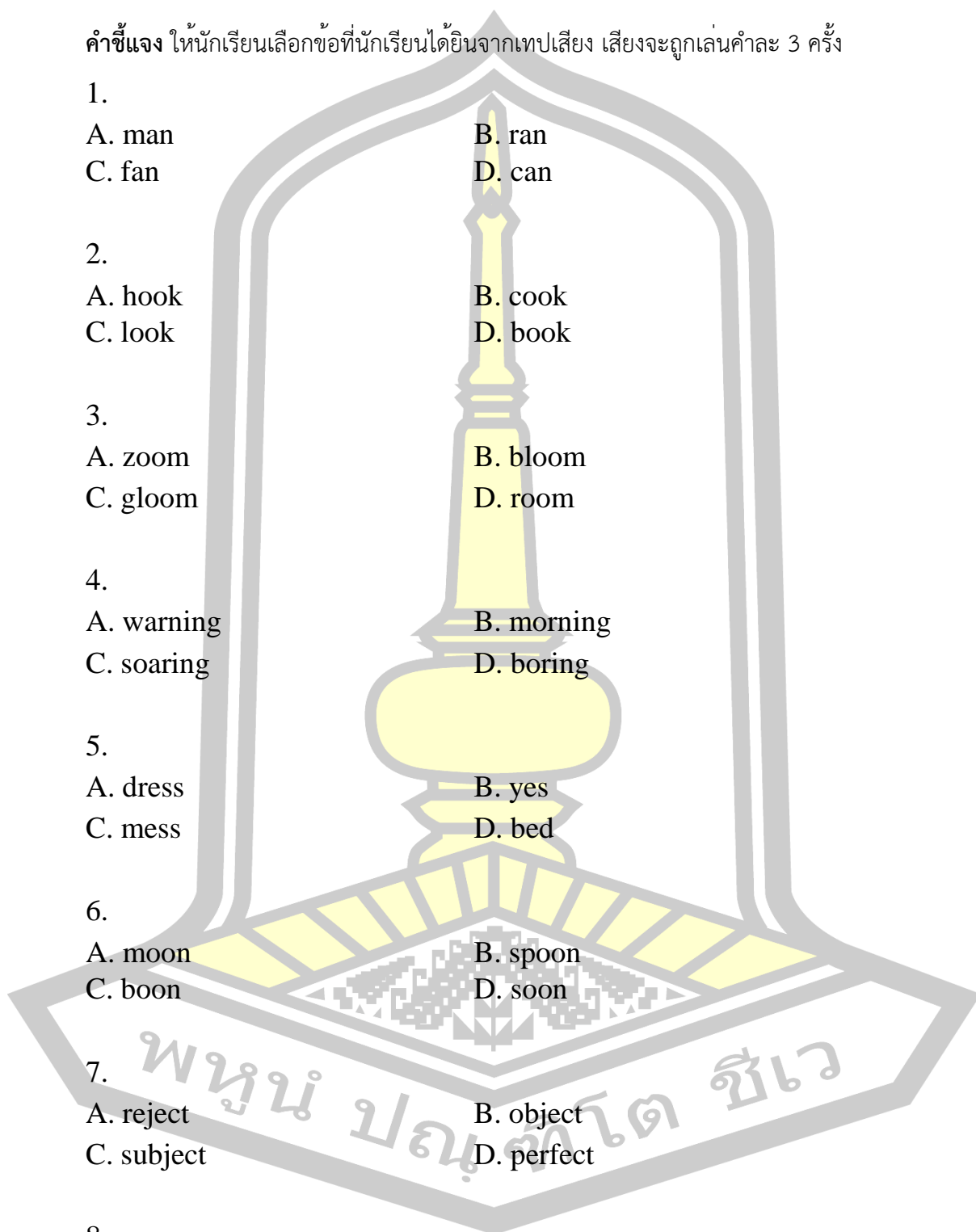
8.

A. polish

C. cherish

B. relish

D. finish



9.

- A. clever
- C. never

- B. endeavor
- D. forever

10.

- A. car
- C. star

- B. far
- D. jar

11.

- A. clear
- C. near

- B. year
- D. cheer

12.

- A. week
- C. sleek

- B. meek
- D. cheek

13.

- A. deck
- C. speck

- B. check
- D. wreck

14.

- A. sweet
- C. seat

- B. beat
- D. meat

15.

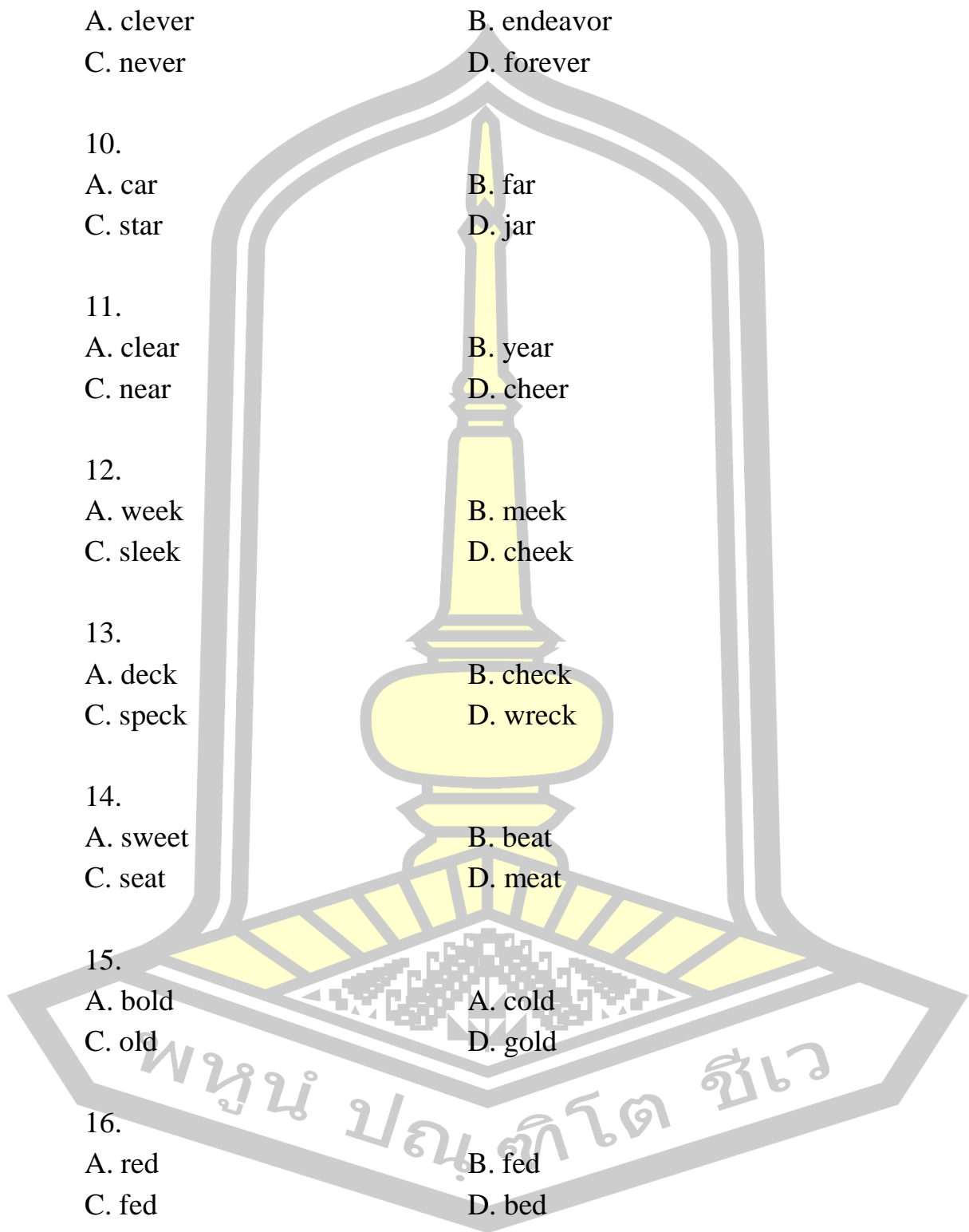
- A. bold
- C. old

- A. cold
- D. gold

16.

- A. red
- C. fed

- B. fed
- D. bed



17.

- A. sport
- C. fort

- B. sort
- D. short

18.

- A. market
- C. carpet

- B. target
- D. outlet

19.

- A. kitchen
- C. thicken

- B. chicken
- D. shaken

20.

- A. silver
- C. mister

- B. shiver
- D. river

21.

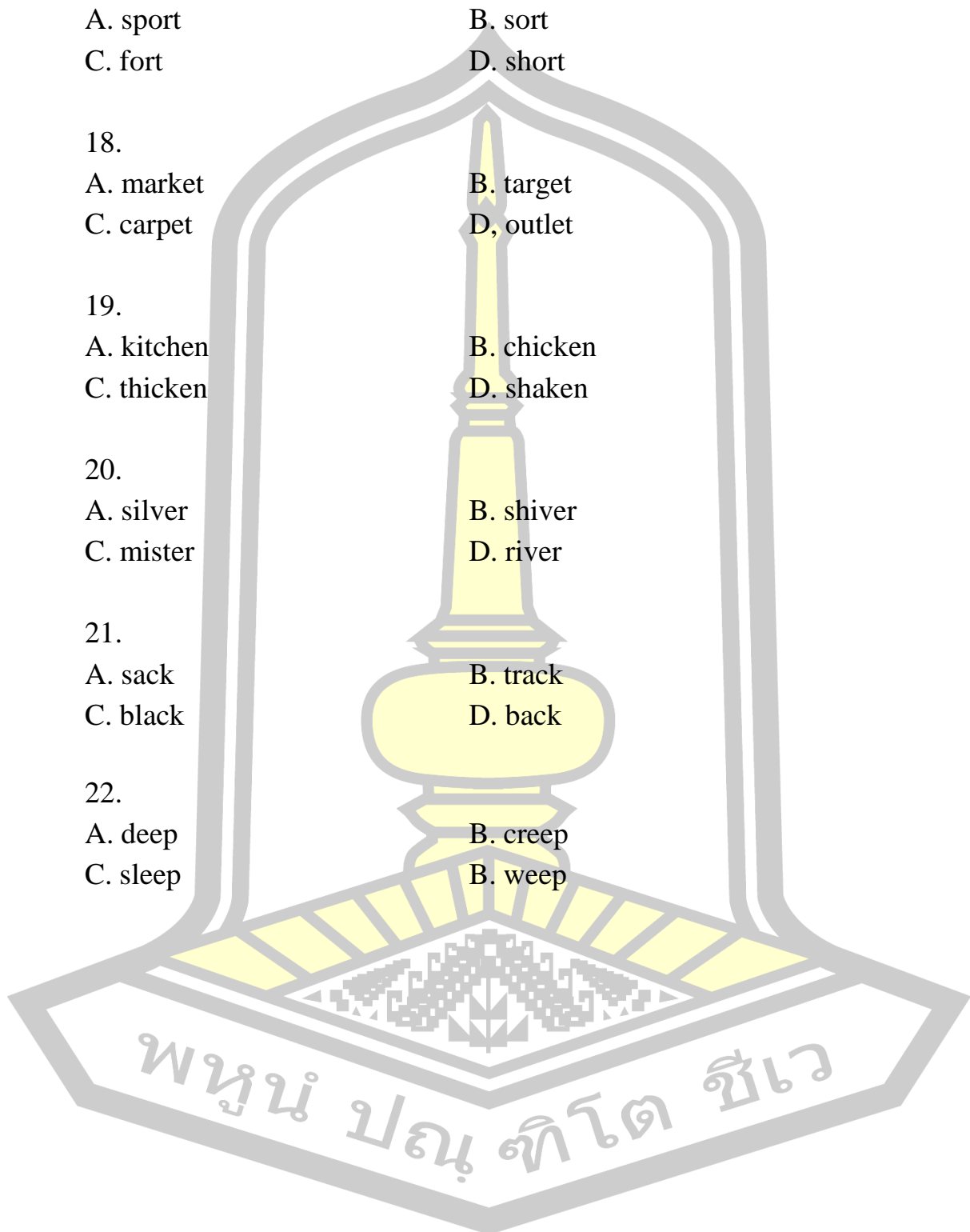
- A. sack
- C. black

- B. track
- D. back

22.

- A. deep
- C. sleep

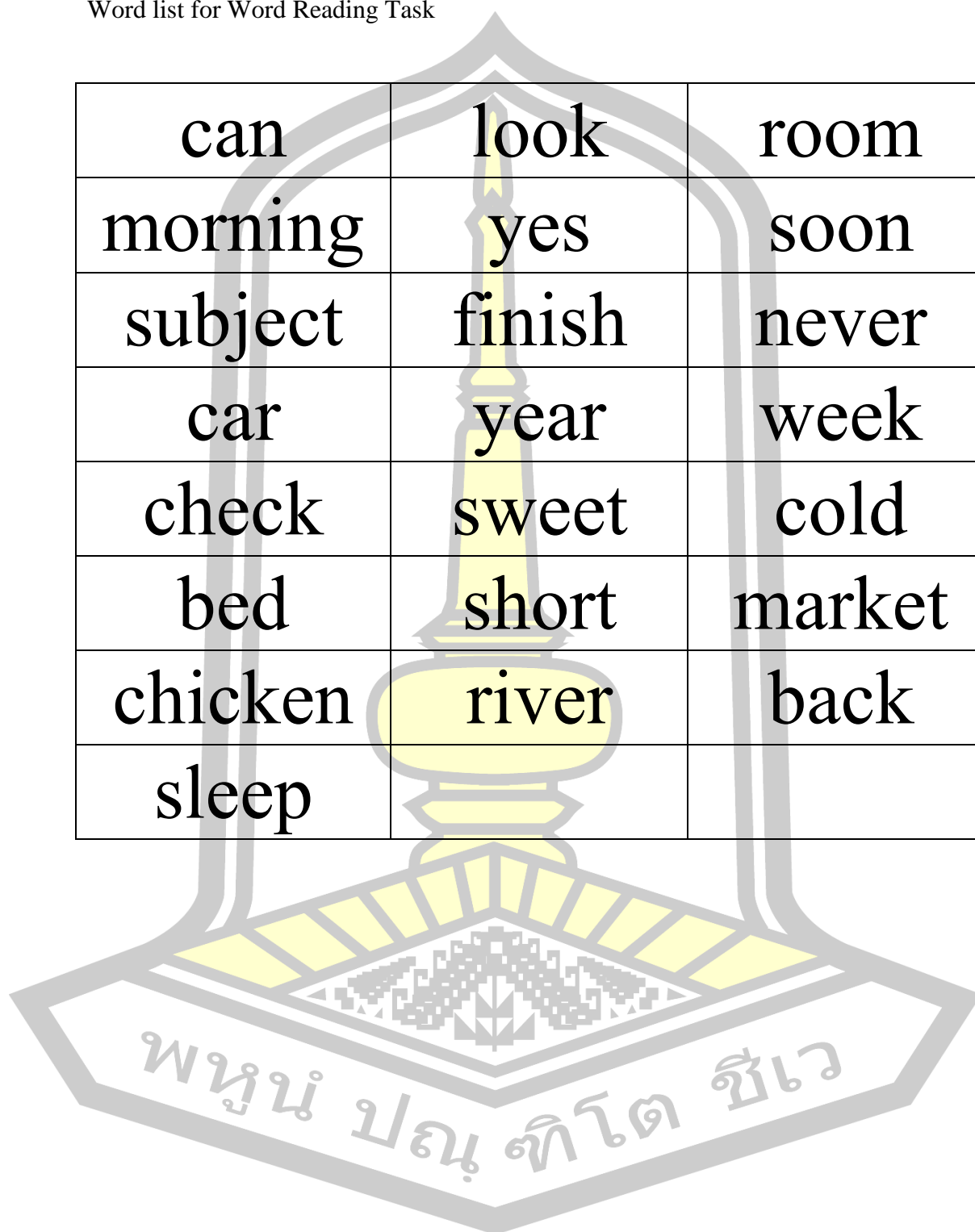
- B. creep
- B. weep



Appendix B: Word Reading Task word list

Word list for Word Reading Task

can	look	room
morning	yes	soon
subject	finish	never
car	year	week
check	sweet	cold
bed	short	market
chicken	river	back
sleep		

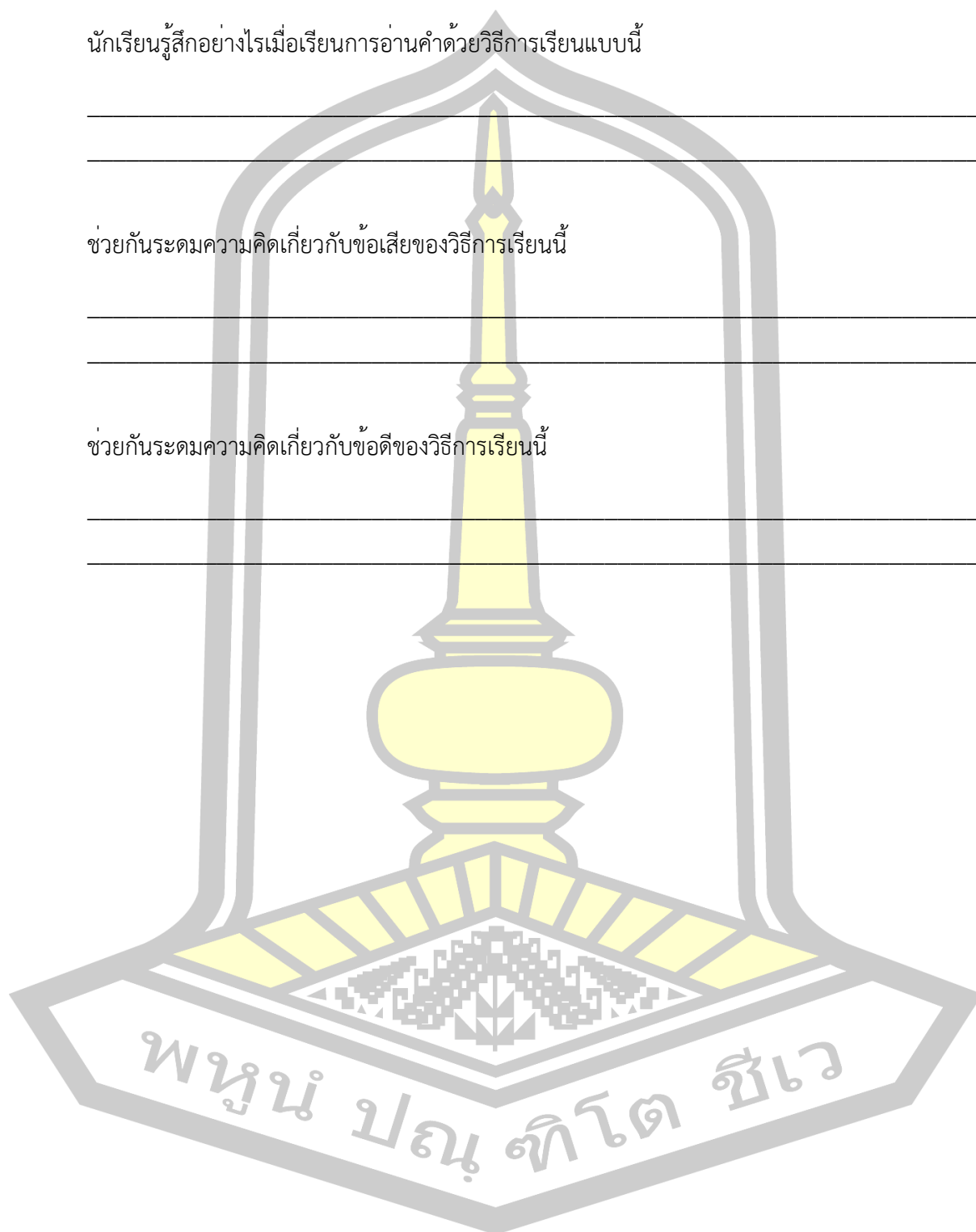


Appendix C: Focus group discussion

นักเรียนรู้สึกอย่างไรเมื่อเรียนการอ่านคำด้วยวิธีการเรียนแบบนี้

ช่วยกันระดมความคิดเกี่ยวกับข้อเสียของวิธีการเรียนนี้

ช่วยกันระดมความคิดเกี่ยวกับข้อดีของวิธีการเรียนนี้



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