CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

This chapter provides the data and results of the analysis for this study. The purpose of this study was to investigate the students' perceptions and their actual use of vocabulary learning strategies. As different learning tasks require different strategies, it is worthwhile looking at how learners learn vocabulary and the strategies they use to discover and retain word meaning. Also, this study examined which Discovery Strategies and Consolidation Strategies are most frequently used by the high school learners of English and their perceptions of the usefulness of the strategies. The data presented in this chapter are divided into two parts: (1) quantitative analysis, which discusses the data gathered by questionnaire survey, and (2) qualitative analysis, which are results of a think-aloud task and semi-structured interview concerning language learning related issues.

4.1 Quantitative Analysis

In this section, the students' use of vocabulary learning strategies, which focused on Discovery Strategies and Consolidation Strategies the grade 12 students and the high proficient students use most frequently were explored. Also, a significant difference between the use of strategies by high proficient students and other participants in the study was examined. The quantitative data were obtained from 200 grade 12 students through questionnaire and they were asked to indicate their beliefs and strategic behaviors regarding the vocabulary strategies in a

questionnaire. The results of the quantitative analysis are described in the following order: (a) students' use of vocabulary learning strategies; and (b) students' perceptions of the usefulness of the strategies.

4.1.1 Students' Use of Vocabulary Learning Strategies

This part presents the results of the vocabulary learning strategies of grade 12 students through a questionnaire. Table 4.1 below summarizes the strategies used by the grade 12 students to discover a new word meaning.

Table 4.1

Discovery Strategies Used by the Grade 12 Students (N=200)

Ranking	Consolidation Strategies	No.	%
1	Guess its meaning from the context	168	84.0
2	Look up the word in a Thai/English dictionary	163	81.5
3	Use an electronic or online dictionary	159	79.5
4	Ask my classmates or peers for the meaning	155	77.5
5	Learn words from the mass media	147	73.5
6	Try to think of an English word that is similar	128	64.0
7	Look up the word in an English dictionary	126	63.0
8	Ask my teacher(s) for the meaning	118	59.0
9	Look at the parts of speech	108	54.0
10	Look for the clues in the word itself	92	46.0
11	Learn words from word lists or glossary	78	39.0
12	Ignore it	62	31.0
13	Learn words through ICQ or chat room communication	54	27.0
14	Interact with native speakers (e.g. the NET)	40	20.0

Table 4.1 divided and analyzed into three cut-off points: the most-used (used by 100% - 66.7% of the respondents), the commonly used (used by 66.6% - 33.3% of the respondents) and the least-used (used by 33.3% - 0% of the respondents). Among the 14 strategies, it was reported that the most-used. Discovery strategies were guessing from context (84%), using a bilingual dictionary (81.5%), using an

electronic or online dictionary (79.5%), asking classmates or peers (77.5%) and learning words from the mass media (73.5%).

Interestingly, there is clear evidence that guessing from context is the most common strategy for L2 learners to discover a new word meaning. Therefore, guessing word meanings from context is widely acknowledged as a useful skill, especially vital to the reading comprehension. Furthermore, the respondents also expressed a strong preference for finding a word's meaning through reference materials, primarily dictionaries. More than eighty percent (81.5%) of the students reported that they looked up word meaning in a Thai/English bilingual dictionary. In comparison to the popularity of using other dictionary strategies, the respondents did not indicate strong affinity for them, especially the monolingual dictionary. In spite of the lack of general consensus on the choice of dictionaries, the learners should know how to negotiate the meaning with the context and note the relevant information available in the dictionary so that the reference materials can be fully utilized.

Apart from context guessing and dictionary strategies, learners also resorted to the social strategies to discover a new word's meaning. In comparison with the percentage of asking teacher(s) for the meaning (59%), the learners seemed to learn new word more frequently from classmates or peers (77.5%). Although teacher usually plays an important role in class, many students reported in the interview that it was "embarrassing" to ask the teacher(s) and it was "inconvenient" and "troublesome" to ask the teacher(s) every time when they encountered a new word.

Finally, seventy-four per cent of the respondents reported that they learned words from the mass media which included the newspapers, television, radio and the Internet. The mass media not only provide enormous resources for students to learn

English in an authentic way but also increase the exposure to learning English outside class time.

In term of the most-used discovery Strategies by the high achievers, of the 200 grade 12 students, 20 students from the top end of the proficiency scale were labeled as "high achievers". It is surprising to see that the high proficient students did not use as many Discovery Strategies as their counterparts. On the contrary, they highly concentrated on the inferencing strategies such as guessing from context (90%) and looking for the clues of the words (70%) to discover a new word meaning. An overview of the Discovery Strategies used by the high proficient students is summarized in Table 4.2 below.

Table 4.2

Discovery Strategies Used by the High Proficient Students (N=20)

Ranking	Discovery Strategies	No.	%
1	Guess its meaning from the context.	18	90.0
2	Look for the clues in the word itself.	15	75.0
3	Look up the word in an English dictionary.	10	50.0
4	Learn words from the mass media.	8	40.0
5	Look at the parts of speech.	7	35.0
5	Look up the word in a Thai/English dictionary.	7	35.0
5	Learn words from word lists or glossary.	7	35.0
8	Use an electronic or online dictionary.	6	30.0
9	Ask my teacher(s) for the meaning.	4	20.0
10	Interact with native speakers (e.g. the NET).	1	5.0
11	Try to think of an English word that is similar.	0	0
11	Ask my classmates or peers for the meaning.	0	0
11	Ignore it.	0	0

Table 4.2 showed that when discovering a new word meaning, the high proficient students used the same strategy most as the rest of the grade 12 students (84%). One plausible reason to justify this situation may be the high proficient

students have acquired a threshold level of vocabulary so that they could make successful guess. Furthermore, the second most-used Discovery Strategy by the high proficient students was looking for clues in the word itself (70%). It was reported that seventy per cent of the high proficient students would make inference to the word part such as the derivational and inflectional features.

In term of the most-used Consolidation Strategies by the grade 12 students, the similar to the Discovery Strategies, the Consolidation Strategies are categorized into three groups: the most-used (used by 100% - 66.7% of the respondents), the commonly used (used by 66.6% to 33.3% of the respondents), and the least-used (used by 33.2% - 0% of the respondents). Table 4.3 presents the strategies used by the students to consolidate a word in memory.

Table 4.3

Consolidation Strategies Used by the Grade 12 Students (N=200)

Ranking	Consolidation Strategies	No.	%
1	Hear it spoken in English.	139	70%
2	Divide the target word into syllables.	137	69%
3	Study the spelling of the target word.	134	67%
4	Use English words similar in sound.	125	63%
5	Read it in a text.	124	62%
6	Connect it to other English words on the same topic.	101	51%
7	Put it in a sentence.	89	45%
8	Study the word list.	88	44%
9	Keep a vocabulary notebook.	80	40%
9	Relate it to a visual image.	80	40%
11	Use Thai words similar in sound.	73	37%
12	Study the word over time.	70	35%

As presented by Table 4.3 above, on the whole, the students seemed to use far fewer strategies to consolidate a word in memory. This claim is well-grounded on the fact that only 70% to 35% of the respondents used the Consolidation Strategies to

remember a word. The apparent implication of this tendency would be the learners used some strategies to discover a word's meaning, however, without consolidating it in memory. Though the participants did not use many Consolidation Strategies, it is found that the learners favored the strategies focusing on the word form. Hearing it spoken in English (70%), dividing the target word into syllables (69%) and studying the spelling of the target words (67%) were at the top of the list. In other words, studying the spoken and written word form was widely used by the students to commit a word to memory.

As for the most-used consolidation strategies used by the high achievers, in comparison to the strategies used by the grade 12 students and the high achievers, strategies focusing on the word form such as hearing it spoken in English and dividing the target word into syllables were commonly used by both groups. Table 4.4 describes the strategies used by the high proficient students to commit a word in memory.

Table 4.4

Consolidation Strategies Used by the High Proficient Students (N=20)

Ranking	Consolidation Strategies	No.	%
1	Connect it to other English words on the same topic.	17	85%
2	Hear it spoken in English.	15	75%
3	Divide the target word into syllables.	14	70%
4	Study the spelling of the target word.	13	65%
5	Relate it to a visual image.	11	55%
6	Read it in a text.	10	50%
7	Put it in a sentence.	8	40%
8	Study the word list.	4	20%
9	Use Thai words similar in sound.	3	15%
10	Use English words similar in sound.	2	10%
10	Keep a vocabulary notebook.	2	10%
12	Study the word over time.	1	5%

Tale 4.4 indicated that on top of that, the most commonly used Consolidation Strategies by the high proficient students was the grouping strategies (85%). Seventeen out of twenty of the high proficient students consolidated a word by connecting it to other English words on the same topic. This may be attributed to the theme-based approach curriculum and the design of the course book. Therefore, vocabulary is grouped according to different themes.

In conclusion, the results of the questionnaire summarized strategies used by the Form Three students and the high proficient students for comparison. The data indicated that guessing from context was the most commonly used Discovery Strategies by the grade 12 students (84%) and the high proficient students (90%). Besides guessing from context, the grade 12 students also resorted to a wider range of strategies such as dictionary strategies and social strategies to discover word meanings. On the contrary, the high proficient students used a limited range of strategies, namely inferencing strategies, to discover word meaning. In terms of the Consolidation Strategies, the grade 12 students preferred strategies focusing on word form. Studying the spoken or written form of a word seemed to be a commonplace for most learners in the study. Though the high proficient students also studied the word form, they used more grouping strategy to consolidate a new word.

4.1.2 Students' Perceptions of the Usefulness of the Strategies

Asking for the most useful Discovery Strategies perceived by the grade 12 students, when studying vocabulary learning strategies as a unified concept, it must not be forgotten that they are for the benefit of the learners. Thus, researcher must consider the learners' feelings, and take not what they think of the various learning strategies. So one way forward is to research into which vocabulary learning

strategies learners are using, and at the same time ask them how effective they believe

those strategies are. The students were asked to indicate their perceptions of the

usefulness of the strategies in the same questionnaire. The results are shown in Table

4.5 below.

Table 4.5

Perceived Usefulness of the Discovery Strategies by the Grade 12 Students

(N=200)

Ranking	Discovery Strategies	No.	%
1	Ask teacher(s) for meaning.	138	69.0
2	Look at the parts of speech.	125	62.5
3	Look for the clues to meaning in the word itself.	122	61.0
4	Look up the word in an English dictionary.	119	59.5
4	Interact with native speakers (e.g. the NET).	119	59.5
6	Use an electronic or online dictionary.	115	57.5
7	Look up the word in a Thai/English dictionary.	113	56.5
8	Learn words from word lists or glossary.	109	54.5
9	Learn words from the mass media.	108	54.0
10	Guess its meaning from the context.	104	52.0
11	Try to think of an English word that is similar.	103	51.5
12	Ask my classmates or peers for the meaning	89	44.5
13	Learn words through ICQ or chat room communication.	74	37.0
14	Ignore it.	49	24.5

Using the same cut-off points, the Table 4.5 showed that the data was

classified into three groups: the most useful (100% - 66.7%), quite useful (66.6% -

33.3%) and the least useful (33.2% - 0%). At the top of the list, sixty-nine per cent of

the respondents indicated that asking the teachers for meaning was the most useful

strategy. This may be due to the fact that the teachers were more knowledgeable to

provide the correct meanings of the word.

In term of the most useful discovery strategies perceived by the high achievers, Table 4.6 describes the responses of the high proficient students towards the usefulness of the Discovery Strategies.

Table 4.6

Perceived Usefulness of the Discovery Strategies by the High Proficient Students (N=20)

Ranking	Discovery Strategies	No.	%
1	Look up the word in an English dictionary.	18	90
2	Ask the teacher(s) for meaning.	16	80
3	Learn words from word lists or glossary.	15	75
4	Guess its meaning from the context.	12	60
5	Look for the clues to meaning in the word itself.	10	50
6	Use an electronic or online dictionary.	9	45
6	Look up the word in a Thai/English dictionary.	9	45
6	Look at the parts of speech.	9	45
9	Interact with native speakers (e.g. the NET).	6	30
10	Learn words from the mass media.	4	20
11	Learn words through ICQ or chat room communication.	3	15
12	Ask my classmates or peers for the meaning.	1	5
13	Try to think of an English word that is similar.	0	0
13	Ignore it.	0	0

The Table 4.6 illustrated that the Discovery Strategies that the high proficient students employed most was using a bilingual dictionary (90%), followed by asking the teacher(s) for meaning (80%) and learning words from word lists or glossary (75%).

In term of most useful consolidation strategies perceived by the grade 12 students, the Table 4.7 shows the results.

Table 4.7

Perceived Usefulness of the Consolidation Strategies by the Grade 12 Students

(N=200)

Ranking	Consolidation Strategies	No.	%
1	Keep a vocabulary notebook.	129	64.9
2	Hear it spoken in English.	128	64
3	Study the spelling of the target word.	115	58
4	Divide the target word into syllables.	111	56
5	Study the word list.	105	52.5
6	Use English words similar in sound.	103	52
6	Put it in a sentence.	103	52
8	Connect it to other English words on the same topic.	98	49
9	Study the word overtime.	95	47.5
10	Read it in a text.	92	46
11	Relate it to a visual image.	85	43
12	Use Thai words similar in sound.	81	41

Although the grade 12 students used strategies focusing on word form and

surface word processing to commit a word in memory, they believed that a keeping

vocabulary notebook (64.9%) was a useful tool to keep track of their vocabulary

learning. Taking this into account, reviewing the vocabulary notebook can enhance

the retention of the learners.

In term of the most useful consolidation strategies perceived by the high

achievers, Table 4.8 below summarizes the results.

Table 4.8

Perceived Usefulness of the Consolidation Strategies by the High Proficient

Students (N=20)

Ranking	Consolidation Strategies	No.	%
1	Keep a vocabulary notebook.	16	80
2	Study the word over time.	13	65
3	Connect it to other English words on the same topic.	12	60
4	Study the word list.	11	55
5	Study the spelling of the target word.	11	55
6	Divide the target word into syllables.	10	50
6	Put it in a sentence.	8	40
8	Use English words similar in sound.	6	30
9	Hear it spoken in English.	5	25
10	Read it in a text.	3	15
11	Relate it to a visual image.	1	5
12	Use Thai words similar in sound.	0	0

Table 4.8 showed that it is surprising to note that the high achievers'

perception on the most useful consolidation strategies coincided with the grade 12

students' perception. The high proficient students believed that keeping a vocabulary

notebook was useful to consolidate new words. Besides, they also thought that

studying the word over time could enhance retention. This seems to suggest that the

high proficient students regarded the cognitive strategies and metacognitive strategies

as useful tools to consolidate new words and they could be used in a complementary

manner, that is, the learners can create their own vocabulary notebooks and review

over time.

In conclusion, this section had summarized the perception of strategies by the

full cohort of 200 students and the 20 high proficient students. It was concluded that

most of the students believed that keeping a vocabulary notebook helped them to

retain word meanings and studying the word form was also a favorable strategy for

most learners. In the next section, the actual use of strategies by the high proficient students will be discussed along with the think-aloud protocols.

4.2 Qualitative Analysis

This section focused on gaining an understanding of the grade 12 students' opinions towards vocabulary learning strategies which existed from high achievers. To address this section, qualitative data from think-aloud and semi-structure interview were employed. With regard to the actual use of strategies, the section below clearly demonstrates how the selected high-achievers made use of each of these strategies during the think-aloud sessions and the opinions about vocabulary learning.

The following section reports different types of vocabulary learning strategies that were reported by the high achievers. The reported areas of vocabulary learning strategies could be separated into these emerging themes: (1) think-aloud protocols by the high Achievers; and (2) high achievers' opinions about vocabulary learning.

4.2.1 Think-aloud Protocols by the High Proficient Students

Ample evidence has shown that, good learners' used more vocabulary learning strategies and they consistently adopt types of strategies based either on their beliefs about vocabulary and vocabulary learning or on other pre-existing cognitive or social factors. Although each strategy contributes to success or failure, consistent employment of certain types of strategies forms an approach to vocabulary learning that may considerably influence the outcomes of L2 learning. Therefore, how different learners combine different strategies and how this affects their learning outcomes warrant studying as much as, perhaps more than, the effects of individual strategies. In light of this, twenty high proficient students were invited to participate

in the think-aloud tasks to demonstrate how they made use of the strategies to discover meanings of ten target words. It is found that the most used strategy is guessing or lexical inferencing and the second commonly used strategy is monolingual dictionary by the high proficient students in the tasks. Some think-aloud protocol data is used for illustration.

The following section discusses in greater detail each type of vocabulary learning that the high proficient students reported and encountered during the think-aloud sessions.

4.2.1.1 Guessing from Context

The think-aloud introspection indicates the high proficient students favored the guessing strategy when they encountered new words in the tasks. It should be noticed that studying the context in which a word occurred provides important linguistic and contextual clues for making inferences. These clues include sentence-level grammar and the surrounding text, which provide a knowledge base for inferencing. The following excerpt demonstrates how a high achiever made use of the linguistic and contextual clues to discover the target word meaning successfully.

<u>**Excerpt 1**</u>

Test Word in Context:
He was identified as John Ssabunnya, a boy who had disappeared three years earlier after his mother was murdered and his father went missing. John was only two years old when he **vanished**.

Think-aloud Protocol:
Student A:
The first sentence describes the situation about the boy (John) and why he had disappeared. Because of his mother was killed and his father went missing. I think the word 'van-ish' means disappeared. Because it is mentioned in the first sentence. The second sentence repeats the first one.

According to excerpt 1 above, student A inferred the meaning from the surrounding context and he tried to make use of every possible hint to deduce the meaning of the target word. Comparing the two sentences, this student noticed that the first hint which is the name of the subject, John, appeared in both sentences. He immediately knew that the second sentence was an elaboration of the first sentence. Another hint embedded in the sentences is the occurrence of synonyms. The words 'disappeared' and 'went missing' are synonyms of 'vanished' which led the participant to successful guessing.

Successful guessing may draw on inferencing the linguistic and contextual clues, learners can also analyze the part of speech and word parts of the target words to deduce the word meanings. Excerpt 2 shows how the student made use of the word study strategies to discover meaning of 'retrieved' successfully.

Excerpt 2

Test Word in Context:
By the time the technician arrived, we had **retrieved**most of our lost data.

Think-aloud Protocol:
Student B:
The word 'retrieved' must be a verb because it is in past perfect tense. Usually 're-' means do again like 're-correction'. In this sentence, I think we have lost the data and we want to get back the data so we called the technician for help. I think 'retrieved' means 'get back'.

Based on excerpt 2, the student B first identified the inflectional affix '-ed' which shows him the part of speech of the target word. Then he made use of the prior knowledge of the word 're-correction' to relate it to the target word 'retrieved' so he

knew that the prefix 're-' meant 'again'. Finally, the participants reread the sentence and used the surrounding context to confirm his guess. The protocol of Excerpt 3 illustrates how a high achiever used similar technique to infer the meaning of the unknown word.

Excerpt 3

Test Word in Context:
Perhaps people tease you about your **complexion**– maybe you have freckles, or a few pimples.

Think-aloud Protocol:
Student C:
I think '-ion' word ending represents a noun, for example, dictation, satisfaction... and after 'your'... we should have a noun. Does it mean something 'complex' because I recognize the word 'complex' or maybe there is something, a noun, there can make things complex.

Based on excerpt 3, student C looked at the word feature of the target word and he thought that 'complexion' and 'complex' belonged to the same word family. Although he misinterpreted the relationship between the two words, he managed to use his prior knowledge about word ending '-ion' and confirm the part of speech of the target word. If he had examined the surrounding context of the word such as freckles and pimples, he would have had known that 'complexion' and 'complex' were not related. This shows that focusing on the word itself and neglecting the context in which the word occurred can be misleading and unreliable.

Apart from making use of the clues at sentence-level, students demonstrated the skill to infer from world knowledge. Real world knowledge does play a vital part in guessing especially when it provides the schema or the background knowledge for

readers. In Excerpt 4, the students used the context and world knowledge to extract

the appropriate meanings of the target word.

Excerpt 4

Test Word in Context:
The theatre managed to **boost**its audiences by cutting ticket prices.

Think-aloud Protocol:
Student D:
I have seen this word before, it means 'increase' right? I think it's
a common sense if you cut price, the demand will increase. This is
what we have learnt from the Econ lesson about Law of Demand,
Demand and Supply.

Excerpt 4 indicated that student D recalled that he had seen the target word

before and he confirmed his guess by common knowledge of Economics. By cutting

the price, he knew that the cinema would be able to attract more audiences. The

drawing upon different source of knowledge enabled him to succeed in guessing. If

the sentence pattern and grammar features are clear to the learners, they may be able

to deduce the meaning more easily. Excerpt 5 demonstrated a confident learner

inferred the word meaning from the sentence pattern and his prior knowledge of

grammar feature.

Excerpt 5

Test Word in Context:
A **feral**child is a child who, from a young age, has lived with animals in the wild.

Think-aloud protocol:
Student E:
There is a pair of commas in this sentence. I think this is a non-defining relative clause because of the 'who' and the commas. Actually, the part in the middle is not very important. And 'fur-al' (feral) means somebody lived with animals in the wild.

Based on excerpt 5, student E demonstrated a sound foundation of the English grammar. Since he knew the structure and function of relative clause, he reached a conclusion of the word meaning without hesitation. In some situations, guessing from context can be a huge challenge especially when the clues are not explicit to the learners.

Excerpt 6

Test word in context:
Although he **snarled** and bit the police, he was no match for them.

Think-aloud protocol:
Student F:
I think it is a verb, similar to 'bite'. Does it mean 'attack'?

Excerpt 7

Test word in context:
Although he **snarled** and bit the police, he was no match for them.

Think-aloud protocol:
Student G:
It may be related to the police. What is no match for them? Sorry, I don't know this word.

Interestingly, guessing from context was regarded as the most commonly used strategies by the strategies in the questionnaire. This is also true when the high proficient students encountered new words in the think-aloud tasks. To guess from context required the manipulation of different guessing skills such as analyzing word features, sentence-context and world knowledge to derive meanings of new words. However, it is important to note that guessing from context is not always accurate and reliable. Hence, the high proficient students resorted to adopt dictionary strategies to confirm the guess.

4.2.1.2 Use of Dictionaries

Dictionaries can be used for a wide range of purposes. It has consistently distinguished between the different requirements and strategies for dictionaries which are to be used for comprehension (listening and reading) and dictionaries which are to be used for production (speaking and writing). Regardless of the different purposes as well as being sources of information, dictionaries can also be aids to learning. Several excerpts are selected to demonstrate how participants negotiated and confirmed the meaning with the context.

Since word meanings are context-sensitive, dictionary users need to negotiate between dictionary explanations and contextual meaning. That is to find an appropriate dictionary meaning and fit it into the context. Excerpt 8 shows that a high proficiency learner was aware of the different dictionary explanations of the target word 'company' and how he settled on the most relevant meaning suitable for the context.

with the aid of dictionaries. When faced with unfamiliar words, they resorted to adopt a combined approach to succeed in guessing. The next section looks into how the high proficient students evaluate vocabulary learning.

4.2.2 High Achievers' Opinions about Vocabulary Learning

In order to capture what questionnaire and think-aloud data could not reveal, an immediate retrospection in the form of structured interview was conducted to collect qualitative data from the good learners. The data include their opinion about vocabulary learning, knowing a word and time spent on vocabulary learning.

Following is how the high proficient students expressed and evaluated their concern about each aspect of vocabulary learning.

4.2.2.1 Importance of Vocabulary Learning

Remarkably, one of the most difficult challenges for language learners is to learn the meanings and use of the words they need to master if they are to be able to understand and communicate in a second or foreign language. Undoubtedly, words are the building blocks to communication that is why vocabulary learning and teaching are important to second language acquisition. In general, the high proficient students seemed to agree that vocabulary learning played an important role in learning English. 16 out of 20 ranked it at 8 on a scale of 1 to 10 with 10 meaning 'the most important'. The other four students ranked it at 6 or 7 on the scale. Excerpts 9 and 10 describe how the high proficient students commented on vocabulary learning.

Excerpt 9

Student G:
I think learning vocabulary is very important because I can have enough vocabulary to express myself. I sometimes find it difficult to express my ideas in writing compositions because I don't have a lot of vocabulary to use. I think the rating should be 8.

Excerpt 10

Student C:
Of course, learning vocabulary is important for us but I think grammar is more important. I can use some simple words to express myself in composition but if I have poor grammar, others will not understand me. Can I say grammar and vocabulary are equally important? Vocabulary and grammar complement each other perfectly. I give them 7 out of 10.

Based on excerpt 9 and 10, all students reported that having sufficient vocabulary size helped them to express their ideas freely and they were able to fully comprehend reading passages. It is intriguing that most interviewees associated vocabulary size with the quality of their composition. They believed that the more extensive vocabulary they have acquired, the better their compositions would be. A plausible explanation is that most learners only knew the productive aspect of a word and neglected the receptive side. In the following section, the focus of discussion will be on the aspect of 'knowing a word'.

4.2.2.2 What "Knowing a Word" Means to the High Proficient Students

Most linguists agree that a word is a complex entity made up of a set of properties and features. In the present study, the high proficient students were asked to explain what "knowing a word" in their own words during the semi-structured interviews. All of them mentioned that "knowing a word" meant knowing the word

meaning, pronunciation, spelling and parts of speech. Additional aspects like collocation and register were mentioned by several interviewees.

1) Word Meaning

Normally, learners tend to learn the meaning and the form of a word before the other aspects of word knowledge. Students unanimously reported that the most important aspect of knowing a word is to know the meaning of a word. Knowing a word means knowing the semantic value of a word and many of the different meanings associated with a word. The high proficient students reported that remembering a corresponding Thai equivalent was not effective and necessary as the equivalent in the first and second languages might not be identical. This claim is supported by the fact that most of the learners opted for monolingual dictionary when they faced with a new word or confirmed meaning.

Moreover, learners usually associate a new word meaning with a known word with similar meaning. For example, student C linked '**vanished**' to the words 'disappeared' and 'went missing' since the words are synonyms. The strategic behavior reveals that the students commit a word in memory by linking the synonyms and thus enhances retention.

2) Spelling and Pronunciation

It has been argued that most Thai students tend to use more "mechanical" strategies such as memorization, notetaking, and repetition than strategies that involve deep processing, such as guessing, imagery, and the keyword technique. However, such a claim appears to be incompatible with the general findings in the present study.

From the previous questionnaire results, it is found that both the grade 12 students and the high proficient students favored Consolidation Strategies focusing on

word form such as dividing the target word into syllables, hearing it spoken in English

and studying the spelling of the target word. The students tended to focus on the

written and spoken form of the word partly because of the belief in the usefulness of

this strategy. It is noted that the over fifty per cent of the grade 12 students believed

that studying the spelling and pronunciation (syllables) helped them to consolidate

new word and similar perception was also found among the high achievers. One of

the high proficient students described the relationship between knowing a word and

written word form in the interview and his response was transcribed in Excerpt 11.

Excerpt 11

Semi-structured Interview:
Student I:
I think knowing a word means … I know the meaning and the
spelling of the word. For example, in the dictation, we need to
know the spelling in order to get the marks. Sometimes, we need to
know how to read the word but it can be quite difficult for me. I
always find it hard to pronounce the last part of the word correctly,
for example, shop-ped, want-ed. You told me the –ed ending can
have different sounds depending on the part in front of it…

For excerpt 11, student I reported that learning vocabulary in second language

involved three major aspects: meaning, spelling and pronunciation of the word. Most

of the teachers and students would likely agree with that and that explains the needs to

introduce students with more strategies to consolidate new words and enhance

retention, such as strategies that involve deep processing.

Another interesting finding about the aspect of pronunciation is that almost all

interviewers realized the importance of pronunciation. In the think-aloud tasks, 16

out of 20 high proficient students could pronounce all the target words correctly.

During the interview, they expressed that knowing how to pronounce the word would not only help them to enhance retention but also enabled them to communicate in daily lives. When they were asked the key to accurate pronunciation, most of the interviewees gave credit to their primary schools as they had been taught phonics in English lessons. This indicates that knowing the spoken word form plays an important role in vocabulary learning.

4.2.2.3 Lack of Time Spent on Vocabulary Learning

Although all the high proficient students unanimously agreed that vocabulary was very important in learning English, they rarely planned their vocabulary learning and spent very little time on it. The response in the interview triangulated the data collected from the questionnaire and proved that most students did not study the word over time. The rest of them spent 1 to 2 hours learning English vocabulary outside class, for example, watching movie, listening to songs and reading newspaper and they did not often put in extra time or effort in learning English vocabulary. A student responded that learning vocabulary was "time-consuming" and he could "naturally pick up vocabulary" in English lessons. The following excerpt shows how the student acquired vocabulary outside class.

Excerpt 12

Semi-structured Interview:
Teacher:	Do you think vocabulary learning is important?
Student J:	Yes, it is important because we need to know the word in order to understand things around us.
Teacher:	Do you plan your vocabulary learning?
Student J:	No. In fact, I think I can learn the vocabulary naturally from the teachers, newspapers, TV... I don't need to plan it in order to learn it.

Teacher: How much time do you spend on learning
             vocabulary outside class?
Student J: I'll say less than 1 hour. I am too busy and I won't
             spend time to revise English at home unless I have
             dictation or test.

Data from the interview reflects that high proficient students did not spend much time on vocabulary learning and outside class time despite its importance. This striking message commands attention of language teachers to provide more opportunities for the learners to practice and use English outside class.

4.3 Summary of the Chapter

In summary, few findings of this study reached the purposes of the study. The results of each section of this chapter are described in two aspects, namely; quantitative analysis which was based on questionnaire; and qualitative analysis which lied on think-aloud tasks and semi-structured interviews among high achieving students. Also, it can be said that good learners use a variety of strategies and take the initiative to manage their vocabulary learning. In the present study, it is found that the high proficient students were aware of the importance of vocabulary learning and they favored contextual guessing and strategies focusing on word form. Based on observation, however, it is surprising that the high proficient students in this study did not demonstrate all the good learner's characteristics. First, they tended to place heavy reliance on contextual guessing and dictionary strategies to discover word meaning instead of using a wide range of strategies when they encountered new words. In addition, the students focused mainly on the memorization of spoken form to consolidate new word meaning. Given the students processed vocabulary mainly at

sensory level where committing the form to memory was the focus, it is difficult for them to recall the learned vocabulary that was neither deeply processed nor linked with their existing knowledge. Finally, although most of the high proficient students agreed that vocabulary was very important in learning English, they rarely planned their vocabulary learning and spent very little time on it. As a result, there were insufficient use and practice of the newly learned vocabulary and thus the vocabulary items were easily forgotten. The findings allowed the researcher to understand how the students, in particular, the high proficient students learnt vocabulary in English and helped the researcher to get more insights to her teaching. Some possible reasons for these results will be discussed next in Chapter Five.