

การพัฒนาทักษะด้านการเขียนโดยการใช้สมุดคำศัพท์ทำมือภาษาอังกฤษ **BOLSTERING WRITING CAPABILITY THROUGH HANDY VOCAB**

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บทคัดย่อ

งานวิจัยฉบับนี้มีจุดประสงค์เพื่อ 1) พัฒนาความสามารถด้านการเขียนของนักศึกษา 2) ส่งเสริมการเรียนรู้ด้วยตนเองของนักศึกษา และ 3) ศึกษาความพึงพอใจของนักศึกษาต่อการเรียนรู้ผ่านสมุดคำศัพท์ทำมือภาษาอังกฤษ เครื่องมือวิจัยประกอบด้วย 1) แบบทดสอบวัดผลสัมฤทธิ์ ได้แก่ แบบทดสอบก่อนเรียนและแบบทดสอบหลังเรียน 2) แบบสอบถาม 3) แผนการสอน 4) สมุดจดสำหรับครูผู้สอน 5) สมุดจดสำหรับนักศึกษา 6) การสังเกต และ 7) การสัมภาษณ์เชิงลึก การวิเคราะห์ข้อมูลใช้ค่าสถิติ Paired Samples Statistics ค่า t-test ค่าร้อยละและค่าเฉลี่ย ผลการวิจัยระบุว่า 1) ความสามารถด้านการเขียนของนักศึกษาเพิ่มขึ้น โดยค่าเฉลี่ยคะแนนแบบทดสอบหลังเรียนเท่ากับ 12.98 ซึ่งสูงกว่าค่าเฉลี่ยคะแนนจากแบบทดสอบก่อนเรียนที่ระบุ 9.57 2) ค่าเฉลี่ยคะแนนของแบบสอบถามเท่ากับ 4.24 แสดงให้เห็นว่า นักศึกษามีความพึงพอใจต่อการเรียนรู้ในระดับมาก และ 3) สมุดคำศัพท์ทำมือภาษาอังกฤษส่งเสริมการเรียนรู้ด้วยตนเองของนักศึกษาในระดับมากทั้งค่าเฉลี่ย 4.27

คำสำคัญ: สมุดคำศัพท์ทำมือภาษาอังกฤษ ความสามารถด้านการเขียนของนักศึกษา การเรียนรู้ด้วยตนเองของนักศึกษา

Abstract

This study aimed to: 1) enhance student writing capabilities, 2) promote students' self-study, and 3) investigate students' satisfactions toward handy vocab. Research instruments were: 1) achievement tests administered as a Pre-test and a Post-test, 2) a questionnaire 3) a lesson plan, 4) a lecturer journal entry, 5) student journal entries, 6) observations, and 7) in-depth interviews. To analyze the data, paired samples statistics, a t-test, the frequency and mean were used. Results revealed that: 1) student writing capabilities had developed since the average student Post-test scores significantly increased to 12.98 from an average pretest score of 9.57, 2) the mean score of the questionnaire was 4.24, indicating a high level of students' satisfactions with the learning, and 3) handy vocab promoted students' self-study which reflected in its mean satisfaction score of 4.27.

Keywords: handy vocab, student writing capabilities, students' self-study

Introduction

Udon Thani Rajabhat University encountered problems with student writing capabilities in recent years. These difficulties, which were documented in student midterm and final examination scores from 2011 to 2013, indicated that approximately 40% students who enrolled in a general English course entitled Reading and Writing for General Purposes failed writing. This problem led to an urgent project to enhance student writing capabilities. The first project was launched, utilizing text-based and process-based approaches in the 2014 academic year. During this period, students were taught to comprehend general features of writing with different text types, structures and rhetorical purposes using text-based approaches, whilst process-based approaches were employed in prewriting stages, drafting and peer review. The findings from this project showed some success since the students' writing scores improved. Unfortunately, these improvements did not enhance students' emotional attitudes. This was evidenced by their comments which revealed that these approaches made them serious, exhausted and uncomfortable. To ease this problem, a search for a better approach was done.

This resulted in the implementation of handy vocab. Handy vocab implements text-based and process-based approaches and considers students' emotional behavior (Shannon, 2015). Furthermore, it focuses on students' self-study and different activities promoting individual creativity, imagination, ideas and design. Hackathorna et al. (2011) stated that teaching students with only text-based approaches is uninteresting. To motivate students, integrating teaching with students' interests is vital. Holland & Goering (2015), whose research was related to child centered learning, also agreed with these sentiments. Their findings showed that teaching writing involved paying attention to students' interests and using their feedback could also enhance student's writing capabilities. Therefore, it can be concluded that effectively teaching writing should include text-based, process-based and emotional approaches. For these reasons, handy vocab was used in this study. The research questions were: 1) Does handy vocab enhance student writing capabilities?, 2) Does handy vocab support students' self-study?, and 3) Are students satisfied with handy vocab?

Materials and Methods

1. Samples of the Study

The samples of this study, selected by using purposive sampling technique, were 409 different-major students enrolled the general English course entitled Reading and Writing for General Purposes during the second semester of the 2015 academic year.

2. Research Instruments

2.1 Achievement tests: These consisted of a pretest and a posttest developed from try-out. The reliability of the test indicated 0.64.

2.2 A questionnaire: It included five-point Likert Scale close-ended questions to assess students' satisfactions with their study progress, handy vocab construction, and a lecturer. Moreover, an open-ended question was also involved.

2.3 A lesson plan: This plan spanned 40 hours with various activities like constructing handy vocab, making sentences, group discussion, oral presentation, etc.

2.4 A lecturer's journal entry: It was a lecturer's notebook used to record behavior, feedback, problems, and responses of students while doing each activity.

2.5 Students' journal entries: These journals were for students to practice making sentences which were later checked and corrected by the lecturer.

2.6 Observations: These instruments were for a lecturer observing students' behavior while doing activities in a classroom. All frequent reoccurred issues were recorded.

2.7 In-depth interviews: These interviews were used twice: 1) with students whose writings were not developed, and 2) with students whose handy vocabs were unfinished.

3. Data Collection

The study spanned 40 hours of instructions and included tasks, exercises, and activities. Four sentence patterns, i.e., affirmative, negative, compound, and questions were used to teach the students fundamental writing. Each of them was taught for 10 hours. Before constructing handy vocab, the students were asked to randomly select an English letter which they would use to develop a vocabulary of 20 words starting with the letter they selected. After they developed their vocabulary, the students were trained to construct sentences as journal entries that included this vocabulary. Their sentences needed to contain one word from their vocabulary per sentence. Feedback on these sentences was frequently given, and the corrected sentences were then written in their individual handy vocab. Entries also included pictures drawn to depict the situations described by the sentences. All the features of the handy vocab must be entirely done by hand. Additionally, progress of handy vocab construction was monitored and feedback given to elicit more effective outputs. While the students were doing activities, observations were made in the lecturer's journal entry.

4. Data Analysis

Quantitative data were statistically analyzed using the open source statistical package. These data came from achievement test scores and responses to close-ended questions on a questionnaire. These were analyzed using a paired samples

t-test. The qualitative data were resulted from the students' responses to an open-ended question, frequent problems observed by the lecturer, and in-depth interviews. These were categorized into different issues and reported as percentages.

Results

1. Results of Quantitative Data

1.1 Results of Students' Achievement Test Scores

The total mean student posttest score was 12.980 ($SD=2.734$) of a possible 20 points. This was higher than their pretest score of 9.574 ($SD=3.141$) showing that student writing scores increased an average of 3.406. Furthermore, the standard errors of mean for pretest and posttest scores were 0.155 and 0.135, respectively, whilst the total standard deviation and total standard deviation of mean for achievement test scores were 2.622 and 0.129, respectively (Table 1). These meant the statistic values were stable and reliable because their scattering data were low.

Table 1 Paired Samples Statistics

Items	N	\bar{x}	S.D.	Std. Error of Mean	Mean Difference between Pretest and Posttest Scores	Total S.D. of Achievement Test Scores	Total S.D. Error of Mean of Achievement Test Scores
Pretest Scores	409	9.574	3.141	0.155	3.406	2.622	0.129
Posttest Scores	409	12.980	2.734	0.135			

To analyze the data, a one tailed paired difference t-test with 408 degrees of freedom were used. H_0 was $u_1-u_2 = 0$ and H_1 was $u_1-u_2>0$. The t-statistic value was 26.27 with $\alpha<0.001$. The mean score was 3.40 with a standard deviation of 2.62 and a standard error of mean of 0.129 using a 95% confidence interval. The critical t-value, t_{crit} was 3.661. The significance (1-tailed) was less than $\alpha=0.001$ (Table 2).

Table 2 Paired Samples t-test

Paired Differences							
\bar{x}	Std.	Std. Error of Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		t	df	Sig. (1-tailed)
			Lower	Upper			
-3.40	2.62	0.129	inf	-3.661	26.27	408	<0.001

These showed the results were matched with the hypothesis of the study that handy vocab enhanced student writing capabilities. Consequently, it could be concluded that handy vocab improved student writing.

1.2 Results from Close-ended Questions of the Questionnaire

Of all three sections of the close-ended questions, students' satisfactions with the lecturer had the highest mean score indicated 4.47 followed by students' emotional satisfactions through constructing handy vocab with a slightly lower mean score indicated 4.18. Students' satisfactions with their study progress received the lowest mean score of 4.06. These results reflected that the lecturer was a facilitator who coached students as they learned.

2. Results of Qualitative Data

2.1 Results of Student Handy Vocab Features



Figure 1 Sample Student Handy Vocab

According to Figure 1, the 409 student handy vocabs had different appearances. 245 handy vocabs (59.90%) were rectangular in shape, 61 (14.91%) were

desk calendar shaped, 35 (8.56%) used comic characters, 24 (5.87%) were fruit themed, 20 (4.89%) were transportation themed, and 8 (1.96%) had other appearances. 376 handy vocabs (91.93%) were tinted using colored pencils, 16 (3.91%) were done using wax oil crayons, 11 (2.69%) were completed using chalk pastel crayons, 4(0.98%) were drawn in black and white, and 2 (0.49%) were produced with watercolors. 204 handy vocabs (49.88%) used a drawing style, 197 (48.17%) were of a pop-up style, and 8 (1.96%) were in a mobile art style.

2.2 Results from the Open-ended Question of the Questionnaire

Of the 409 samples, 281 students (68.70%) expressed their opinions and made comments about the study. These comments were grouped by issue. Common student observations included:

- 202 students (71.89%) accepted that handy vocab made them independently develop ideas to design and create what they liked;
- 104 students (37.01%) thought that their pop-up style handy vocab was the most elaborate work they had ever done; and they thanked the lecturer for her encouragement;
- 88 students (31.32%) agreed that individually constructing handy vocab developed their inner capabilities and allowed them to express their identity;
- 72 students (25.62%) commented that their handy vocabs allowed them to do more elaborate work and develop patience; and
- 68 students (24.20%) suggested that the lecturer should allow them to type because their handwriting is illegible.

2.3 Results from the Observations

The observations indicated that the most frequent occurrences were:

- The students always needed to have a dictionary available while constructing sentences:
 - Constructing affirmative sentences seemed easy for them;
 - Some students constructed sentences using Google Translate, but the results were poor and confused them;
- Most students preferred not to present their work orally since they worried about their pronunciation;
- Female students seemed more adept while doing their handy vocabs;
- When the students were asked to work in pairs, they preferred to work with a person of the same gender;
- Students in an air-conditioned rooms tended to be more attentive; and

- Students whose English background was poor tended to ask their lecturer for help after class.

2.4 Results from In-depth Interviews

2.4.1 In-depth Interview Results of Students Whose Writings Were Unimproved

Using purposive sampling technique, seven of 37 students (9.05%) whose posttest scores were lower than their pretest scores were selected and interviewed. The three most frequent comments were:

- Seven students (100%) indicated that learning sentence construction was difficult for them;
- Six students (85.71%) claimed that their English knowledge background was poor; and
- Six students (85.71%) said that they never liked to study English because they had bad experiences with their former teachers.

2.4.2 In-depth Interview Results of Students Whose Handy Vocab Were Unfinished

There were 21 students (5.13%) who had not completed their handy vocab by the end of the course. Eight students were selected to participate in this interview, using purposive sampling technique. The three most frequent comments were:

- Eight students (100%) said they did not have enough time because they needed to do other projects assigned by other lecturers;
- Four students (50.00%) claimed that constructing handy vocab was expensive; and
- Five students (62.50%) stated that it was difficult for them to consult the lecturer outside of class since they were on the satellite campus.

Discussions

1. Student Writing Progress

Handy vocab was effective since the students' posttest scores were significantly higher than their pretest scores. More techniques that stimulate student interest and help them become skillful in writing should be developed to make its use more effective (Carr & Thompson, 1996). This study utilized student journal entries which worked well because they caused the students to continuously practice writing. Shvidko (2015) also used personal journals to develop student writing skills and found a similar result. Additionally, he also focuses on frequent writing practice because it brings improvement and confidence which then influences other writing activities. More

importantly, a lecturer should always keep in mind that frequently giving students' feedback stimulates development of writing (Bruner, 1990a).

A lesson plan is also important. A well-organized lesson plan should contain a variety of interesting activities that enable the students to develop their writing. This study was designed to use different activities for student learning and have the students evaluate their own writing. The activities included individual, pair, and group work that supported student learning through visual, auditory, and tactile kinesthetic acquisition. However, most activities were done in class because it was easier for the lecturer to observe students' learning progress. Hackathorna et al. (2011) also agreed that teaching students through in-class activities is effective. Their findings revealed four effective teaching methods, i.e., in-class activities, discussion, demonstration, and lecture. Holmes & Holmes (2011) asserted that a well-organized lesson plan with different activities enhances student learning. Their research indicated that students are able to learn well in this way.

An educational system should be child centered rather than having the traditional focus of the Thai system. This research found that handy vocab promoted self-study because the students must construct their handy vocab themselves by searching for information, designing individual handy vocab books, making complete sentences, drawing, and coloring. The importance of self-study is confirmed by Miller (2015) who strongly agreed that self-study minimizes a teacher's role and facilitates student motivation. However, self-study in groups should be avoided (Bruner, 1996b). Since developing handy vocab is an individual effort, it can be concluded that handy vocab promoted self-study.

Handy vocab promotes students' self-study, and it is in contrast with the approach of frequent vocabulary recitation. This study focused on learning by doing rather than learning by reciting. It gave the students good opportunities to practice making sentences and constructing handy vocab in a DIY (do-it-yourself) manner. Moreover, practicing sentence creation leads to automatic recognition of vocabulary by the students. In this way, the handy vocab strategy accomplishes two objectives, enhancing student writing capabilities and supporting students' self-study.

2. Students' Emotional Progress

Doing handy vocab activities affected students on an emotional level. Most students commented that doing handy vocab activities made them more patient and enabled them to increase their concentration. In this way, handy vocab helped students to develop their emotional quotient (EQ).

The EQ of students can be improved by a lecturer's gentle guidance and encouragement. The handy vocab technique led to closer relationships between the

students and the lecturer, according to the survey of students' satisfactions. In all parts of the questionnaire, reported students' satisfaction with the lecturer was at the highest level. This shows that the role of the lecturer is crucial. Moreover, frequent after-class meetings with individual students reduced the psychological distance between the lecturer and the students. This built student confidence so that they were able to ask questions and gave the lecturer a chance to more closely examine student progress. Rodabaugh (2004) found that a large distance between teachers and their students is a very significant impediment to learning. Perceived unfairness seems to cause the highest degree students' dissatisfactions and will cause all learning activities to fail. Additionally, frequent attention of the teacher while doing handy vocab activities effects students on an emotional level. Students come to rely on the lecturer and are confident when doing their handy vocab. They enjoy their work which bolsters their EQ (Holland & Goering, 2015). This may lead to a general interest in learning, thereby supporting development in other areas of their lives.

Conclusions

Since all the results had shown that students had an improvement of writing capabilities, and they also had positive attitudes with the study, it could be concluded that: 1) handy vocab had implemented student writing capabilities, 2) handy vocab had promoted students' self-study, and 3) handy vocab made students feel very satisfied. These results reflect that handy vocab is one of interesting teaching instruments that lecturers should apply for encouraging students in writing class. Moreover, the explicit result of handy vocab is to reduce a large distance between a lecturer and students. Practice writing is necessary for students to frequently consult lecturers. If a lecturer can reduce this distance, improvement of students' writing capabilities is easily grasped.

Acknowledgements

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