

Gap Between Intended and Acquired Curriculum of English in Secondary Schools in Laos

Souvannasy Bouangeune

National University of Laos, Laos

Soulinavong Latsanyphone

National University of Laos, Laos

Yukiko Hirakawa

Hiroshima University, Japan

This study investigates the effectiveness of the English curriculum in secondary schools in Laos. The sample consists of 24 teachers, and 1,179 Grade 5 students from 25 secondary schools in Vientiane Municipality and Vientiane Province. The results show that the current curriculum is not effective in raising student achievement. The students have modest achievement in all three parts of the test: grammar, vocabulary and reading comprehension. This is because of textbooks and the way of using them. In fact, in the textbooks, there is too much content to be accomplished within the limited time. Also there is no explanation of vocabularies and grammar points. Another reason is that teaching techniques are inappropriate, and most of the schools lack teaching equipments such as tape recorders and cassettes. These make students unable to acquire English knowledge as expected. The results reveal that there is a large gap between intended curriculum and acquired curriculum. It is an urgent task to examine the teaching method and revise the curriculum.

Key words: Laos, EFL, secondary education, Lao ELT, teaching

materials, intended/acquired curriculum

INTRODUCTION

In the situation where English is taught as a foreign language, the effectiveness of the teaching and learning depend several factors, including teacher, learner, and context variables. Teacher factors include the teacher's proficiency, training and experience, cultural background, preferred teaching style, motivation and attitude. Learner factors include learners' learning style preferences, their language learning need, interests, and motivation. Contextual factors include curriculum, school culture, classroom conditions, class size, and availability of teaching materials (Stevens 1980, pp. 21-28), as he puts:

Maximum rates of achievement in learning and teaching of a foreign language are typically produced when skilled and devoted teachers are encouraged by society and their profession to cherish willing learners.

He adds that the framework of organized learning and teaching for successful learning depends upon achieving the maximum harmony between large numbers of variables, whose precise importance differs from one set of learning/teaching conditions to another.

In Laos, after the government introduced 'The New Economic Mechanism' (NEM) in early 1986. English language began to play a key role in the development of the country since then. Recognizing its vital role, the government of Laos introduced English language into secondary school curriculum as one of elective foreign languages among French, Russian and German. At the beginning, this newly introduced subject did not have teaching standard; teachers had to select any available material; and the value of English was not recognized by most of the students. Until early 1990s, when Russian language started to lose its dominance in Laos, the number of English learners in secondary school has increased dramatically. Pushed by increasing numbers of students, together with the shortages of both personnel

and materials for teaching, the government of Lao PDR initiated the quality improvement of English teaching by developing national curriculum and textbooks in 1995. The current curriculum was enacted in 1997, and four textbooks used in lower and upper secondary schools were published in 1998.

In spite of ten-year effort of the government, it is widely recognized that student English achievement at secondary school level is unsatisfactory. Some believe that it is because of lack of textbooks and qualified English teachers, and large class size and a not well-organized curriculum (Goh & Vonchith, 2003). However, since the implementation of the curriculum, there has been no study of student achievement based on scientifically collected data at secondary school; except for evaluative views based on general impression on English education in Laos (e.g., Appleby et al. 2002; Goh & Vonchith, 2003; Sithirajvongsa & Goh, 2004).

This research, conducted in 2003, was the first attempt to clarify the student achievement in English. Some of aforementioned factors considered influencing on the achievement of teaching and learning a language by Strevens (1980) were examined. The overall results and several factors affecting the achievement of individual students were discussed in Souvannasy, Sakigawa, and Hirakawa (2008). The results showed that student achievement was fairly low. Also, the analysis showed that the shortage of textbooks and qualified teachers, lack of subject-matter knowledge of teachers, and shortage of in-service teacher training were clearly not the reasons of low achievement. Students in larger classes performed better. It suggested that the problem lay in curriculum, textbooks and teaching method. However, what was wrong with them and why student achievement (acquired curriculum) was far below the expectation of the intended curriculum was not yet discussed.

In this paper, the researchers will discuss the reasons of low achievement from the viewpoint of curriculum and textbooks based on the data from questionnaires and textbook analysis, and try to give suggestions for further improvement.

Intended and acquired curriculum, which are key terms in this study were defined in the following ways: *Intended curriculum* means the goal of the

curriculum while *acquired curriculum* refers to student achievement in grammar, vocabulary and reading comprehension. Why acquired curriculum is defined in terms of student achievement in those particular learning aspects will be explained in textbook analysis part.

INTENDED CURRICULUM IN LAOS

Curriculum Stated in the National Standard and the Textbooks

In the study, the term ‘curriculum’ is synonymous with textbook in the sense that the goals and contents of the curriculum are presented in textbooks. In addition, the national standard of the curriculum was established based on the textbooks, and just showed the general goals of lower and upper secondary schools, brief introduction of teaching technique such as “listen and repeat, etc.” and the schedule to teach units in the textbooks, for instance.

From 1996 to 1998, the Laos National Research Institute for Educational Sciences (NRIES), Ministry of Education (MOE), published four textbooks to be used in six grades of lower and upper secondary schools, under the support of Lao-Australia English Support Project. The first official English textbook “*English for Lao Secondary Schools 1*” (hereafter Textbook 1) and “*English for Lao Secondary Schools 2 – 4*” (hereafter Textbooks 2, 3 and 4) were published in 1997 and 1998, respectively.

According to the introduction of the textbooks, six characteristics of the textbooks are: (a) containing learning and teaching techniques which were experimented in Lao secondary schools before implementing the textbook and proved to be effective; (b) designing to be relevant to the everyday experience of Lao students; (c) containing games, songs and activities to make learning fun; (d) providing teacher guides that give teachers step-by-step instruction in using communicative methodology and creating a student-centered classroom; (e) encouraging bi-lingual approach to English teaching and learning, and support teachers with bi-lingual teacher guides; and (f)

aiming at developing four skills: speaking, listening, reading and writing (NRIES, 1996 & 1997).

The curriculum standard was published in 1997 for lower secondary school and in 1998 for upper secondary school by NRIES after developing the textbooks. They simply states the instructional time allocated for English and which unit of which textbook should be taught in which week of which grade. Three periods (45 minutes each period) a week are allocated for foreign language education from the first to sixth grades in secondary school (from sixth grade to eleventh grade counting from the first grade of primary school). English learning in the secondary school is divided into two stages:

Stage 1: Lower Secondary School Level

In Textbook 1 and 2, students are expected to acquire the basic skills in English: basic grammar such as present simple tense, present continuous tense, past simple tense, future tense ('will' and 'going to'), present perfect tense, passive voice, conditional clause (type I), modal verbs (must, should, ought to, can, could, etc.); 1457 words and ability to create new sentences and speech patterns based on the textbook models (NRIES, 1996 & 1997).

The skills students are expected to acquire during this stage are:

- Distinguishing sounds of English alphabets;
- Acquiring basic vocabulary (numbers, dates, etc.);
- Describing people, place, daily routines with simple sentence patterns;
- Interacting with other people (greeting, giving direction, requesting, etc.); and
- Writing an informal letter and filling in a simple form requiring their personal information.

Stage 2: Upper Secondary School Level

In the last three years of upper secondary school, students continue to work on interacting, reading and writing which are presented in Textbook 3 and 4 (NRIES, 1998a & 1998b). By the end of this stage, students are expected to have acquired the following skills:

- Describing family life, jobs, climate, geography, countries, people, religion, hobbies, the future, the environment, etc.;
- Interacting about daily life, reading tourist signs, giving direction, talking on the phone, etc.;
- Writing letters, greeting cards, application form, resume, etc.; and
- Reading for main ideas and reading for pleasure.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In this part, sampling and instrumentation are described in brief.

Sampling, Schools and Implementation

The sample consisted of 1,170 Grade 5 students in Lao secondary schools. They had been learning English for four years, by the time the test was administered at the beginning of academic year 2003-04 (September 2003). They were selected from suburban area of Vientiane Municipality and Vientiane Province, which are relatively developed regions in the country. They were from 25 upper secondary schools that accounted for 9.3% of all upper secondary schools in Laos. 24 teachers teaching in those schools were also selected as the sample.

Test

An achievement test was employed to measure student achievement (the acquired curriculum) in terms of grammar, vocabulary and reading comprehension. Why these particular learning aspects were considered as acquired curriculum or student achievement? First, they were relatively easy to test. Second, though there is discussion whether the curriculum is communicative or not, it is now widely recognized that grammar and vocabulary knowledge are the essential components of language proficiency and build up the foundation for

the learner to know how to speak, listen, read and write (Hughes, 1989, p. 141; Savignon, 2002, p. 7). Also, grammar part contained questions concerning communicative skills that are emphasized in the curriculum, such as yes/no questions and WH questions.

The test was developed by the researchers based mainly on Textbook 1, partly Textbook 2 and 3. It was a multiple choice test with four alternative choices. In total, there are 45 items; however, five items in reading comprehension was given two points, so full score of the test was 50. In addition, Lao instruction was given in each part of the test (Appendix A).

It consisted of three parts: grammar and sentence patterns (20 items), vocabulary (20 items), and reading comprehension (5 items). The grammar and sentence patterns part included 20 items shown later in Table 2. The vocabulary part consisted of (a) vocabulary in context, (b) opposite word, and (c) direct translation. The reading comprehension part consisted of one simple 120-word passage, extracted from Textbook 2 (NRIES, 1997, p. 115).

The researchers would like to emphasize that test items were all taken from the content of the Textbooks 1, 2 and 3. All words and expressions used in the test appear in the textbooks.

The reliability coefficient (Cronbach's Alpha) of the tests was .832. It can be said that the test was highly reliable.

Textbook Analysis

In analysis of textbooks, the textbook-evaluation checklist by Alderson (1992) cited in Ellis (1997), Williams (1983), Sheldon (1988), and Jahangard (2007) was used. The analysis looked at the objective, organization, unit structure, language instruction, time allocation, word used and other characteristics.

Questionnaires

Questionnaires were distributed to 24 English teachers and 1, 170 Grade 5 students to investigate the factors concerning the implementation of the

curriculum, teaching and learning (Appendix B and C, respectively).

RESULTS

Acquired Curriculum Shown in the Result of the Test

Table 1 shows the descriptive statistics of the students' test scores. The mean score for the students was 16.4 (32.8%) out of a full score of 50. Due to the fact that the test was in a multiple choice format with four alternative answers and the rate of 'no answer' was only 3.6%, the student achievement was low.

In the part of grammar and sentence patterns, the students' score was 6.7 (33.5% on the full score of this part). In vocabulary part, the score was 7.5 (37.5%). In reading comprehension part, the score was 2.2 (22.1%), which is below expected minimum score of 25%.

For example, only 16% of student could get the right answers for questions of past simple as shown in Table 2. Although those questions included the key word 'yesterday', which could help them to choose the correct answer and the word 'yesterday' appeared 24 times in Textbook 1, the students still could not choose the correct answer. This might be because students might not understand the forms of the verbs (past or present form) or might not know the meaning of the word 'yesterday'.

Rate of Right Answer in Grammar and Sentence Patterns

The rate of right answer for each item is shown in Table 2.

Though the students were in Grade 5 and all the items were expected to be taught in Grade 1 and 2, the result showed that students could not acquire what the curriculum expected them to acquire. The rate of right answer of 17 items out of 20 in this section was below 50%. It is striking that seven items have lowest rate of the right answer, which was lower than 25%. These items

were past simple (had), past simple (could), passive voice, superlative form of adjective (hottest), inflection of verbs (aren't), Yes/No question (answered 'No'), and declension of pronouns (object form).

The activities in the textbooks were not effective to help students acquire the intended communicative skills. Asking and answering Yes/No questions and WH questions are the main activities in Textbook 1, but the rates of right answer were 23.5% (answered 'No'), 27.9% (answered 'Yes'), 25.3% (asked 'Why') and 47.4% (asked 'Where').

The rate of right answer in present continuous was 79.9%. This could be because Lao has similar expression and also students tended to choose verb -ing form as the right answer. For example, 34.4% of students chose 'eating' in the item 17 "Sticky rice is () in Laos." and 26.1% of the students chose 'having' in the item 12 "They () dinner at Daovieng Restaurant yesterday."

Rate of Right Answer in Vocabulary

This part was divided into three sections: word in context, opposite word and direct translation. Section I (word in context) required students to read and gain the meaning of the words in the sentence. The students need to have knowledge in vocabulary and sentence structure in order to choose the right answer. Section II (opposite word) required students to have knowledge of the given words and their oppositions. This kind of test was also introduced in their textbooks. Section III (direct translation) just wanted to check whether the students know the meaning of the words.

The result revealed that Lao students were weak in vocabulary. The rate of right answer was less than 50% in all items, including very basic words such as 'know' or 'water'. Students could not acquire vocabularies in intended curriculum. The rate of right answer for each item is shown in Table 3.

The achievement in direct translation section was better than the other two sections with the rate of right answer of 41.6%. On the contrary, the rates of right answer in section I (word in context) and section II (opposite word)

were 38.8% and 24.4%, respectively.

Rate of Right Answer in Reading Comprehension

Though the text was taken directly from Textbook 2, the rate of right answer was 22.2%, which is lower than 25%, the expected rate attained by chance. The rate of right answer for each item is shown in Table 4. This clearly showed that students could not read the texts though they have studied the text in the textbook.

Results of the Textbook Analysis

By comparing Lao Textbook 1 (for students in Grade 1 and 2 in lower secondary school) with two Japanese textbooks for students in Grade 1 in lower secondary school, the researchers tried to give clearer picture of their similarities and the differences in terms of objective, content, unit construction, language instruction, the appearance of grammar and vocabulary and number of words used in the textbooks. The reason why the researchers chose Japanese textbooks was that the system of English education in Japan is similar to that in Laos. Both countries officially start to teach English from lower secondary school, and the expected teaching periods are about the same. Both Lao and Japanese curricula require three periods a week of English, and 33 weeks a year in Laos and 35 weeks a year in Japan.

The details are as the followings:

Objectives

The objectives of the Textbook 1 for Lao lower secondary students are to make the students acquire knowledge of basic English (alphabets, basic vocabulary, basic grammar and sentence patterns, and basic reading comprehension). However, the objectives are not clearly stated in each unit but appear at the end of the textbooks.

The objectives of Japanese textbook for grade 1 are not stated in the Courses of Study (JMESSC, 1998), but the overall objectives of English education in three years of lower secondary schools are to make students acquire listening, speaking, reading and writing skills in basic English. The Guidebook of the Courses of Study (JMESSC, 1999) also require teachers to teach 900 words, including 200 functional words listed in the standard, and show grammar points to be taught. In the Japanese textbooks for first grade of lower secondary school students, the objectives of each unit are clearly stated at the beginning of each unit, and the students themselves have to check whether the objectives of each unit has been covered after finishing the unit.

Organization of the Textbooks

Lao Textbook 1 consists of 23 units (each unit consists of three lessons). There are three revision units, vocabulary list, and list of irregular verbs at the end of the textbook. On the other hand, the Japanese textbooks such as *One World English Course 1* (Matsumoto et al. ed., 2005) consists of four units. Each unit is divided into two or three lessons. Therefore the textbook has nine lessons. There is a project and one grammar point for each unit. In addition, a reading text for pleasure, word list, and useful expressions are available at the end of the textbook.

Unit Construction

Lao Textbook 1 mostly consists of activities. Each unit starts from an activity such as “Listen and repeat”, and ends with similar tasks. What explanation should be given to students totally depends on teachers. Even teachers’ guide does not contain any explanation. The teachers’ guide is almost the direct translation of the textbook, and does not give teachers any additional explanations in using the textbook as well as explanations of grammar points, and meaning and usage of vocabulary (NRIES, 1996). On

the other hand, Japanese textbooks have detailed explanation of grammar points and meaning of words. Unofficial teachers' guides are full of explanations in Japanese and supplements. Activities are contained in the textbooks, but the amount is much smaller. The extra activities should be given to students depend on teachers.

Language of Instruction

Lao Textbook 1 is mostly written in English and has no explanations of meanings of the words or grammar points in Lao (L1). This would bring more difficulties to students who have to acquire many new vocabularies and grammar points. Even though Lao translations of new words are placed at the end of the book, the students are not encouraged to study because it is not mentioned in the textbook and the teachers' guide. Most concrete words are taught through pictures. Students are supposed to look at the pictures in the textbook, and obtain the meanings from those pictures. But as the pictures are not clear, they can confuse the students. For example, in the Textbook 1, the pictures of 'milk' and 'water' are drawn side by side (p. 82), but the only difference is that the glass of milk is with a can and the glass of water is with a bottle. On one page, a glass with some liquid inside (p. 117) means water, not a glass, while on another page (p. 43) a plate with some liquid is a plate, not soup (NRIER, 1996). In Japanese textbooks, they provide instructions in Japanese. This would give more chance for the students to know what they are to learn and acquire in each exercise and they also can prepare for lesson before the class too.

Explanation of the Grammar Points and Vocabulary

In Lao Textbook 1, grammar points suddenly appear in the textbook without any explanation. For example, though 'plural noun' is a difficult concept for Lao students because there is no plural form of nouns in Lao, the textbook provides a simple and unfocussed explanation "In this lesson you

will learn how to use this, that, these and those.” with Lao translation (p. 34). Then in activity of ‘point and say’, students are requested to say “These are books”. Past tense is another difficulty for Lao students, because it does not exist in Lao. It appears in Unit 13 with a little explanation “In this lesson you will learn to say sentences and ask questions about the past.” (p. 77), but here, there is no translation in Lao. Then ‘listen and repeat’ activity starts: “This is Sengchanh. Do you remember her? She works hard every day. She worked hard yesterday. What did she do?” Also “Object form of pronoun” is not given any explanation. It suddenly appears in Unit 17, “Whose is this?” (p. 98), “It belongs to me. It is mine.” On the other hand, in Japanese textbooks, new words and new grammar points are shown with highlight and given explanations in Japanese.

The Number of Words and Grammar Points to be Taught

In Lao Textbook 1, the students are expected to learn 760 (excluding proper nouns) new words in the first one and a half years. It means that Lao students are expected to acquire about 500 words for the first year. Among 760 words in the Textbook 1, just 59.5% are in word range of 1-1000 of GSL by West (1953), 24.5% are in the word range of 1001-2000 of GSL, and 14.5% are off-list words. Only 54 words (7.1%) are functional words. Among 110 words out of the list, 17 (15.5%) are words adopted into Lao from English, such as ‘bye’, ‘centimeter’, etc., but other 93 (84.5%) are totally new for Lao students. Conversely, one of the English textbooks used in the first grade of Japanese lower secondary school “One World English Course 1” (Matsumoto et al. ed., 2005) contains 363 words. Seventy four point two percent are words in the range of 1-1000 word level, and 14.8% are words in the range of 1001-2000 word level. Sixty nine words (19.0%) are functional words. Nine point six percent are off-list words. However, 26 out of 34 (76.5%) are words adopted from English into Japanese, for example, ‘hamburger’ (hambaga in Japanese), ‘hint’ (hinto), etc., and only eight words (23.5%) are new for Japanese. Another Japanese textbook “New Horizon

English Course 1” (Kasashima et al. ed., 2002) contains 352 words (303 of them are designated as the important words to be memorized). Considering that both Lao and Japanese curricula require three periods a week of English, and 33 weeks a year in Laos and 35 weeks a year in Japan, vocabulary requirement in Lao curriculum is more than 1.5 times higher than that of Japan. For grammatical contents, Lao curriculum for grade 1 requires students to learn interrogative form, negative form, personal pronouns, auxiliary verb ‘can’, singular/plural nouns, inflection of verbs, gerund, present continuous, simple past, present perfect (have got) and future tense with ‘be going to’. In sentence structure, S+V+O+O, S+V+O+C, ‘what’ clause, and adverbial clause with ‘when’, ‘because’, etc. are taught. In Japan, gerund, present perfect (have got), future tense with ‘be going to’, S+V+O+O, S+V+O+C, ‘what’ clause, and adverbial clause with ‘when’, ‘because’, etc. are taught in higher grades.

In brief, Lao Textbook 1 requires students to learn much more vocabularies and grammar points than Japanese textbooks.

Results of Questionnaires to Both Teachers and Students

Neglecting the National Standard

The results of questionnaires show that 16 teachers out of 24 were not following the national standard (NRIES, 1998a). According to the standard, the latter part of Textbook 3 is expected to be used in Grade 5. However, six teachers answered that they were using Textbook 3 and 2, and other ten teachers were using Textbook 1 and 2. Five teachers did not answer this item. Only three teachers were using Textbook 3 mainly.

Strangely, students of teachers who were using Textbook 2 and 3 were significantly better than those of the teachers who were mainly using Textbook 3, and Textbook 1 and 2. However, their mean score was only 17.9 (35.8%), which was far from satisfactory achievement.

Instruction Depending on Teachers

As stated earlier, the textbooks do not have any explanation either in English or in Lao of words and grammar items. Explaining them or not, or the way to explain them totally depends on teachers. This might be the reason why there was a large gap in mean scores among classes. The best class had the mean score of 23.3 (46.6%), while the worst class had the mean score of 13.0 (26.6%). As shown in Souvannasy et al. (2008), the average score in a class is the strongest factor influencing individual student's score in multiple regression ($\beta = .426, p < .001$).

Negative Effect of Pre-service and In-service Training

In this research, it was striking that both high qualification in pre-service training and experience of in-service training were found to have negative effects on student achievement.

The mean score of 370 students of the seven teachers graduating from three year college was 17.4 (34.8%), followed by 687 students of the 13 teachers who had no qualifications as English teachers (16.3 or 32.6%). Students taught by the teachers graduating from university had the lowest score (14.2 or 28.4%) among the three groups ($p < .01$ by ANOVA).

The mean score of 776 students of the 15 teachers who have never attended in-service training course for English teaching by using the textbooks was 17.6 (35.2%), while that of nine teachers who had attended the in-service training was 14.0 (28.0%) ($p < .01$ by *t*-test).

One of possible reasons is the trainers' belief. The researchers, when visiting the Department of English in the National University of Laos, which was the only university level English education institution at that time, realized that a strong belief that English should be taught in English was shared by the staff of the department. They insisted that teachers should not teach students the equivalent word of easy word like 'water' in Lao. They should show the water or its picture, or explain in English "Water is a kind of

liquid you drink every day”. Showing did not seem to work with abstract words like ‘know’, and it was unrealistic to think that a person who does not know water can understand the explanation above. Also, many of them thought grammar would be acquired naturally, and explaining English grammar in Lao would bring negative effect on learning English. This would influence the teachers who graduated from the Department of English. This idea was also used in in-service training center. They would think that English should be taught in English only, and encourage the trainees to avoid using Lao (L1) in English class.

Applying Inappropriate Teaching Techniques in Ordinary Class

The last possible reason detected by the results was that the teachers might not use the appropriate teaching techniques in the ordinary class. They might apply them in extra class.

The result showed that attendance in extra classes clearly influenced student achievement greatly. The mean score of 664 students who had never attended extra class was 14.7 (29.4%), that of 315 students who had attended them for less than six months was 17.0 (34.0%), that of 91 students who had attended them for seven to 12 months was 22.7 (45.4%), that of 16 students who had attended then for 13 to 24 months was 27.5 (55.0%), and that of 24 students who had attended it for more than 25 month was 26.2 (52.4%) ($p < .01$ by ANOVA). It was amazing that extra class was so effective. In fact, there are more ordinary teaching periods than the extra class. Each teacher is supposed to carry out 360 teaching periods (from Grade 1 to Grade 4) in intended official curriculum; the students who attended only English class in school could not make much progress like those who also attended extra classes. For instance, students who studied English at school only had the progress of 2.2 (14.7 – 12.5) (expected score of those who marked randomly), while students who attended extra classes 75 periods (1 period x 5 days x 15 weeks) had the progress of 2.3, and those attending 150 periods had the progress of 8.0.

The result suggested that teachers taught much better in extra classes. It is widely recognized that teachers are more motivated in teaching extra classes, because students pay tuition to teachers. In the extra classes many teachers use imported textbooks that are believed to be more systematic in teaching sentence patterns and grammar.

No Effect of Motivation and Class Size

The motivation of students could not be a persuasive explanation of student achievement. Various indicators of motivation in the questionnaire were examined, but no difference was found. The majority of Lao students were highly motivated. For example, 84.6% of the students chose 'strongly agree' for the question "I think English is important." In the question "I enjoy studying English", 57.4% chose 'strongly agree' and 27.3% chose 'agree'. The difference of mean score of the two groups is minor but significant difference ($p < .01$ by ANOVA) (17.3 and 15.4, respectively).

As stated before, the researchers found that there was a positive significant correlation ($r = .41$, $p < .05$) between the number of students in a class and the mean score of the classes. It suggested that in Laos, many large classes with 40 to 80 students were working more effectively than small size classes with 20 to 40 students.

Lack of Teaching Materials, Especially Tape Recorders

Some activities in the textbooks are certainly not included in the process of teaching. Though the textbooks are activity-oriented and all units contain listening activities, 896 students (76.6%) in all 25 classes answered that teachers 'never' used tape recorders. Also, 20 teachers answered that they suffered from shortage of cassette players. This could be a serious problem, because many activities in the textbooks are impossible to do without cassettes and cassette players.

The possession of the teachers' guides by teachers was significantly related

to the score of students. The mean score of 189 students taught by four teachers who did not have teacher guides was 14.3 (28.6%). It was significantly lower than the mean score of 981 students taught by twenty teachers with teachers' guides ($p < .01$ by t -test), which was 16.8 (33.6%). This is supportive for bi-lingual teaching in Lao context, but the score of 16.8 (33.6%) was unsatisfactory.

Possession of textbooks by students did not cause consistent raise in their achievement. This could be because textbooks are mainly written in English and there is no Lao explanation. These textbooks can improve students with proper bi-lingual instruction of teachers and activities, but the possession itself seems to be ineffective.

Possession of Lao-English dictionary had drastic effect. The mean score of the 241 students who had dictionary was 19.2 (38.4%), while that of the 929 students who had no dictionary was 15.7 (31.4%) ($p < .01$ by t -test). This also ascertains that bi-lingual teaching is more effective.

DISCUSSIONS

The results of this study clarified that the textbooks for lower secondary level were not effective in raising student achievement. The problem lies both in the part of the textbook and the way of using them. The textbook has too much content within the limited time of instruction. It does not focus on functional words that are important in structuring sentences. The textbook is activity based, but many activities described in the textbook are not available, because there are no tape recorders and cassettes in most classes. There is no clear objective for each lesson and no explanations of basic grammar in the textbook. How teachers should do to make students acquire words and understand grammar items is not clearly stated by curriculum designers. It depends totally on teachers, but the English level of the teachers is not high enough. The method of teaching encouraged in the university and training courses "Teaching English through English" is suspected to influence student

achievement negatively.

These facts strongly suggest that the curriculum and textbooks should be revised. First, the content should be more focused on basics both in vocabulary and grammar. The indispensable contents to be learned should be indicated, and taught clearly, so that students can do cumulative learning. Explicit instruction and explanation of important words, grammar items and sentence structures should be included. The explanation should be given in Lao, and it should be detailed because as it shows in teachers' rate of right answer, not all teachers have sufficient skills of English. The explanation should be in the textbooks, considering the fact that many teachers do not have teachers' guides, and probably some teachers do not teach seriously in ordinary classes. Second, the importance of bi-lingual teaching stated in the textbook should be re-enforced. In the early level, it is unrealistic to teach English through English, especially considering the knowledge level of teachers, short time of instruction and limited exposure to English. Atkinson (1987) suggests using L1 in early level class to give instruction, to discuss classroom methodology, and to present and reinforce the target language. Finally, to make activities effective, tape recorders and cassettes should be ready for use in all secondary schools. If it is impossible, the content of the activities described in the textbooks should be changed.

This study has some limitations. Regarding the implementation process of curriculum, ways of teaching, learners' motivation, class size, teacher training proficiency and background were considered. However, in order to get clearer picture of current curriculum implementation and identify more comprehensive reasons why there is a gap between intended and acquired curriculum. Data collection methods should be improved in future studies. Specifically, data collection of way of teaching was collected by questionnaires to teachers and students and no direct observations of classroom practice were included in this study's data collection. One finding showed that both high qualification in pre-service training and experience of in-service training were found to have negative effects on student achievement left one more question mark leading to investigate in future studies. That is "Does the

problem exist in teacher training practice itself?” Therefore, the evaluation of the teacher training of teaching English for the secondary school level should be conducted in future studies.

THE AUTORS

Souvannasy Bouangeune, a lecturer at the Department of English, Faculty of Letters, National University of Laos (NUOL). Currently, he is a doctoral candidate at Hiroshima University in Japan. His current research interests cover curriculum development and evaluation. His recent publication is *Determinants and issues in student achievement in English at the Lao Secondary Education Level* (2008) with M. Sakigawa and Y. Hirakawa.
Email: suvanasy@gmail.com

Soulinavong Latsanyphone, a lecturer at the Department of English, Faculty of Letters, National University of Laos (NUOL). She holds a B.A. in English Language Teaching from NUOL, a Master of Educational Administration from Flinders University, and M.A. in English Language Education from Hiroshima University. Currently, she is a doctoral student at Hiroshima University in Japan. Her research interests are curriculum evaluation and teaching material development.
Email: nipon.suvarasi@gmail.com

Yukiko Hirakawa is an associate professor in the Department of Education and Culture, Graduate School for International Development and Cooperation (IDEC) at Hiroshima University, Japan. Her fields of interest are educational planning, process of educational improvement and developing higher order cognitive skills. Her recent publications include *Determinants and issues in student achievement in English at the Lao Secondary Education Level* (2008) with B. Souvannasy and M. Sakigawa, *The effects of utilizing a Videoconferencing System for International Discussion on Global Issues at a Japanese High*

School (2007) with S. Nagata et al. and *Teachers' conceptualization and actual practice in the student evaluation process at the upper secondary school level in Japan, focusing on problem solving skills* (2001) with Nu Nu Wai.

Email: hirayuki@hiroshima-u.ac.jp

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TABLE 1
Mean and Standard Deviation of Test Scores

Variable	N	Mean	%	SD	Min	Max	Score
Total	1170	16.4	32.8%	7.4	3	49	50
Grammar and sentence patterns	1170	6.7	33.5%	2.9	0	20	20
Vocabulary	1170	7.5	37.5%	4.0	0	20	20
Reading comprehension	1170	2.2	22.1%	2.3	0	10	10

TABLE 2
Rate of Right Answer in Grammar and Sentence Patterns

No.	Item(s)	Textbook (Unit) *	Right answer	
			Teachers	Students
8	Present continuous tense	1(12)	91.7%	79.9%
6	Future with “be going to”	1(15)	87.5%	57.6%
3	Prepositions (about)	2(7)	87.5%	57.5%
2	WH-Questions (asked ‘where’)	1(4)	95.8%	47.4%
4	Comparative form (bigger)	1(22)	83.3%	39.5%
18	Declension of pronouns (subjective)	1(3)	95.8%	39.4%
14	Request with “could”	2(9)	87.5%	33.5%
7	Countable and uncountable noun	1(5)	79.2%	33.1%
11	Singular and plural (boys)	1(6)	87.5%	30.1%
19	Yes/No-Question (answered ‘yes’)	1(13)	79.2%	27.9%
9	Declension of verb (does)	1(8)	79.2%	27.6%
16	WH-Questions (asked ‘why’)	1(19)	87.5%	25.3%
1	Declension of pronouns (object)	1(17)	83.0%	24.7%
15	Yes/No-Questions (answered ‘no’)	1(8)	87.5%	23.5%
5	Present perfect tense (have been)	2(4)	54.2%	23.2%
20	Declension of verbs (aren’t)	1(5)	79.2%	23.1%
13	Superlative form (hottest)	1(22)	75.0%	22.7%
17	Passive voice	2(14)	29.2%	19.9%
12	Past simple tense (had)	1(13)	79.2%	16.1%
10	Past simple tense (could)	1(13)	70.8%	16.0%

Note: * The item’s first appearance in the textbook (unit).

TABLE 3

Rate of Right Answer in Vocabulary Test

Section	No.	Item	GSL*	Textbook (Unit)***	Rate of right answer		
					Teachers	Students	
						%	Mean
I	23	three	n.a**	1(6)	100%	55.7%	1.94 (38.8%)
	22	drink	522	2(6)	100%	45.7%	
	24	husband	663	1(16)	100%	37.4%	
	25	wedding	n.a	3(7)	75%	28.5%	
	21	watch	457	1(8)	88%	27.1%	
II	26	black	586	1(12)	92%	39.4%	1.44 (24.4%)
	28	ugly	1731	1(11)	100%	30.3%	
	29	wide	2084	3(11)	67%	26.7%	
	27	dry	746	1(23)	88%	24.4%	
	30	slim	n.a	2(1)	88%	23.2%	
III	35	know	734	1(19)	100%	48.8%	4.16 (41.6%)
	39	strong	385	1(23)	96%	48.5%	
	32	bicycle	2181	1(4)	96%	46.7%	
	34	get up	n.a	1(8)	96%	46.4%	
	40	water	208	1(8)	100%	46.1%	
	33	road	440	2(7)	100%	43.8%	
	38	start	246	1(17)	100%	40.7%	
	31	always	273	1(10)	100%	37.4%	
	36	meat	1312	1(14)	96%	33.7%	
	37	quickly	657	1(17)	92%	24.3%	

Note: * The order in the General Service List of English Words (West, 1953).

** n.a = not available in the GSL.

*** First appearance in the textbook and unit, e.g. 1(6) means that the word first appeared in Textbook 1, Unit 6.

TABLE 4

Rate of Right Answer in Reading Comprehension

Question item	Rate of right answer		
	Teachers	Students	
		%	Mean
41	75%	19%	2.2 (22.1%)
42	67%	32%	
43	25%	12%	
44	71%	27%	
45	83%	21%	

APPENDIX 1
Questionnaire for Upper secondary school students

School:
Your grade four English teacher's name:
Your name: (Optional)
Age: years old Sex: male female

1. Where do you stay? (Please tick "✓" one)
- a. My parents' house
 - b. My relatives' house
 - c. Rented room
 - d. Dormitory
 - e. Others
- (Please specify:)

2. What language do you speak at home?
- Lao other (Please specify:)

3. Do you have _____ at home? (Please tick "✓". You can tick more than one item)
- a. English textbook 3
 - b. English textbook 2
 - c. English textbook 1
 - d. English dictionary
 - e. other English books
 - f. magazines or newspapers written in English

4. Have you ever taken extra-English class or private tuition? (Please tick "✓" one)
- a. Never
 - b. Less than 6 months

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- c. 7-12 months
- d. 13-24 months
- e. 25-36 months
- f. 37 months or more

5. Have you ever learned English through TV or radio teaching program?
(Please tick “✓” one)

- a. Many times
- b. Several times
- c. Some times
- d. A few times
- e. Never

6. Do you watch or listen to English program on TV or radio? (Please tick “✓” one)

- a. Always
- b. Often
- c. Sometimes
- d. Rarely
- e. Never

7. What is your parents’ academic qualification? (Please tick “✓” one in the table below)

No.	Qualification	Tick (✓) one of the items
Father’s		
01	Never attend school	
02	Attend primary school but not complete	
03	Primary school certificate	
04	Lower-secondary certificate	
05	Upper-secondary certificate	
06	Diploma	
07	Other (Please specify:)	
Mother’s		
01	Never attend school	
02	Attend primary school but not complete	

03	Primary school certificate
04	Lower-secondary certificate
05	Upper-secondary certificate
06	Diploma
07	Other (Please specify:)

8. Does your family own _____? (Please tick “✓” Yes or No)
- a. Car
 - b. Motorbike
 - c. Color TV
 - d. Video
 - e. CD player or cassette tape
 - f. Radio
9. How often do you study English at home? (including doing English homework)
- a. Almost everyday
 - b. Sometimes in a week
 - c. Sometimes in a month
 - d. Sometimes in a semester
 - e. Almost never
10. What do you think about your study of English, comparing to your study other school subjects? (Please tick “✓” one)
- a. I do less work on English than any other subject
 - b. I work harder on English than any other subject.
 - c. I do about as much work on English as I do on any other subject.
11. Does your teacher write the content of the textbook on the blackboard so that students can copy it into their notebooks? (Please tick “✓” one)
- a. Almost all parts
 - b. Major parts
 - c. Some parts

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- d. Few parts
- e. Almost none
12. Do your parents encourage you about your study? (Please tick “✓” one)
- a. Always
- b. Often
- c. Sometimes
- d. Rarely
- e. Never
13. Do your parents expect you to proceed to higher education after finishing upper secondary school? (Please tick “✓” one)
- a. Strongly expect
- b. Expect
- c. Neutral
- d. Expect not to proceed
- e. Strongly expect not to proceed
14. Do you hope to proceed to higher education after finishing upper secondary school? (Please tick “✓” one)
- a. Strongly hope
- b. Hope
- c. Neutral
- d. Do not hope
- e. Strongly do not hope
15. Please describe your English teacher in Grade four about his/her teaching.
(Please circle one of the scores “1-5”)
- | No. | | Always | Often | Some-
times | Hardly
Ever | Never |
|-----|---|--------|-------|----------------|----------------|-------|
| 01 | Give clear explanation in his/her instruction. | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 02 | Explain the meaning of words/phrases so that students can catch up the meaning. | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |

03	Give examples in his/her explanation.	5	4	3	2	1
04	Make students practice and give exercises.	5	4	3	2	1
05	Pose questions to students to check their understanding.	5	4	3	2	1
06	Use charts in class.	5	4	3	2	1
07	Use supplementary exercise sheet.	5	4	3	2	1
08	Use cassette player in class.	5	4	3	2	1
09	Give students time to ask questions.	5	4	3	2	1
10	Give homework to students.	5	4	3	2	1
11	Give a small test or a quiz to students.	5	4	3	2	1
12	Check homework and test, and give feedback to students.	5	4	3	2	1
13	Be absent from class.	5	4	3	2	1
14	Arrive late at the class.	5	4	3	2	1

16. Please state your opinion on your English teacher in Grade four. (Please circle one of the scores "1-5")

No.		Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
01	His/Her teaching was interesting and attractive.	5	4	3	2	1
02	My teacher was helpful in my English learning.	5	4	3	2	1
03	My teacher explained me how learning English is important for my future.	5	4	3	2	1
04	Welcome us to come and ask questions outside class hours.	5	4	3	2	1

17. Please state your opinion on your study of English. (Please circle one of the scores "1-5")

No.		Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
01	I enjoy learning English.	5	4	3	2	1
02	I think English is important.	5	4	3	2	1

Thank you very much for your kind cooperation!

Questionnaire for Upper Secondary School Grade Four English Teachers

School:

Name: (optional)

Sex: male female

Age:years old

1. How many years of teaching experience do you have?..... year(s)

2. How many years of English teaching experience do you have?year(s)

3. How many years of experience do you have in teaching English at upper secondary school level? year(s)

4. What is your area of specialization? (You may tick more than one option)

No.	Area of specialization	Tick (✓)
01	French	
02	Russian	
03	English	
04	Others (please, specify:)	

5. Please mention your highest academic qualification.

No.	Academic qualification	Tick (✓)
01	Lower-secondary school certificate	
02	Upper-secondary school certificate	
03	3-year training college diploma	
04	Bachelor degree	
05	Master degree	
06	Others (please specify:)	

6. Have you ever attended the following English training courses?

- a. Pre-service training course (3 years) Yes No
- b. Pre-service training course (4 years) Yes No
- c. Others (please, specify:)

7. Did you study English in your secondary school?
 Yes No
8. Did you study English in university/college? Yes No
9. Have you ever studied English on radio/TV teaching programs?
 Yes No

10. Why did you decide to teach English?

Please tick in the table below (you may tick more than one option)

No.	Statement	Tick (✓)
01	It is easier to get part-time job.	
02	It will help me to get social recognition.	
03	It will help me to understand English people and their way of life.	
04	It will help me to meet and converse with more varied people because it is an international language.	
05	I am interested in English language/English language teaching.	
06	Others (please, specify:)	

11. Please mention your feeling or desire of English language teaching.

(Please tick “✓” the most appropriate one.)

No.	Statement	Strongly Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
01	I enjoy teaching English.				
02	I want to learn more about English language teaching.				
03	I want to improve my English language proficiency.				

12. What kind of difficulties do you face in your teaching of English?

(Please tick “✓” the numbers as many as you concern.)

No.	Statement	Tick (✓)
01	Limitation of my own proficiency of English	
02	Limited opportunities to take in-service training courses for English language teaching	
03	Limitation of my skills in teaching English	
04	Limited opportunities to exchange knowledge and experiences of English language teaching among colleagues	
05	A big class size	
06	Insufficiency of textbooks for students	

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-
- 07 Insufficiency of English dictionaries/other English textbooks/
supplementary English exercise sheets
 - 08 Shortage of teaching equipments such as cassette-players
 - 09 Insufficient time for lesson preparation
 - 10 Insufficient time for making students practice and giving exercises
to students
 - 11 Insufficient time for feedback to students after the correction of
students' work or tests
 - 12 Students' low concern and willingness in learning English
 - 13 Others (please, specify:)
-

13. Are the followings available? (Please tick as many as you have)

- a. Teacher's guide for English language teaching
- b. Supplementary English exercise sheets
- c. English dictionaries
- d. Magazines written in English
- e. Books written in English
- f. English newspapers
- g. Radio
- h. TV
- i. CD player or cassette tape
- j. Video
- k. Satellite

14. Do you make the following activities in your leisure time?

(Please tick "✓" the most appropriate one.)

No.	Always	Often	Sometimes	Hardly ever	Never
01					
02					
03					
04					

15. When you were teaching English in Grade Four last year, what textbook and teaching materials were you using?

- a. Mainly “English textbook 3”
 - b. “English textbook 3” and “English textbook 2”
 - c. “English textbook 2 and 3” and other textbook or teaching materials
 - d. Mainly other textbook or teaching materials
- (Please specify the name of the textbook or teaching materials you were using)
-

16. When you were teaching English in Grade Four last year, how important did you recognized the following aspects as the purpose of your English teaching at that grade level? (Please tick the most appropriate one.)

No.	Very important	Important	Neutral	Less important	Not important
1					
	Basic grammar and sentence patterns				
2					
	Basic vocabulary				
3					
	English reading				
4					
	English writing				
5					
	English listening				
6					
	English speaking				

17. Please state your opinion on English teaching in secondary schools (Please tick the most appropriate one.)

No.	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
1					
	It is important that students acquire English for the future development of the Lao nation.				
2					
	Good English skills help students to proceed to higher education.				
3					
	Good English skills help students to find a good job.				
4					
	Secondary school English should focus more on basic grammar and vocabulary.				
5					
	Secondary school English should focus more in oral communication.				
6					
	The level of English education in secondary school is satisfactory.				
7					
	The level of English skills among				

-
- students is low, because they are not willing to study it.
- 8 The level of English skills among students is low, because there is something to be improved in English education.
-

Thank you very much for your kind cooperation!

Test of English Language

(Do not write in this paper)

I. Grammar & sentence patterns

Complete the sentences below by choosing the answer from the option (a) to (d) and write it on the answer sheet.

1. That man is hungry. Please give _____ some food.
(a) he (b) her (c) his (d) him
2. A: _____ are you going?
B: I am going to school.
(a) What (b) Who (c) Where (d) Which
3. They asked him a lot of questions _____ his job.
(a) at (b) about (c) for (d) of
4. My house is _____ than his house.
(a) bigger (b) more bigger (c) biggest (d) more big
5. Our friends _____ here since yesterday and they will go home tomorrow.
(a) are (b) were (c) will be (d) have been
6. Somphone _____ to play football tomorrow.
(a) goes (b) is going (c) went (d) has gone
7. In Vientiane, _____ students go to schools by bus.
(a) much (b) a little (c) many (d) any
8. Please be quiet! I _____.
(a) am working (b) worked (c) to work (d) work

9. Sonxay is very lazy. He never _____ his homework
(a) do (b) is doing (c) does (d) doing
10. He _____ play football yesterday because it was raining.
(a) won't (b) can't (c) couldn't (d) shouldn't
11. Five _____ played football at school yesterday.
(a) boy (b) the boys (c) of boys (d) boys
12. They _____ dinner at the Daovieng Restaurant yesterday.
(a) have (b) had (c) having (d) has
13. May is the _____ month in Laos.
(a) hotter (b) more hot (c) most hot (d) hottest
14. _____ you open the window, please?
(a) Could (b) Shall (c) Should (d) Must
15. A: Do they often go to Vangvieng?
B: Yes, they _____.
(a) do (b) did (c) are (d) are going
16. A: _____ does she take the bus?
B: Because she doesn't have a car.
(a) Why (b) Where (c) When (d) How
17. Sticky rice is _____ in Laos.
(a) ate (b) eating (c) eaten (d) eat
18. Are _____ beautiful girls?
(a) she (b) they (c) them (d) her
19. A: Did they have dinner at home?
B: No, they _____.
(a) aren't (b) didn't (c) haven't (d) don't
20. Niphone is here, but her parents _____.
(a) isn't (b) wasn't (c) aren't (d) weren't

II. Vocabulary

Complete the sentences below by choosing the answer from the option (a) to (d) and write it on the answer sheet.

21. Somdy likes cinema very much. He often _____ it.
(a) feels (b) meets (c) sells (d) watches
22. My brother sometimes smokes and _____ beer.
(a) eats (b) drinks (c) sings (d) wears
- A: How do you spell "3"?
B: _____.
(a) tlee (b) three (c) thlee (d) tree
24. I am Xaysana's wife. He is my _____.
(a) brother (b) husband (c) father (d) uncle
25. November 20 will be their _____ day. They are getting married.
(a) birth (b) rainy (c) sad (d) wedding

** Choose the opposite word for each number by choosing the answer from the option (a) to (d) and write it on the answer sheet.*

26. white ≠ _____
(a) black (b) green (c) pink (d) yellow
27. wet ≠ _____
(a) cold (b) dry (c) hot (d) light
28. beautiful ≠ _____
(a) easy (b) fat (c) thin (d) ugly
29. narrow ≠ _____
(a) deep (b) high (c) tall (d) wide
30. fat ≠ _____
(a) heavy (b) light (c) slim (d) thick

** Choose appropriate meaning for the words below by choosing the answer from the option (a) to (d) and write it on the answer sheet.*

31. Always = _____
(a) always (b) sometimes (c) perhaps (d) never
32. Bicycle = _____

- (a) motorbike (b) bus (c) bicycle (d) car
33. Road = _____
(a) road (b) car park (c) rice field (d) market
34. Get up = _____
(a) sleep (b) change (c) dream (d) get up
35. Know = _____
(a) know (b) see (c) hear (d) meet
36. Meat = _____
(a) vegetable (b) fish (c) meat (d) milk
37. Quickly = _____
(a) quietly (b) carefully (c) luckily (d) quickly
38. Start = _____
(a) stop (b) start (c) continue (d) rest
39. Strong = _____
(a) strong (b) light (c) weak (d) heavy
40. Water = _____
(a) fire (b) water (c) wind (d) earth

III. Reading

Read the text below and complete the sentences based on the text by choosing the answer from the option (a) to (d) and write it on the answer sheet.

The zoo

The zoo is a beautiful place. It's clean and peaceful, and people always obey the zoo rules. They never drop rubbish.

At the eastern end of the zoo there are six special animals. They are: a deer, a bird, a monkey, a kangaroo, an antelope and a crocodile. These six animals come from different countries: Indonesia, Australia, China, Vietnam, Myanmar and Laos.

These animals eat at different times of the day: at nine o'clock in the morning, at half past ten in the morning, at midday, at three o'clock in the afternoon, at six o'clock in the evening and at midnight.

The animals are in cage numbers 1-6. But we don't know which animal is in which cage.

41. A rule of the zoo is not to _____.
(a) be clean (b) be peaceful (c) drop rubbish (d) eat food
42. A special animal comes from _____.
(a) Thailand (b) Myanmar (c) England (d) Japan
43. A kangaroo lives in _____ of the zoo.
(a) Australia (c) different countries
(b) a cage at the eastern end (d) a cage at the western end
44. In the zoo, a monkey is in _____.
(a) the cage number 1 (c) the cage number 3
(b) the cage number 6 (d) one of the cages from numbers 1-6
45. The six special animals are given food _____ of the day.
(a) in the morning (c) at different times
(b) in the evening (d) at the same time

=====**End of the test**=====