

การตระหนักรู้ของกริยาลีนกลุ่มคำร่วมของนักศึกษาชั้นปีที่ 3 สาขาวิชาภาษาอังกฤษเพื่อการสื่อสารสากล มหาวิทยาลัยเทคโนโลยีราชมงคลอีสาน วิทยาเขตสุรินทร์

The Awareness of Phrasal Verb Collocations of Third Year (EIC) Major Students at Rajamangala University of Technology Isan, Surin Campus

รัตนา นามปัญญา^{1*}, นัมเก วงศ์โม¹
Rattana Nampanya^{1*}, Namgay Wangmo¹

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บทคัดย่อ

การศึกษารังนี้มีวัตถุประสงค์ เพื่อตราชื่อสอบว่านักศึกษาสาขาวิชาภาษาอังกฤษเพื่อการสื่อสารสากล ชั้นปีที่ 3 มหาวิทยาลัยเทคโนโลยีราชมงคลอีสาน วิทยาเขตสุรินทร์ ตระหนักรู้ในการใช้ English Collocations หรือไม่ ประชากรที่ใช้ในการศึกษาเรื่องนี้คือ กลุ่มที่มีความสามารถด้านภาษาอังกฤษดี จำนวน 16 คน และกลุ่มที่มีความสามารถด้านภาษาอังกฤษอ่อน จำนวน 14 คน ที่กำลังศึกษาในภาคเรียนที่ 1 ปีการศึกษา 2561 เครื่องมือที่ใช้ในการรวมรวมข้อมูลคือ แบบทดสอบชนิดแปลงแบบประโยชน์คริยาลีน จำนวน 20 ข้อ

ผลการศึกษาพบว่าแม้ว่านักศึกษาส่วนใหญ่ (ร้อยละ 86.66) ในการศึกษารังนี้ผ่านการทดสอบ แต่ค่าเฉลี่ยของกลุ่มที่มีความสามารถด้านภาษาอังกฤษดีและกลุ่มที่มีความสามารถด้านภาษาอังกฤษอ่อนอยู่ที่ 13.56 และ 13.36 ตามลำดับ ผลการทดลองครั้งนี้แสดงให้เห็นว่านักศึกษาสาขาวิชาภาษาอังกฤษเพื่อการสื่อสารสากล ชั้นปีที่ 3 มหาวิทยาลัยเทคโนโลยีราชมงคลอีสาน วิทยาเขตสุรินทร์ตระหนักรู้ในการใช้ English Collocation อยู่ในระดับปานกลาง

คำสำคัญ: กลุ่มคำที่ถูกใช้ด้วยกัน ความตระหนักรู้ กริยาลีนราก

Abstract

The purpose of this study was to investigate the collocation awareness of 3rd Year English as an International Communication (EIC) major students at Rajamangala University of Technology Isan, Surin Campus. The subjects of this study were 16 good language ability students and 14 limited language ability ones. They were studying in the first semester of the academic year 2018. The research tool was a translation test which contained 20 items of phrasal verb collocations.

The results indicated that although a large number (86.66%) of subjects could pass the test, the mean scores of good and limited language ability subjects were 13.56 and 13.36 respectively. This could be an indication that EIC students at Rajamangala University of Technology Isan, Surin Campus were moderately aware of English collocations.

Keywords: Collocations, Awareness, Phrasal verb

* สาขาวิชาศาสตร์ คณะเทคโนโลยีการจัดการ มหาวิทยาลัยเทคโนโลยีราชมงคลอีสาน วิทยาเขตสุรินทร์ Linguistics Department, Faculty of Management Technology Rajamangala University of Technology Isan, Surin Campus

*Corresponding author e-mail: namgaywangmo51@gmail.com

Introduction

A collocation is a multi-word combination or a group of words that frequently appear together, usually in a specific order. A co-occurrence of words or terms in collocation is not controlled only by grammar of a language, but also by patterns of usage and a native speaker's expectation of idiomticity (Taiwo, 2004). Accordingly, whereas there is no principle why "*forth and back should be ungrammatical in English, linguistic conventions demands back and forth instead" (Zimmerman, 2009: 38). This linguistic phenomenon later leads to an interesting assumption that words do not exist in isolation but rather cluster around some words while ignoring others. Therefore, when strong and weak can be used to describe a human body in English, only the former can collocate with the word tea as found in "strong tea" but not "*weak tea". In this case, "light tea" is preferred over "*weak tea."

Generally speaking, this collocational aspect of language has been found to cause a lot of difficulties among language learners of English primarily because they are "unpredictable and often idiomatic in nature (i.e. their meaning cannot be deduced solely from the meanings of their component part)" (Zimmerman, 2004: 37). As a multi-word unit, collocations can also pose syntactic challenges for many learners. For instance, phrasal verb collocations (a combination of verb and particle, in which a particle can be an adverb, a preposition, or a combination of them) are difficult to master not only because they are often semantically unpredictable, but also because they are syntactically complex (Dixson, 2004). In particular, it is impossible for learners to know whether a given phrasal verb is separable or not based on its appearance alone, and they can only "acquire the grammar of phrasal verb through exposure or explicit instructions" (McDorman, 2012: 1).

Furthermore, collocations can be problematic for several other reasons. For example, students may not have much available processing capacity to pay careful attention to how words are conventionally tied together in speech or written texts. Also, it may not be clear to them how restricted a given collocation is (Howarth, 1998, as cited in Bonk, 2000). Thus, some collocations may sound odd and out of place when being translated. Liu (2004) pointed out that his language learners seemed to lack enough knowledge of acceptable collocations in English. Most of them relied heavily on the use of direct L1 translation in producing lexical collocations of the target language, which later resulted in various kinds of unacceptable word combinations.

The unacceptable invented collocations such as 'make homework,' and 'good in mathematics' are definitely not correct expressions in English, but they are frequently witnessed at Rajamangala University of Technology Isan, Surin Campus, where the researcher has been working as an English teacher for many years. Besides a high possibility to repeatedly produce these unacceptable collocations, a number of students here revealed a tendency of problems in translation when they were assigned to work with a phrasal verb in English. Examples include "work out at the gymnasium" and "broke down when she heard a car bomb". In many occasions, students incorrectly translated the meaning of the underlined phrasal verbs by using a direct translation of each individual word. In doing so, students would describe that the phrasal verb 'work out' could be translated into Thai as 'going out for work' while 'broke down' can be translated as 'something at a low position broke.'

The above misunderstanding regarding collocation may be owed partly to the fact that classroom practice at Rajamangala University of Technology Isan, Surin Campus was more likely to focus on a single word exercise such as one word gap filling, one word dictation, and one word translation, but not on a multi-word exercise or task. To this base, it is not surprising that the translation of a phrasal verb collocation, as discussed earlier, seems to manifest itself as one of the most problematic areas since students are not well aware that its meaning is not usually derived from a definition of each individual word. In fact, several researchers have demonstrated that language transfer is a common source of collocation errors for English language learners of diverse linguistic backgrounds. This is because learners tend to use collocations from their native language until they either become or are made explicitly aware of collocation differences between L1 (first language) and L2 (second language) (Zimmerman, 2004; Taiwo, 2004).

In order to maximize teaching effectiveness, we, as language teachers, should recognize the significance of collocation, being aware that the acquisition of it is crucial for learners' communicative competence. Lennon (1991 as cited in Melka, 1998) has posited that "language must not only be grammatical, it must also be appropriate". As a consequence, teachers must address appropriacy in addition to grammaticality when teaching all aspects of language, including collocations. The knowledge of collocation, evidently, has been connected to learners' communicative effectiveness in the sense that it helps promote fluency and naturalness in language use. Once acquired, words which are stored in chunks can be retrieved automatically from a speaker's mental lexicon (Lewis, 1997).

As a result of this, the present study became one of the first attempts to investigate the collocation awareness of students at Rajamangala University of Technology Isan, Surin Campus by conducting an error analysis of phrasal verb collocations translation used by these students. In other words, a translation test served as a main research tool to measure students' awareness of collocation. Results obtained from this study would

hopefully reveal the extent, to which students at Rajamangala University of Technology Isan were aware of collocation, especially the phrasal verbs in English. The results would also prove useful for a development of language learning and teaching here at Rajamangala University of Technology Isan, Surin Campus. The obtained findings were also intended to help teachers find appropriate translation materials to suit their students' needs and use a more effective translation technique suitable for different tasks students need to undertake in a language classroom.

Methodology

1. The Context of the Study

English is taught as a fundamental subject for all students, and a major subject for students majoring in English as an International Communication (EIC) at Rajamangala University of Technology Isan (RMUTI), Surin Campus. As part of the program, Translation is offered as one of the different major courses for students whose major is EIC. More specifically, third-year EIC major students at RMUTI, Surin Campus, are required to take three translation courses to complete their program of study: Introduction to Translation, which introduces a basic theory of translation, Translation: English into Thai, focusing on the translation of various English texts into Thai, and Translation: Thai into English, with a concentration on translating any Thai source texts into English target texts.

For the present research, the translation test of different phrasal verb collocations was administered in the course titled Introduction to Translation because of several reasons. First, since this course was taught by the researcher, the existing class should be considered as happening in a natural learning teaching environment. Second, for a translation test to be distributed in this course, it should not be considered as something intrusive of a learning process since it was part of a routine class evaluation. Finally, because one of the major objectives of this course is to provide students with further opportunities to translate English texts into Thai, it seems comparable to the major goal of this research, which focuses on an investigation of collocation awareness, using a translation test of phrasal verbs from English into Thai.

2. Participants

The participants in this study were 30 third year students who majored in English for International Communication at Rajamangala University of Technology Isan, Surin Campus. There were 4 males and 26 females. These participants registered for the (01-075-201) Introduction to translation in the first semester of the academic year 2018. The main reason for selecting this group of participants was primarily because they were already in the course, which was taught by the researcher. As already stated, in order not to intrude a natural classroom setting, having these students as research participants would achieve this goal, and in so doing, data collected from these participants should well represent authentic materials for the analysis. Besides including everyone in the researcher's class as a research participant, their grades in the pre-requisite course, namely English Structure 2, were taken into consideration as an indication of the participants' language proficiency. However, this language ability was roughly divided into two groups: learners with a good language competence and those with limited one. While the former included students who received A, B +, and B from the pre-requisite course, the latter contained those with C+, C, D+, and D grades. The former group had 16 students, and the second one had 14. The purpose of having two language proficiency groups was to explore if there might be a relationship between language competence and collocation awareness.

3. Research Instruments

The sentence translation test, which contained 20 items, was employed as a main research instrument in this work. Each sentence contained a phrasal verb collocation, which was collected from the students' textbooks used in the pre-requisite course (English Structure 2). Examples are go along, pass away, pick up, turn down, and so on. Some of the phrasal verbs found in this test were also drawn from the grammar books (e.g. Basic Grammar, Natural Grammar) that students had used in their other English courses (e.g. English for Study Skills Development). All of the phrasal verbs in this study were presented in an inseparable form and based on a classification of collocation proposed by Benson, Benson and Ilson (1986)'s framework, which places verb+ particle (e.g. a preposition) under a grammatical collocation (See the test in Appendix B).

This framework was chosen mainly because it appears to be one of the most influential works in the field since it is frequently cited in a number of previous studies. Furthermore, it should be stated here that the phrasal verbs appearing in the test were selected because of their frequency of occurrence in the textbooks mentioned earlier. That is, only phrasal verbs which occur more than one time in the text were included in the test. This has been carried out on the assumption that a profound understanding of collocation cannot take place without students being exposed to this language aspect through listening and reading. Moreover, these verbs were

not further classified into different types as suggested by Fraser (1976): literal, aspectual, and figurative phrasal verbs.

4. Data Collection

As indicated earlier, the data in this research were gathered from the English phrasal verb translation test. The participants took one hour to complete this 20 item-translation test, without using a dictionary of any type. The test was distributed to 30 participants during the wrap-up period of the last class. Since each test item was written by the researcher, its reliability was double checked by a native speaker of English who taught at the researcher's school. The researcher also consulted the Oxford dictionary (The Oxford English Dictionary. 2nd ed. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989) to make sure that each phrasal verb was accurately used in a sentential context.

5. Scoring criterion

The participants' tests were marked using the following criterion. The scoring was set as one mark for each item. Therefore, the total score of the test was 20. The participants who could provide a correct meaning of a phrasal verb received one mark whereas those who translate it incorrectly received a zero mark. In marking each test item, attention was paid only to the translation of the phrasal verb itself, and not the context in which it occurred.

6. Data Analysis

The score of each participant was taken into consideration. The gained scores were calculated into mean and percentage based upon the number of correct translation of each phrasal verb to reveal the extent to which students at Rajamangala University of Technology Isan are aware of a phrasal verb collocation. The participants who received more than 50% of the total scores were marked as learners who had demonstrated collocation awareness whereas those with the score lower than 50% were labeled as learners who lacked collocation awareness. Then, the participants' mean score as converted into a percentage was interpreted in terms of a degree of awareness, using a criterion below:

- 90-100 % Perfectly aware
- 80-89 % Well aware
- 70-79 % Fairly aware
- 60-69 % Moderately aware
- 50-59 % Poorly aware

A descriptive analysis was also applied to explain any tendency found on the test.

Result

In this chapter, the findings of this study are presented. The results will be presented in the following Table 1 below.

Table 1 The results of the students' scores on the translation test.

| No. | Language Proficiency G=Good L=Limited | Total Score | Correct score | Incorrect score | Results |
|-----|--|-------------|---------------|-----------------|---------|
| 1 | G (A) | 20 | 15 | 5 | Pass |
| 2 | G (B) | 20 | 12 | 8 | Pass |
| 3 | L (C) | 20 | 15 | 5 | Pass |
| 4 | G (B+) | 20 | 15 | 5 | Pass |
| 5 | L(C+) | 20 | 9 | 11 | Fail* |
| 6 | G (B+) | 20 | 16 | 4 | Pass |
| 7 | G (B) | 20 | 15 | 5 | Pass |
| 8 | G (B) | 20 | 13 | 7 | Pass |
| 9 | L (C) | 20 | 14 | 6 | Pass |
| 10 | G (B) | 20 | 9 | 11 | Fail* |
| 11 | G (B) | 20 | 11 | 9 | Pass |
| 12 | L (C) | 20 | 11 | 9 | Pass |
| 13 | G (B) | 20 | 13 | 7 | Pass |
| 14 | L(C+) | 20 | 18 | 2 | Pass |

| No. | Language Proficiency G=Good L=Limited | Total Score | Correct score | Incorrect score | Results |
|----------|--|-------------|---------------|-----------------|---------|
| 15 | G(B+) | 20 | 17 | 3 | Pass |
| 16 | G (B) | 20 | 12 | 8 | Pass |
| 17 | L(C+) | 20 | 15 | 5 | Pass |
| 18 | G (B) | 20 | 14 | 6 | Pass |
| 19 | L (C) | 20 | 13 | 7 | Pass |
| 20 | G (B) | 20 | 14 | 6 | Pass |
| 21 | L (C) | 20 | 13 | 7 | Pass |
| 22 | L (C+) | 20 | 16 | 4 | Pass |
| 23 | L (C+) | 20 | 17 | 3 | Pass |
| 24 | G (B) | 20 | 15 | 5 | Pass |
| 25 | L (C+) | 20 | 16 | 4 | Pass |
| 26 | G (A) | 20 | 17 | 3 | Pass |
| 27 | L (C+) | 20 | 12 | 8 | Pass |
| 28 | L (C) | 20 | 10 | 10 | Pass |
| 29 | G (B) | 20 | 9 | 11 | Fail* |
| 30 | L (C) | 20 | 8 | 12 | Fail* |
| X | | 20 | 13.53 | | |
| % | | 100 | 67.75 | | |

As seen in Table 1, 26 out of 30 or 86.66% could pass the test while only four or 13.33% students failed the test. More specifically, whilst some students performed greatly on the test, receiving the scores of 18 and 17, those who performed poorly received only 8 to 9 marks.

However, although most of the students (86.66%) passed the test, the mean score of the test is only 13.35 of 20, or 67.75% as seen in Table 1. This shows that the awareness level of the students is still not high.

Similar results were also evident when the participants' language ability was taken into account. That is the students of two language proficiency groups are not different in terms of phrasal verb awareness level.

Table 2 The scores of two language proficiency groups.

| G Participants (Good language proficiency) | Received Score | L Participants (Limited language proficiency) | Received Score |
|---|----------------------|--|----------------------|
| G 1 | 15 | L 1 | 15 |
| G 2 | 12 | L 2 | 9 Fail |
| G 3 | 15 | L 3 | 14 |
| G 4 | 16 | L 4 | 11 |
| G 5 | 15 | L 5 | 18 |
| G 6 | 13 | L 6 | 15 |
| G 7 | 9 Fail | L 7 | 13 |
| G 8 | 11 | L 8 | 13 |
| G 9 | 13 | L 9 | 16 |
| G 10 | 17 | L 10 | 17 |
| G 11 | 12 | L 11 | 16 |
| G 12 | 14 | L 12 | 12 |
| G 13 | 14 | L 13 | 10 |
| G 14 | 15 | L 14 | 8 Fail |
| G 15 | 17 | | |
| G 16 | 9 Fail | | |
| Total | N = 217 | Total | N = 187 |
| Mean | 13.56 (67.8%) | Mean | 13.36 (66.8%) |

As seen in Table 2, when the language competence was considered in connection to each participant's gained scores, it was discovered that no matter what language proficiency the participants had- good or poor/limited- most of them passed the translation test of a phrasal verb collocation.

However, the mean scores of the two groups were only about 66-67% each. This could be a good indication that the degree of their collocation awareness seemed to appear at a moderate level.

Table 3 The participants' performance on each test item

| Order | Correct Answers | Phrasal Verbs |
|-------|-----------------|----------------|
| 1 | 30 | Fill in |
| 2 | 29 | Pass away |
| 3 | 29 | Put up with |
| 4 | 27 | Come up with |
| 5 | 26 | Stand by |
| 6 | 26 | Turn off |
| 7 | 26 | Work out |
| 8 | 25 | Pick up |
| 9 | 24 | Plug in |
| 10 | 22 | Put away |
| 11 | 22 | Hand in |
| 12 | 21 | Break down |
| 13 | 21 | Turn down |
| 14 | 17 | Drop off |
| 15 | 16 | Wipe off |
| 16 | 12 | Find out |
| 17 | 11 | Throw away |
| 18 | 10 | Watch out |
| 19 | 8 | Put off |
| 20 | 7 | Get along with |

In Table 3, the number of correct scores on each phrasal verb collocation is displayed. As shown here, the test items no. 1, 2, and 3 were likely to cause least difficulties for the participants since almost all of them could translate these phrasal verbs correctly, and these phrasal verbs are fill in, pass away, and put up with (Please refer to appendix C for student's translation test). On the contrary, the participants seemed less likely to have awareness of the phrasal verb collocation in items no. 19 and 20 since only a small number of them could translate "get along with" and "put off" correctly.

The major tendencies presented earlier will be discussed in the next chapter.

Summary and Discussion

1. Summary of the Results

The results obtained from the analysis indicated that the majority of students participating in this research revealed awareness of the phrasal verb collocations through the sentence translation test. However, the level of awareness was not high as their average score was at moderate level. The findings also pointed out to the

fact that the participants' language proficiency might not be a good indicator of how well students could comprehend the target phrasal verbs. Finally, it was observed that while the meanings of some phrasal verb collocations (e.g. fill in, pass away) were well recognized, several of them posed challenges among the participants (e.g. put off, get along with).

2. Discussion

According to the overall analysis, the quantitative results showed that the participants in this study revealed considerable awareness of the target phrasal verb collocations. As evident, the majority of them passed the collocation translation test with the mean score of only 13.35 or 67.75%.

As stated in Chapter 3, all phrasal verb collocations were collected from the textbooks and grammar books used in other previous English courses. It is likely that the participants had come across or were exposed to the phrasal verbs appearing on the test before. As seen in this work, every participant performed perfectly well on the phrasal verb "fill in," demonstrating their understanding of the meaning of this verb through the correct translation. Evidently, "fill in" appeared many times in the textbooks used at Rajamangala University of Technology Isan Surin Campus. Particularly, it was found in the instructions of different exercises throughout the books. Examples include "Fill in the blank with the most appropriate word" or "Fill in the forms, using your personal information." This multiple exposure to the phrasal verb could contribute to a certain degree of the participants' awareness of collocation. The same explanation also holds true for the case of "pass away," where it was seen a number of times in the reading passages of several textbooks.

Explicit grammar instructions in Thailand could be another crucial factor which is responsible for the participants' considerable awareness of the phrasal verb collocations in this study. Being part of a lesson, the grammar of phrasal verbs receives quite an attention in grammar books (e.g. Four Corner, Touch Stone, and Face to Face)

The findings also indicated that good and limited language ability participants did not show significant differences in terms of their collocation awareness. In fact, both groups performed equally well on the test. This evidence seems to provide a good indication that language competence might not override the exposure and explicit instruction factors contributing to a learner's success in comprehending the meanings of collocation. Here, it should be worth mentioning that the tendency of participants' considerable awareness in this study does not agree with other work such as that of Huang (2001), who investigated Taiwanese EFL students' knowledge of English collocations and the collocations errors they made. The results of Huang's study showed that EFL students had the insufficient knowledge of English collocations, and the errors they made could be attributable to their negative L1 transfer.

A common error made by RMUTI students are the incorrect translation of "work out" into "working outside the building." In addition, the translation errors found in this work may be owed to the idiomatic nature of these phrasal verbs, in which their meanings cannot be deduced solely from the meanings of their component parts. For the problematic phrasal verb collocations under study, it was suspected that they (e.g. "put off" or "get along with") may fall into a figurative phrasal verb whose meaning is derived from a metaphorical extension of the literal or aspectual phrasal verbs (Fraser, 1976). Therefore, it is important for teachers to help raise an awareness of the idiomatic and polysemous nature of a phrasal verb as well as emphasizing differences in the collocation patterns of students' native language and the target one to help them minimize collocation errors.

3. Teaching implications

The teaching of collocations inevitably needs to be integrated with the teaching of vocabulary partly because, as observed in the current work, students showed moderate awareness of the phrasal verb collocations. To teach them effectively, ESL/EFL teachers may need to address the cultural issues, metaphorical meanings, a way of describing something by means of an image or symbol and the historical origins associated with the collocations. For example, upon encountering an idiomatic phrasal verb such as "hang up," teachers may address the historical view that in the past a telephone was normally put on the wall, and when someone finished a conversation, he or she would "hang it up." This reality, in turn, will have an influence on a word choice found in the idiomatic phrasal verbs of different languages.

Conclusion

1. Conclusion

This study focused on the awareness of a phrasal verb collocation of third year EIC majors at Rajamangala University of Technology Isan, Surin Campus. In order to answer the research question; to what extent are Rajamangala University of Technology Isan, Surin Campus (RMUTI) students aware of phrasal verb collocations, the sentence translation test was administered among 30 participants. The results obtained from the

analysis indicated that the majority of participants were aware of the target phrasal verb collocations at moderate level.

2. Limitations of the study

This study might have some limitations. The first limitation is related to the test format, followed by the testing time length, and the number of participants. Focusing on the first issue, because there is no control over the types of phrasal verbs as proposed by Fraser (1976), there might be a possibility that literal phrasal verbs- the easiest type- outnumbered the other two groups, which would allow a high possibility for correct guessing. Secondly, based on personal communication with some students, the length of the testing time may have been too limited. The expansion of it will allow participants more time to carefully do the test. Moreover, because there were only 30 students who took the test, this limited number will definitely not enough for the generalization of the findings, and more participants will help ensure both research reliability and generalizability.

3. Recommendations for further studies

Since there is no control over the types of phrasal verb collocation in the current work, future research should take into consideration this problem by projecting a balanced number of three main kinds of phrasal verbs as proposed by Fraser (1976) to be appeared on their test. A carefully designed test with an equal amount of literal, aspectual, and figurative phrasal verb would definitely ensure a clear picture of the phrasal verb collocation problems Thai students learning English as a Foreign Language may encounter. Additionally, more time for the translation test should be allowed in order for the test takers to complete their work in a more efficient manner. Finally, if the number of participants increases in future work, its results will be better generalized to other population of a similar context, and to encourage this generalizability concern, a more advanced statistics may be applied in case of the comparison between language ability groups.

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