

Collocational Instruction for Improving Undergraduate Student Competency in English Reading and Writing

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ABSTRACT

This study has its objectives: 1) to compare students' English reading competency before and after learning through the collocational instruction (CI) for improving undergraduate student skills in English reading and writing; 2) to investigate students' English writing competency after learning through CI. The target group was 20 undergraduates, selected by Purposive Sampling, at Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University, Khon Kaen Campus, majoring in Buddhist Studies, Philosophy, Teaching Thai Language, Political Science and Social Studies. The research tools included: 1) the CI lesson plans; 2) a reading test; and 3) a writing evaluation form. The statistics used in the data analysis were: Mean, Percentage and S.D. The results were as follows. 1) the reading competency of the samples is higher after learning by CI and that writing is also higher than the set criteria.

Keywords

collocational instruction activities, English competency, reading and writing competency

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I. Introduction

English is very important for improving the national competitiveness of Thailand [1]. The National Strategy mentions that Thai people are expected to be frugal, generous, disciplined, and ethical, equipped with logical thinking and 21st century skills, communication skills in English [1]. Using English whether as a second language or a foreign language, vocabularies play an important role in communicating [2]. For this reason, vocabularies are a part of the language that help improve cognitive development and make people comprehensively communicate. Human is able to communicate to each other even they lack the grammar but not for lack of vocabularies [3]. Vocabularies are essential that learners should have learned as much as they can because there are more than 70% of vocabularies, especially the collocation in four skills: listening, speaking, reading, writing [3]. Moreover, in readings, there are various branches of knowledge in present which collocation is found. Studying by reading, therefore, can help knowledge acquisition [4].

There is an important factor when mentioning reading proficiency which is the understanding of the collocation. Learners normally need to learn and endeavor to grasp the collocation familiarly [2], in order to connect the right meanings with the context from a reading. If

learners pay attention to the collocation, it will worth understanding better in reading [3]. In Thailand, the learners could not interpret the reading so that it caused them slow learners and got them confused because they did not comprehend the collocation [5] [6] [7] [8]. Hence, if the learners still have their lack of the collocation, they will obviously encounter writing problem. In addition, teaching collocation can enhance English writing proficiency, as some previous studies [9] suggested that English writing proficiency of high school learners passed the standard because they notice collocation from a reading and revise the vocabularies that they noted which can advance them to the writing.

In order to solve the mentioned problem, a way to improve is CI or in other words called 'teaching collocation' [8] [9]. Teaching collocation had brought the concept of lexical approach in language teaching as a way in teaching [3]. The meaning of collocation that was using collocations with other vocabularies in which each one was related to each other and naturally using vocabularies as phrases as native speakers without interpreting word by word [3]. There are steps in teaching collocation in line with lexical approach in language teaching: observation, estimation, and usage. The first step is 'noticing', learners noticed new collocations from a reading by underlining or highlighting collocations and write down what

they have noticed to their notebooks. The second is 'estimating', learners study the meanings of collocations from a reading and exemplify sentences from dictionary with separating similarity and difference of the collocations in the exercises. The last is 'using', it is to produce the language learners are capable of bringing the collocations they have studied and applied in self-communication [3] [10]. Therefore, learners could practice language using in Learner-centered which made effective learning meaningfully.

According to above teaching method, the researchers are interested in CI integrated with reading steps: pre-reading, inter-reading, and post-reading [10], and construct lesson plans in terms of teaching collocation in order to enhance reading and writing abilities of undergraduate students at Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University, Khon Kaen Campus (MCUKK), Thailand.

II. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The research methodology involved the interpretative paradigm and aimed to develop CI for improving English competency, particularly reading and writing skills, of the undergraduate students of MCUKK. In so doing, the objectives of this research are as follows:

- 1) To compare students' English reading competency before and after learning through the collocational instruction (CI) for improving undergraduate student skills in English reading and writing;
- 2) To investigate students' English writing competency after learning through CI.

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study was One-Shot Case Study, designed for comparing learners' English reading proficiency in pre-teaching and post-teaching collocations, and studying their writing proficiency after teaching collocation with following methods:

Target Group

The target group of this study included 20 undergraduate students, selected by Purposive Sampling, at MCUKK, majoring in Buddhist Studies, Philosophy, Teaching Thai Language, Political Science and Social Studies, who enrolled

the course of English 2, semester 1, 2020, organized by Khon Kaen Language Institution.

Variables

The researchers studied a conceptual framework supported a model of behaviorist's learning styles consisted of observation, estimation, and usage [9]. The researchers then integrated the model with the methods of reading teaching until gaining 3 methods of teaching collocation related to learner-centered: 1) pre-reading method, 2) inter-reading method, and 3) post-reading method [10] which there were variables as follows:

Independent Variable: CI by using the following methods:

1. Pre-reading method (Observation)

1.1 Students learn importance of collocations in a reading with underlying or highlighting.

1.2 Students do exercises in each lesson plan consisting of five reading passages: daily routine, journey, finance, education, and energy and environment so that students study meanings and methods in using collocations, and exemplify sentences from dictionary and computer program.

1.3 Students take collocation notes from a reading and do exercises on their notebooks consisted of vocabularies, meanings, definitions, pronunciations, synonyms, antonyms, idioms and example-sentences.

2. Inter-reading method (Estimation)

2.1 Students read stories using skimming and scanning techniques by questioning to build their understandings on the reading.

2.2 Students revise their own vocabularies in the notebooks and do notetaking for what they have studied more.

3. Post-reading method (Usage)

3.1 Students write English summary in order to summarize main points from a reading.

3.2 Students narrate their summaries to the group in order to exchange language viewpoints.

Dependent Variable:

1. English Reading Proficiency

Students do the 20-item-objective test of English reading proficiency consistent with the six

levels of Bloom's Taxonomy of Learning: remember, understand, apply, analyze, evaluate, and create [9].

2. English Writing Proficiency

Students write English summary with five elements of score standards: 1) main idea, 2) supporting detail, 3) self-language sentence building, 4) data and detail organizing, and 5) accuracy of grammar and punctuation usage.

Research Method

The research method is divided into 5 phases as follows:

Phase 1: Study theories, documents, researches, and relate literatures with the following topics: teaching collocation, English reading proficiency, and English writing proficiency.

Phase 2: Stipulate a target group and study variable, instruments and learning materials involved in the research.

Phase 3: Construct research instruments based on the studied results in Phase 1 and 2.

Phase 4: Present the rectify research instruments to the experts in order to verify the quality.

Phase 5: Collect data of the target group with the pretest and posttest of English reading proficiency, and evaluate English summary writing after every lesson plan, then conduct statistical analysis of the data, and interpret and discuss the research results.

Statistics in Analysis of Research Result

1) Calculate Mean, Standard Deviation, and Percentage of pretest and posttest of English reading proficiency by comparing to quality and standard of higher education study result mentioned by MCKU university announcement on English Proficiency of MCKU undergraduate students.

3. Evaluate English summary writing proficiency after every lesson plan of teaching collocation, and considering a percentage of students who passed the test (50%) and quality level by comparing to the standard of measurement and evaluation of higher education mentioned by MCKU university announcement on English Proficiency of MCKU undergraduate students.

IV. RESEARCH RESULTS

1) The comparison results of pre- and post-teaching collocation in English reading proficiency of 20 students majoring in Buddhist Studies, Philosophy, Teaching Thai Language, Political Science and Social Studies indicated that the mean of English reading proficiency score before teaching collocation was 6.6 (S.D. = 2.04), accounted for 33%, at a 'failure' level. After teaching collocation, the mean was 12.2 (S.D. = 2.59), calculated as 61%. This is consistent with the hypothesis stating that students get higher scores in English reading proficiency after teaching collocation according to the standard of measurement and evaluation of higher education mentioned above.

| Grade | Score Scale Value: Credit | Score Scale (Percentage) | Study Result (Quality) |
|-------|---------------------------|--------------------------|------------------------|
| A | 4.0 | 80 - 100 | Excellence |
| B | 3.0 | 70 - 79 | Good |
| C | 2.0 | 60 - 69 | Fair |
| D | 1.0 | 50 - 59 | Poor |
| F | 0 | 0 - 49 | Fail |

Table 1: The standard of measurement and evaluation of higher education mentioned by MCKU university announcement on English Proficiency of MCKU undergraduate students.

| Testing | Mean (20 total) | S.D. | Percentage | Quality Level |
|---------------|-----------------|------|------------|---------------|
| Pre-teaching | 6.6 | 2.04 | 33 | Fail |
| Post-teaching | 12.2 | 2.59 | 61 | Fair |

Table 2: The comparison result of pre- and post-teaching collocation in English reading proficiency

2) The evaluation result of post-teaching collocation in English writing proficiency in every lesson plan suggested that its mean in English writing proficiency equaled to 10.69 (S.D.= 1.55), accounted for 53.36 %. This indicated a poor level of performance. However, the comparison of the percentages of the first lesson and that of the fifth

suggested 37.8 % of the improvement in writing proficiency of the students. This is very positive progress of the student learning.

| Lesson Plan No. | Mean (20 total) | S.D | % | Quality Level | Pass/Not Pass (As Standard) |
|-----------------|-----------------|-----|------|---------------|-----------------------------|
| 1 | 6.45 | 1.0 | 32.2 | Fail | Not Pass |
| 2 | 8.60 | 5 | 5 | Fail | Not Pass |
| 3 | 11.55 | 1.3 | 43.0 | Poor | Pass |
| 4 | 12.75 | 9 | 0 | Fair | Pass |
| 5 | 14.10 | 2.0 | 57.7 | Good | Pass |
| | | 9 | 5 | | |
| | | 2.2 | 63.7 | | |
| | | 2 | 5 | | |
| | | 1.0 | 70.0 | | |
| | | 2 | 5 | | |
| Sum | 10.69 | 1.5 | 53.3 | Poor | Pass |
| | | 5 | 6 | | |

Table 3: The study result of post-teaching collocation in English writing proficiency in each lesson plan

V. DISCUSSION

According to the instruments used, the researchers had constructed the instruments for the experiment contained five lesson plans, each lesson was four periods taking 50 minutes per a period; so, there were 20 periods in total. Research methodology and data collection were systematically conducted started with studying curriculum, course description, and a conceptual framework of teaching collocation content. Then, the researchers chose the readings which were several and appropriate to students' capabilities context covered English vocabulary contents: daily routine, journey, finance, education, and energy and environment. Afterward, the researchers made up the exercises on teaching collocation and built the copes of teaching collocation according to a learner-centered instructional concept: objectives, workloads, evaluations used in every of each lesson plan. As mentioned previously, the researchers brought all lesson plans and exercises to be evaluated by the experts before using it with the real target group of the study in order to measure their content and time suitability.

As stated in the study result, it indicated that students' English reading proficiency score

was higher after learning with CI, passed the standard at 61% at a fair level. For this reason, it means the students understood meanings of collocations in a reading which showed them the holistic view and the main idea of CI. As shown in Table 2, the comparison result of pre-teaching collocation in English reading proficiency, the students gained the score at 33% at a 'failure' level. It was because students did not understand collocation meanings in a reading; they also interpreted collocations wrongly so that they were unable to catch main idea and details of the reading as well as answering the questions. Conversely, as the result of post-teaching collocation, they were better at 61% at a 'fair' level. This shows 28% of improvement.

As mentioned above, doing exercises could help students have better scores that in each lesson plan of teaching collocation, students practiced to use collocation meanings and learn how to use collocations in sentences. Questions were also used in consonance with Bloom's Taxonomy [9] in order that students wrote important collocations to seek for main ideas of the story. As Krashen [11]; Schmitt [12] stated that the more students knew and understood meanings and methods of collocations, the more they could understand a reading. Also, students could connect the collocations with other vocabularies and interpret right meanings which could relate an entire story.

As seen in Table 3, it indicates that in the first two lessons of the lesson plan, students failed English writing tests at 32.25% and 43.00%. This might be that students have not understood meanings of collocations in a writing yet, therefore they could not catch main ideas and used wrong collocations in summarizing. This was conformed to the previous studies [13] [8], its result was found that the reason that students failed was that they did not have enough collocation knowledge so that they could not use right meanings. Also, it was because students were unable to sum the main idea of the reading and to connect body of knowledge and concept between first two lesson plans.

It was conspicuous that in the third and the fourth lesson plans, students' English writing proficiency was calculated at 57.75 % and 63.75%. Students could choose collocations more correctly and appropriately. And in the fifth lesson plan, their scores got calculated at 70.05% at a good level;

students could comprehend writing ideas, summarize important main ideas and supporting details, and use better languages. The average score of English writing proficiency was at 53.36 % in overall at a poor level. It was, however, found that students increasingly improved their English writing proficiency because they had gained higher scores respectively since the first and the last lesson plan.

VI. RECOMMENDATIONS

In order to improve CI, first, the instructors should check students' vocabulary notebooks and exercises of every lesson plan in order to examine their understandings and realize students' different bases needed to exemplify and teach how to write English writing summary before a class. Second, the course should have a longer duration as students have more time to practice and learn. However, a too long period might not gain the students' interest. Third, the study of IC should continue in cooperative learning style with other activities and computer technology at the same time for encouraging students in the form of the project-based learning in 21st century. Fourth, as stated in the 12th National Economic and Social Development Plan (2017-2021) [14] which pays attention on Thailand sustainable development goals, it is necessary to enhance English learning related to economy and social topics such as finance, energy, environment, and journey for future careers of the students. CI should be used with the development of other skills: speaking and listening. As the most of the students are Buddhists, the Buddhist doctrines or Buddhist terms should be applied to CI.

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