CHAPTER FIVE : SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION

In this chapter, the findings of the study will be discussed according to the order of the research questions. It will be followed by recommendations and suggestions for future research.

5.1 Findings of Research Question 1

What is the receptive and productive vocabulary size of urban and rural students in the district of Kuantan?

A summary of the results is shown in the following table:

Table 5.1
Findings of the first research question

Translation Tests	Urban Receptive and Productive vocabulary sizes > Rural Receptive and Productive vocabulary sizes
	Insignificant difference between Receptive and Productive vocabulary sizes of Urban and Rural students
	High frequency words > Low frequency words
	Gap between high frequency words of urban and rural students < Gap between low frequency words of urban and rural students
Lex30	Urban Low-frequency Productive vocabulary size = Rural Low-frequency Productive vocabulary size

Note : > more than
< smaller than
= is the same as

From the analyses of the first research question, five findings were revealed. Generally, urban students have a larger vocabulary size compared to rural students. The five findings will be discussed in greater detail in the following sections.

5.1.1 Urban Receptive and Productive vocabulary sizes > Rural Receptive and Productive vocabulary sizes

The first finding reports that urban students have significantly larger receptive and productive vocabulary compared to rural students. This supports previous studies conducted within and outside Malaysia. Rosli and Edwin (1990) in their study found that urban students outperformed rural students in vocabulary test by 19%. Lehr et.al. (2004) found that urban children, in higher SES homes spend more time interacting with their parents, and hence, have larger vocabulary size compared to rural children in lower SES homes. Researchers have also revealed that when children enter kindergarten, higher SES children have "almost twice the usable vocabulary as low SES children" (Graves, Brunetti and Slater, 1982, cited in Berne and Blachowicz, 2008, p.314) (see CHAPTER 2 Section 2.7.1).

Urban students in this study appeared to have gained from ample access to resources and aids, as well as having a positive attitude towards the English language by having significantly higher vocabulary sizes. Their rural counterparts may have also appeared to be at a disadvantage.

First of all, urban students enjoy the many privileges of having ample opportunity of exposure and use. Their higher SES compared to rural students may have also been a factor, as it is said that higher SES families enjoy more verbal communication, hence, fostering more opportunity to gain vocabulary (Lehr et.al., 2004 , Graves et.al., 1982, cited in Berne & Blachowicz, 2008) (see CHAPTER 2 Section 2.71). Another factor which may have played a contributing role to this result is their school environment. Students in both the selected urban schools are multi-racial. Thus, one of the lingua-franca would naturally be English and this then promotes more usage for practical purposes.

In the case of the rural students, the result supports previous studies conducted where rural students are at an obvious disadvantage in terms of exposure and use. In Malaysia, rural schools are at a disadvantage in terms of resources, aids and attitude of stakeholders (Lok, 2007)(see CHAPTER 2 Section 2.7.1). Their lower family SES may have also offered them fewer opportunities to communicate, not only in their L1, but even more so in L2. With lower SES, they may also have lower educational aspirations (Hu, 2003 and Xu, 2009) (see CHAPTER 2 Section 2.7.1). In addition, the school environment of rural students may play a role as well. The rural schools selected for this study mainly consist of a one-race population, in contrast with the urban schools, which are more multi-racial. The use and need for English in these rural schools may not have been widespread enough to promote vocabulary gain. As most L1 and L2 words are said to be learnt receptively through reading or listening (Schmitt, 2000), these students then are at a disadvantage to gain greater vocabulary size, as they should have as L2 students. With no practical purpose to acquire the language and use the language (except for a few hours a week during lessons), they may then lack the motivation to learn English. The community they live in may also have even higher level of negative connotation towards the language, perhaps due to a concentration of one majority race and also due to the history of past colonization (Gaudart, 1987).

Therefore, this finding supports the results of previous studies where urban students are reported to have larger vocabulary size compared to rural students. However, the reasons behind this disparity may be worth investigating further in future studies.

5.1.2 Insignificant difference between Receptive and Productive vocabulary sizes of Urban and Rural students

Another finding is that the difference between the productive and receptive vocabulary sizes of both urban and rural students is not statistically significant. Hence, this indicates that the receptive and productive vocabulary could be similar in size. This is however, contrary to studies conducted, where receptive vocabulary tends to be larger (Webb, 2008 and Schmitt, 2000). A few factors may be contributing to this result.

Firstly, the growth and development of students' receptive vocabulary may be stunted. Schmitt (2000) has noted that L2 students may lack an adequately rich exposure for incidental learning of receptive vocabulary to occur, even though experts (Schmitt, 2000 and Nation, 2002) have pointed out that receptive vocabulary is greatly gained through incidental exposure. This study may reflect Schmitt's concern. As have been discussed under the earlier finding, the lack of exposure may be due to the school environment. It may have played a role as students tend to communicate more in their L1 due to lack of opportunity and motivation to use English. This may not only apply to rural students, but to urban students as well. As the students chosen in this study are all Malays, it can safely be said that this community of students is exposed to L1 most of the time, in school, at home and in the society, as Malay is the national language and is the most widely used language in Malaysia. Urban students' preferred choice of lingua franca with friends of other races may also be Malay, and not English. English may only be heard and read sporadically, during lessons or while reading the occasional magazines or books. Hence, the sporadic exposure to English may not be adequate to support and develop incidental receptive vocabulary learning to its full potential.

Apart from that, the need to expand their vocabulary may also be lacking. They may see no need to expand their vocabulary to understand conversations or messages in

English, beyond what they study in school, as their social situation does not call for it. English perhaps is seen as an academic subject and as a medium of instruction for Science and Mathematics subjects. Students may have felt that their vocabulary knowledge is sufficient for them to gain good marks in those tests. The demand of the test is such that students may be able to gain respectable marks even without a wide knowledge of words. Hence, this may have resulted in the unwillingness of students to invest time and effort in expanding their receptive vocabulary and hence, a stunted receptive vocabulary size, limited to only what they learn in school, for academic purposes.

Another possible explanation behind this may be that students' vocabulary growth may be 'fossilized' (Long, 1997; Jiang, 2000; Lardiere, 1998, cited in Chen, 2009) . They may have reached a stage where their vocabulary growth is 'stunted'. Hence, they may then resort to 'recycling' and 'reusing' known words in their daily lives and exams and get by just as well. This may indicate the scenario where students do not even need to actively learn new words, what more passively gain new words, as their environment is not conducive enough. This may be a reason why their receptive vocabulary is at par with their productive vocabulary.

With such factors impeding receptive vocabulary growth, productive vocabulary should be even smaller. However, in this case, the repeated practice and use of vocabulary in teaching and learning may be the factor that tilts the scales into balance. As the achievement of the English language is very much dependent on examination results, the testing methods may cause a backwash effect. The exam format for the English language tests dominantly the writing skills. Hence, students spend a lot of time practicing how to write good essays. They may be producing already familiar words repeatedly, so as to 'play it safe' during exams. With this, they make full use of their receptive vocabulary and hence, a balanced receptive and productive vocabulary size.

Another reason for this insignificant difference between receptive and vocabulary size may be the amount of word knowledge being tested in this study. The word knowledge tested was only on the form and meaning. If the complete knowledge of the word, for example, collocations or syntax, were taken into account, the gap may have been more significant.

Furthermore, the lenient scoring method may be one of the causes as well. If stricter marking, in terms of spelling and grammar, is employed, the gap may have been more significant. In Webb's (2008) study, participants' vocabulary gap was greater when they were scored using strict marking, where spelling and grammar were taken into account. In contrast, the ratio of productive and receptive knowledge was almost equal when scored using a more lenient marking.

However, looking at the raw scores of productive and receptive vocabulary, it is interesting to note that productive vocabulary is reported to be larger than receptive vocabulary (see Table 4.1). Webb (2008) explained that this might have occurred because students were tested for different receptive and productive words. Students may be more familiar with words from the productive test than receptive test and vice versa. A way to overcome this may be to have two sets of tests, where all the words could be analysed for both receptive and productive knowledge.

Another reason that explains the slightly larger productive vocabulary size is that students may have encountered problems in the receptive test. They may have overlooked a few matters when translating L2 words to L1 words, particularly spelling and pronunciation. For example, students tend to mistake 'multiple' for 'multiply' (spelling) and 'fond' for 'pond' (pronunciation). This may be due to the fact that one word is more recognizable and appears more frequently than the other (multiple vs. multiply) and also

due to L1 interference (/f/ and /p/ in colloquial Malay is interchangeable). Other examples of errors can be seen in Table 5.2.

Table 5.2
Examples of errors in receptive translation test

Probable Cause of Errors	Target Word	Mistaken for
Affixes	Lead	Leader
	Appoint	Appointment / Point
	Besides	Beside
Pronunciation	Ought	Thought
	Deed	Need
	Faith	Fate
	Eager	Anger
Familiarity	Expenses	Expensive
	Conscience	Conscious
	Arise	Rise
Meaning	Beyond	Target
	Fit	Tight
	Noble	Pure

Hence, all these problems that were faced by the participants may have reduced their scores in the receptive translation test. However, this was not a problem when translating L1 into L2 words (productive translation test), as they may have gained the spelling of words through direct study of its spelling and meaning. This may also indicate that these students acquire L2 vocabulary more using explicit learning through sight rather than incidental learning through sound. From this learning strategy, it appears that the ESL students here are actually more EFL. Another point to support this is that L1 and L2 learners' gap between receptive and productive vocabulary is supposed to be larger than EFL learners' gap (Webb, 2008) (see CHAPTER 2 Section 2.3), whereas the results of this study indicates the opposite. Hence, it appears the participants of this study reflect an EFL situation more than an ESL one.

5.1.3 High frequency words > Low frequency words

Results have also shown that students have larger high frequency vocabulary compared to low frequency words. This is true for both urban and rural students.

This finding shows that the students' vocabulary development is in line with the notion of vocabulary frequency. As some words appear more frequently than others, it is only natural for students to gain more high frequency words, as they use and are exposed to them more often than low frequency words, which may only appear once or twice in their lessons.

As experts have cited that L2 students' practical goal is to gain the first 2000 most frequency words (Schmitt, 2000) (see CHAPTER 2 Section 2.4), this finding can add value to the direction of the English curriculum. Students' vocabulary development is clearly pointing in the right direction. However, further studies have to be conducted to determine the extent of the achievement of this goal.

5.1.4 Gap between high frequency words of urban and rural students < Gap between low frequency words of urban and rural students

This result indicates that rural students are trailing behind urban students in their low frequency vocabulary more than in their high frequency vocabulary. This may be due to their disadvantages as have been discussed earlier (see Section 5.1.1). With rural students already at a disadvantage to gain exposure and use of the language, they are left behind even further and have a greater 'slump' in low frequency vocabulary compared to urban students.

As the nature of vocabulary knowledge is said to be 'incremental', the more receptive vocabulary students gain, the more productive vocabulary students have access

to. Similarly, the lesser the receptive vocabulary gain, the lesser the productive vocabulary to access. Hence, this results in the 'Matthew Effect', where the rich gets richer and the poor gets poorer (Stanovich, 1986, cited in Lehr et.al., 2004) (see CHAPTER 2 Section 2.7.2). With more receptive vocabulary, urban students then have greater access to productive vocabulary. In comparison, with an already limited and hampered receptive vocabulary, the probability for rural students to access their receptive vocabulary to be productive vocabulary will be even less. This calls for the need of greater emphasis and exposure on the part of rural students to control this backsliding from getting more detrimental, as they are already at an obvious disadvantage compared to urban students.

5.1.5 Lex30 : Urban Low-frequency Productive vocabulary size = Rural Low-frequency Productive vocabulary size

For Lex30, low frequency vocabulary production showed no significant difference between urban and rural students. This is in contrast to the results of the translation tests, where urban students outperformed rural students for low frequency words.

Firstly, a reason behind this may be the format of the test. One is a controlled test (translation test) whereas the other is a free-production test (Lex30). For the controlled translation tests, students were tested based on a controlled set of words, whereas in the free production Lex30 test, students were free to produce any words, based on the stimulus given. This may suggest that a controlled test such as the translation test may be a better instrument to gauge students' productive vocabulary development.

With greater freedom of production in Lex30, urban and rural students were found to have the tendency to produce the same words based on the stimulus words given. Most of the low frequency words produced were technical terms related to their Science

subjects, for example ‘Physics’, ‘Chemistry’, ‘photosynthesis’, ‘organ’ and ‘microorganism’. This may be due to the fact that these students use and produce a similar set of words, as they share similar subjects which are taught in English (Science and Mathematics). As teenagers, computer and electronic gadgets are also most relevant to them. Hence, another set of popular response would be technical terms used in computers and electronic gadgets, for example ‘computer’, ‘internet’ and ‘wireless’. Hence, their ‘uniformed’ answers could have caused the results to be similar. Other common low-frequency responses can be seen in Table 5.3.

Table 5.3
Common low-frequency responses for Lex30

Stimulus	Responses
Disease	H1N1, dengue, SARS, contagious, fever, aedes, dialysis, pandemic, asthma, flu, germs
Science	Laboratory, scientific, circulatory, cells
Technology	PDA, Facebook, portable, playstation, laptop, robot, e-mail

This finding may indicate that students have better access to produce and are more comfortable using subject-specific English terminologies rather than general English. This may demonstrate their language use pattern, where they may communicate and use English mainly for academic purposes and for interest sake, but not for daily use. Furthermore, this may also imply that students have limited access to low frequency vocabulary, apart from terminologies.

Secondly, the implementation of Lex30 may also be a factor contributing to this result. In Meara and Fitzpatrick’s (2000) original study, they set a time limit of 30 seconds per stimulus words for participants to produce responses. Participants were not able to return to previous stimulus words to revise or add on to their responses. However, in this study, the students were given a maximum of 80 minutes to complete the translation tests

and Lex30. Within that time limit, some students completed the tests by regulating back and forth between the translation test and Lex30 while others had 20 to 25 minutes to complete Lex30 with the allowance to produce responses to stimulus words on their own time and sequence. The difference in the way Lex30 was implemented may have brought about a difference in results, where the previous is more controlled and sequenced while the latter is more relaxed.

5.2 Findings of Research Question 2

What is the relationship between:

i) the overall receptive and productive vocabulary of urban and rural students?

ii) receptive and productive vocabulary at different word levels of urban and rural students?

A summary of the results is shown in the following table.

Table 5.4
Findings of the second research question

Translation Tests	Overall receptive vocabulary correlates with overall productive vocabulary strongly, and also at every word level
	Strength of relationships for urban students > rural students
Lex30	Only a weak correlation between Lex30 and rural students' Receptive vocabulary

Note : >greater than

From the analyses of the second research question, three findings were revealed. Generally, receptive vocabulary correlates with productive vocabulary and vice versa. Hence, the size of one can predict the size of another. The findings will be discussed in greater detail in the following sections.

5.2.1 Overall receptive vocabulary correlates with overall productive vocabulary strongly, and also at every word level

This finding may indicate that the vocabulary level of urban and rural students are predictable, using the translation tests. Students with larger receptive vocabulary tend to have larger productive vocabulary as well, and vice versa. This finding supports the results of previous studies conducted. In Meara and Fitzpatrick's (2000) study, they found that the size of their participants' receptive vocabulary is broadly proportionate to the size of their productive vocabulary (see CHAPTER 2 Section 2.6.1). With a clear indication of the ability to predict, this may help researchers, and especially teachers, in gauging the extent of the students' vocabulary size. For example, when a student fails to recognize or produce a high frequency word, he or she may have very little ability to recognize and produce low frequency vocabulary as well.

This may also imply that the translation test can be used as a placement tool for teachers to determine the entry level of students' vocabulary. It may help teachers determine the best methods and strategies to adopt in a classroom. In addition, as schools in Malaysia use a 'forecast system' in terms of results (students' end of the year results as well as major examination results are 'forecasted'), the translation test may be part of a larger test battery that can be conducted for this purpose.

5.2.2 Strength of relationships for urban students > rural students

Results of the study have also shown that the strength of relationships between receptive and productive vocabulary for urban students is stronger than rural students at every word level. This result also indicates that urban students' vocabulary is more predictable than rural students. However, results of this study cannot be overgeneralized

to represent the population of students in Malaysia. The factors contributing to this can only be based on the researcher's limited background knowledge of the students in this study, as this area was not explored.

One of the factors behind this result may be the similarity of background of the students. Urban students selected in this study may have more similar background compared to rural students. Urban students may have almost similar amount of exposure and use of English, whereas rural students may have exposure and the opportunity to use, ranging from different ends of the continuum, from adequate to very little. Hence, their result from the test may have been unstable.

Another factor worth mentioning is the attitude of rural and urban students to taking the tests. As Nation (in Coxhead, 2005) has noted, the attitude of the test-takers may influence the result of the test. (see CHAPTER 2 Section 2.6.1) Urban students may have a more serious attitude while taking the test whereas rural students may have a more negative attitude. First of all, urban students may have a higher level of expectations when it comes to test-taking as they may see this as an achievement factor and motivation for future job prospects (Xu, 2009) (see CHAPTER 2 Section 2.7.1). Secondly, rural students may view test-taking lightly as they may have lower aspirations and motivation for good grades in exams, especially English (Gaudart, 1987) (see CHAPTER 2 Section 2.7.1.), have had bad experiences with tests before (especially English) and perhaps would have done a lot of guesswork and did it quickly without giving it much attention. Hence, a difference in the attitude of the test-takers may have influenced the results, although other factors which have not been explored may have contributed to this result as well.

5.2.3 Lex30 : Only a weak correlation between Lex30 and rural students' receptive vocabulary

When the results for the translation test were correlated to Lex30, the analysis revealed only a weak correlation between Lex30 and rural students' receptive vocabulary. This is in contrast with the study conducted by the founder of Lex30, Meara and Fitzpatrick (2000), where their study showed that Lex30 correlates highly with a test of receptive vocabulary. The reason may be due to the format of the receptive vocabulary test used in the previous study and this current study. This study used a translation test, whereas the previous study used a "yes/no" test. The difference in test formats may have yielded different results, as have been reported by experts in the field (Webb, 2008, Schmitt, 2000 and Meara and Fitzpatrick, 2000) (see CHAPTER 2 Section 2.6). The translation test in this study may have limited the students to only words from the word list, whereas the "yes/no" test used in the previous study may allow their subjects to over-estimation of their vocabulary knowledge. They may tick "yes" to words which they may not know the meaning of. Hence, this may have elicited different responses, and perhaps, even different scores.

5.3 Research Question 3

To what extent do the vocabulary sizes of urban and rural students correlate with their ELA?

A summary of the results is shown in Table 5.5.

Table 5.5
Findings of the third research question

Translation Tests	Overall vocabulary size correlates with ELA moderately : -Urban students' overall vocabulary size correlates with ELA -Rural students' overall vocabulary size does not correlate with ELA
	Urban students' receptive vocabulary size correlates with ELA, whereas rural students' productive vocabulary size correlates with ELA

From the analyses of the third research question, two findings were revealed. Generally, vocabulary size correlates with ELA only moderately to some extent. The findings will be discussed in greater detail in the following sections.

5.3.1 Overall vocabulary size correlates with ELA moderately

Based on this research question, it was found that urban and rural students' vocabulary shares a moderate relationship with ELA. This finding supports the results of previous studies where vocabulary can influence and predict language proficiency and academic achievement. As academic achievement involves comprehension, experts have "found a strong and persistent link between vocabulary instruction and comprehension based tasks" (Berne and Blachowicz, 2008, p.315). It is said that with better vocabulary, the achievement in academic subjects will be improved. . In Morris and Cobb's (2004) study, their vocabulary profiling of TESL trainees is found to be good predictors of academic performance (see CHAPTER 2 Section 2.7.2).

This result shows that students' vocabulary size can indeed predict and influence their English test results. It can be said that studies on this issue conducted in different context can be applied to Malaysia, specifically to Kuantan, as well. The results of the other studies can act as an indicator to the potential of vocabulary here (see CHAPTER 2

Section 2.7.2). It may be able to act as a predictor to school readiness for young children (Government of Canada Report, 2006) and English majors in university (Morris and Cobb, 2004). However, upon closer examination of this result, the second finding for this research question may raise considerable doubts about overgeneralizing this. There is a strong possibility that the difference in the ecological background may influence the pattern of correlation. This will be discussed in detail in section 5.3.2.

This finding can suggest that the translation tests may act as a tool to gauge students' English language test achievement. However, it has to be fine-tuned further to garner better predictability. The scoring method of the translation tests in this study was quite lenient. In Webb's study (2008), his strict scoring method yielded slightly different results compared to lenient scoring. Hence, to get a better picture of the relationship in this study, a strict scoring method can be used, to see whether there is a difference in results.

Lex30 and students' ELA, however, did not reveal any statistically significant relationship. This may be due to the different demands and purpose of the test. Lex30 looks at the ability to produce low frequency words, whereas the English test looks at the overall structural aspect of presenting ideas in the language. The need to produce low frequency words in the English test may be minimal, except for high achievers, which is a minority group. This can be explained by the reason that the writing skill takes precedence over the reading skill in the English test. Students with little ability to access and use low frequency words may get by in it, perhaps by using a majority of high frequency words. Hence, the English test may not be a good enough comparative to gauge their production of low frequency vocabulary. Apart from that, the majority of low frequency words that students produced in Lex30 are scientific and technological terms. All these terms may be of little use in their English test and the ability to produce low frequency words apart from

these subject-specific themes may be unaccounted for. Therefore, the basis of comparison between the responses in Lex30 and the English test may not be accurate. A more detailed study in this area is needed to shed more light on how vocabulary shares a relationship with ELA.

5.3.2 Urban students' ELA correlates with receptive vocabulary, whereas rural students' ELA correlates with productive vocabulary

The second finding reports that there is a difference in relationships, in terms of which factor ELA shares with. Urban students' ELA showed stronger relationship with their receptive vocabulary, whereas rural students' ELA showed stronger relationship with their productive vocabulary.

Urban students' result of the analysis is in line with previous studies, where receptive vocabulary is greatly linked to reading proficiency and comprehension (Berne and Blachowicz, 2008, Chall and Snow, 1988, Lehr et.al., 2004, and Webb, 2008) (see CHAPTER 2 Section 2.7.2). Hence, even as reading skill is minimally tested in the English test, it may be essential for students to do well to gain better ELA. As urban students have reportedly better ELA, this may be one of the factors contributing to this result.

Another factor may be students' ecological factor and learning styles. As urban students may have more exposure to English, they may have gained more incidentally and hence, a more 'reliable' L2 receptive vocabulary size compared to rural students. Rural students, due to their lack of exposure, may have gained more of their so-called 'L2' English receptive vocabulary through explicit learning, perhaps in an EFL situation (see SECTION 5.1.2). Hence, the different ecological background and different vocabulary

learning style may have put their receptive and productive vocabulary gains on a different continuum altogether. This then, may have a snowball effect, resulting in the difference in the outcome.

Based on a more 'reliable' L2 receptive vocabulary, it is possible to predict urban students' ELA. However, their productive vocabulary proved otherwise. This may be due to the fact that words tested in the translation tests were only from the word list. Hence, it may not reflect their actual productive vocabulary size. This may be improved by conducting a more encompassing test which includes more words to be tested to gain better results.

For rural students, their questionable 'L2' receptive vocabulary may not be able to predict their ELA. However, there may be other factors at play. Their attitude towards the test, the limited words in the test, the format of the ELA itself, their family background and their personal learning styles may contribute to this result. Further studies have to be conducted to investigate this in greater detail. However, in terms of productive vocabulary, it showed a significant relationship with ELA. One reason behind this may be rural students' ample opportunity to practice, due to the backwash effect of the exam, where the writing skill is given importance. Hence, they improve on their productive vocabulary, perhaps recycling already known words. This brings about the 'Matthew Effect' (Stanovich, 1986, cited in Lehr et.al., 2004), where the more they produce (writing), the better they get at it (see CHAPTER 2 Section 2.7.2). This may be the reason why rural students displayed a relationship between their ELA and productive vocabulary, albeit a weak one.

5.4 Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, a few recommendations can be made to teachers, curriculum developers and test developers.

First of all, as the results have shown that vocabulary does indeed have an influence on students' ELA, teachers can provide students with more structured vocabulary instruction which requires more quality processing and constant recycling. This can help ensure that students take on a more active and serious attitude towards vocabulary while providing them a platform for exposure and practice, as their surrounding environment may be inadequate. The demand of English tests can also be structured in such a way that deeper vocabulary knowledge is tested and students are given credit for low-frequency vocabulary use. Besides, teachers can monitor their students' vocabulary progress through ready-made tests for placement and diagnostic purposes. By having an idea of their students' entry level and problem areas in vocabulary, teachers can perhaps devise tailored methods and strategies to help their students and prevent backsliding from getting rampant. To expand the receptive vocabulary, teachers can also integrate the existing reading project in the schools, NILAM (Nadi Ilmu Amalan Membaca or The Pulse of Knowledge is in the Reading Habit), and award it a higher level of importance.

Secondly, curriculum developers can devise a curriculum to include vocabulary in its specifications and objectives. This will put vocabulary instruction on a higher pedestal and a more structured and focused instruction could be derived from it. Another extension to this suggestion may be the inclusion of more vocabulary items in the English language tests. Furthermore, the word list in the curriculum could also be revised and perhaps, revamped, to make it more current and relevant for local needs. The selection of words should be carefully carried out as some words may be more useful than others in the local

context, which may differ, from the British and American contexts. The list can also be made more meaningful if words are categorized based on frequency and broad themes. This may ease practitioners in planning suitable goals for their students.

Thirdly, students can start taking on an active role to improve on their vocabulary. They can counter the lack of exposure and practice by reading extensively. They can also devise personal strategies to consolidate their vocabulary learning by methods such as actively consulting the dictionary and keeping a log book on new words.

5.5 Suggestions for Further Research

Due to the limitations of this study and after considering the results, a few suggestions can be made for further research.

First of all, the study can be expanded to study a greater population. More students can be involved to gain a more reliable insight into vocabulary in Malaysia. As students in Malaysia have different L1s, the study can be extended to study the different vocabulary patterns. A longitudinal study can also be conducted to explore the vocabulary gain (and perhaps slump) of students from primary to secondary or even tertiary level. This may provide an informational basis to curriculum developers and linguists in the design of curriculum to come. Besides, a thorough study on students' background may provide deeper understanding of the factors contributing to vocabulary size. Students' family background including their SES, L1, aspirations and communication may be looked into in greater detail. Students' exposure to the different methods of vocabulary instruction as well as their learning styles may also be explored as it may also play a vital role in their vocabulary development.

Secondly, different test formats can be explored. This study used a self-devised translation test and a word association test. It was quite a tedious process when it came to scoring and it was difficult to choose words which are suitable for translation, given the limited words in the word list. The use of other test formats may also yield different and new findings. Other formats worth exploring may be a simple yes/no test as it may consume less time and all the words in the list can be included. Another format worth considering may be ready-made vocabulary tests. These would save time preparing and pilot-testing and also be able to gauge students' vocabulary levels in general, beyond the limitation of the word list. For more localized needs, a better designed test that is user-friendly and cost-effective can be devised to benefit teachers and students alike. However, the best choice of test format would inevitably depend on the purpose of the test and study.

Apart from that, the scoring method of the translation tests in this study can also be revised. As this study adopts a lenient scoring, for the purpose of gaining an insight to their vocabulary size, a strict scoring method can also be implemented if the researcher is interested to find out students' level of vocabulary mastery. A strict scoring method may also used as a diagnostic tool, in which case it can present areas where students are good at and weak in. Again, this depends a lot on the purpose of the study to be conducted.

A separate study on localized word frequency may also be useful. As vocabulary use in Malaysia may differ from countries where English is the L1, the frequency of certain words may differ. A Malaysian English corpus can be studied to gauge these differences.

Researchers can also re-visit and re-investigate the status of English in Malaysia. As students in this study have demonstrated that they are more EFL learners rather than ESL learners, perhaps it may be crucial to reassess the English situation. This could have

major implications in educational policies, curriculum and even the use of English in governmental and business dealings.

Furthermore, as it has been reported that vocabulary shares a significant relationship with other language skills by many previous studies and supported here, it may be useful for future studies to investigate the point at which vocabulary can help and perhaps, improve students' language proficiency. Hence, researchers can specifically look at how vocabulary assists students and the extent it contributes to their language proficiency.

5.6 Conclusion

This study has achieved its aims and objectives. It has discovered the vocabulary sizes of urban and rural students, where urban students proved to have larger vocabulary sizes than rural students. It has also confirmed that vocabulary shares a significant relationship with English language achievement and hence, is able to influence and predict ELA, to some extent. With this, the stakeholders can reap relevant and current insights into vocabulary and how it can benefit and implicate language achievement. This may also sway the fashion of language teaching in favour of vocabulary. However, more studies have to be conducted to extend the scope of this study in order to benefit a greater population.

Nevertheless, this can serve as a valuable and worthy take-off point for further research in this area. With the new policy, MBMMBI, set by the Ministry of Education and millions of ringgit being allocated to it in the recent Malaysian financial budget, it shows the government's commitment and sincerity to develop and strengthen the proficiency of languages, in this case, a special mention of the English language in

particular. It makes sense that vocabulary should be explored further in addressing this policy as this study supports previous studies conducted, where the role of vocabulary in the representation and transmission of ideas is proven to be an established relationship.

This provides more than enough reasons for educators to not only notice it, but place vocabulary on a higher pedestal. All the stakeholders, be it curriculum developers, the education departments, researchers, teacher trainers, textbook writers, language tutors, teachers or students alike can play a role in highlighting vocabulary instruction. With an active participation and approach to vocabulary research, especially in the local Malaysian context, it can expedite the success of the government's mission and thus, contribute meaningfully to the aspiration of its people.