การรับรู้การใช้คำปรากฏร่วมในภาษาอังกฤษของผู้เรียนไทย
The Acquisition of Basic Collocations by Thai Learners of English

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      การวิจัยครั้งนี้มีวัตถุประสงค์เพื่อ (1) ศึกษาระดับความเชี่ยวชาญในการรับรู้และการสร้างคำปรากฏร่วมในภาษาอังกฤษของผู้เรียนไทย (2) ศึกษาระดับความเชี่ยวชาญในการสร้างคำปรากฏร่วมในสามรูปแบบคือ คำกริยา-คำนาม คำคุณศัพท์-คำนาม และคำนาม-คำนาม (3) ศึกษาความสัมพันธ์ของการรับรู้และการสร้างคำปรากฏร่วมในภาษาอังกฤษของผู้เรียนไทยและ (4) ศึกษานัยสำคัญของความแตกต่างในการสร้างคำปรากฏร่วมสามรูปแบบคือ คำกริยา-คำนาม คำคุณศัพท์-คำนาม และคำนาม-คำนาม กลุ่มตัวอย่างในการวิจัยครั้งนี้เป็นนักศึกษาชั้นปีที่สอง ปีการศึกษา 2555 มหาวิทยาลัยเทคโนโลยีราชมงคลแห่งหนึ่งจำนวน 104 คน โดยแบ่งออกเป็น 3 กลุ่มดังนี้ (1) นักศึกษาหลักสูตรนานาชาติ จำนวน 24 คน (2) นักศึกษาวิชาเอกภาษาอังกฤษเพื่อการสื่อสารสากลจำนวน 40 คนและ(3) นักศึกษาจากคณะอื่นที่ไม่ใช่วิชาเอกภาษาอังกฤษ จำนวน 40 คน เครื่องมือที่ใช้ในการวิจัยครั้งนี้ประกอบด้วย(1) แบบทดสอบวัดความเชี่ยวชาญในการรับรู้การใช้คำปรากฏร่วมในภาษาอังกฤษ (2) แบบทดสอบวัดความเชี่ยวชาญในการสร้างคำปรากฏร่วมในภาษาอังกฤษสามรูปแบบคือ คำกริยา-คำนาม คำคุณศัพท์-คำนาม และคำนาม-คำนาม และ (3) แบบสำรวจภูมิหลังและพฤติกรรมในการรับรู้ภาษาอังกฤษของนักศึกษา ผลการวิจัยสรุปได้ดังนี้ (1) นักศึกษาทำคะแนนแบบทดสอบวัดความเชี่ยวชาญในการสร้างคำปรากฏร่วมในภาษาอังกฤษได้ดีกว่าแบบทดสอบวัดความเชี่ยวชาญในการรับรู้คำปรากฏร่วมในภาษาอังกฤษ (2) นักศึกษาทำคะแนนแบบทดสอบวัดความเชี่ยวชาญในการสร้างคำปรากฏร่วมในภาษาอังกฤษชนิด คำนาม-คำนามได้ดีที่สุด (3) การรับรู้และการสร้างคำปรากฏร่วมในภาษาอังกฤษของนักศึกษามีความสัมพันธ์กันอย่างมีนัยสำคัญทางสถิติ (4) การสร้างคำปรากฏร่วมในภาษาอังกฤษทั้งสามรูปแบบของนักศึกษามีความแตกต่างอย่างมีนัย

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สำคัญทางสถิติ และ(4) ปัจจัยที่ส่งผลต่อการรับรู้และการสร้างคำปรากฏร่วมในภาษาอังกฤษของนักศึกษา ได้แก่ การแปลความจากภาษาแม่ไปยังภาษาที่สอง การใช้คำคล้ายหรือคำเหมือนในภาษาแม่ การขาด ความรู้ด้านวัฒนธรรมและคำศัพท์เฉพาะด้าน และการใช้คำกริยา de-lexicalization

คำสำคัญ : คำปรากฏร่วมในภาษาอังกฤษ ผู้เรียนไทย

Abstract

The main purposes of this research were: (1) to investigate the receptive and productive collocational proficiency of Thai learners, (2) to investigate the proficiency of Thai learners in producing each type of collocations; verb-noun, adjective-noun and noun-noun, (3) to investigate the correlation between receptive and productive collocational proficiency of Thai learners, and (4) to investigate the differences in three types of productive collocations produced by Thai learners. Sample was 104 second-year students studying in academic year 2012 at a Rajamangala University of Technology. They were 24 students from an international program, 40 students from English for International Communication program and 40 students from non-English programs. The research instruments were (1) the Receptive Collocational Proficiency Test (2) the Productive Collocational Proficiency Test focusing on three types of collocation: verb-noun, adjective-noun and noun-noun and (3) a questionnaire to survey background and English learning habit of the learners.

The results revealed that (1) all learners did better on the productive collocational test than the receptive collocational test; (2) the learners achieved the highest mean scores on noun-noun productive collocation test; (3) the learners' reception and the production of the collocation in three types was significantly correlated; (4) the three types of productive collocations of the learners were statistically different; (5) factors affecting English receptive and productive collocational proficiency of the learners were direct translation from L1 to L2, borrowing of mother-tongue language, limited knowledge in culture and vocabulary, and use of de-lexicalized words.

Keywords : Basic collocations, Thai learners of English

1. Introduction

According to Nation & Waring (1997), learners need to know a minimum of approximately 3,000 high frequency words because they provide coverage of at least 95% of a running text. Moreover, with the recent campaign in favor of the lexical approach, EFL learners have increased their attention on words that go together or collocations.

Collocations are a necessary component of vocabulary knowledge as they are a crucial factor in the competence level of native speakers. Ellis (1996) pointed out that the proper use of collocations is vital if a second language learner wants to sound like a native speaker. Furthermore, Herbst (1996) confirmed that competence in a language involves knowledge about collocations, as they are so commonly used. Collocations can be found in up to 70% of everything we say, hear, read or write (Hill, 2000).

In Thailand, collocations seem to be ignored in vocabulary teaching and learning. The majority of Thai teachers fail to appreciate the significance of collocations, and only a few teachers focus on raising the awareness of their students regarding the proper use of collocations. This is in sharp contrast to other Asian countries, such as China, Japan, Korea and Taiwan, in which collocations are a popular research topic. (Huang, 2001).

Collocation should be taught at the earliest stage of language learning; the sooner collocations are introduced to learners, the better chance they have to become successful language learners. For teachers, preparing the students to use collocations effectively and appropriately will contribute to efficient communication and help students to sound like native speakers, is an arduous and challenging task. When EFL teachers want to teach new vocabulary, they should keep in mind that it is necessary to present a new word with its collocation, as well as focusing on active collocations. Faerch (1984) claimed that if a learner has a word in their vocabulary, this knowledge should also include the most frequent collocations of that word, as the evaluation of language competence is based on the collocational knowledge and performance of the learner.

The research objectives in this study are to investigate (1) the levels of receptive and productive collocational proficiency among the three learning settings (2) the proficiency in producing each type of collocation; verb-noun, adjective-noun and noun-noun (3) the correlation between receptive and productive collocational proficiency in the three learning settings and (4) the significant differences among three types of productive collocations in the three learning settings.

This study is significant in collocational proficiency of Thai university learners for a number of reasons. Firstly, collocational proficiency is a necessary element of communicative competence. Secondly, collocations should be a part of every stage of a learner's academic path. Lastly, EFL learners should be familiar with at least two thousand vocabulary items, as well as their collocations. For these reasons, it is crucial to promote and encourage teaching collocations.

2. Literature Review

2.1 The Definition of Collocation

The term collocation was first used by Firth (1957), and the collocation of a given word is a statement of the habitual or customary associations with that word. Bolinger & Sears (1981) regarded collocations as a kind of habitual association of words and asserted that collocations resulted from the experiences of native speakers using these expressions, repeated again and again in certain circumstances.

In brief, collocations are those combinations of words which occur naturally with greater than random frequency (Lewis, 1997). James (1998) claimed that collocations are the words that particular words normally keep company with. So, we can say that collocations are the way in which one word comes together with another word, for no specific reason. Sometimes, a pair of words may not be absolutely wrong and people will understand what is meant, but it may not be the natural, normal collocation. If someone says "I did a few mistakes", they will be understood, but a fluent speaker of English would probably say "I made a few mistakes".

2.2 The Characteristics of Collocation

Yang & Hendricks (2004) summarized the characteristics of collocations as the frequent co-occurrence of items between which no word can be inserted, such as bread and butter; as a native English speaker is unlikely to say bread, cheese and butter. Secondly, the components of a collocation cannot be replaced by a synonym or a word of similar meaning, for example, business trip is more acceptable than business journey, as journey does not collocate with business. Thirdly, collocations are irreversible binomials (James, 1998), for example, bed and breakfast rather than breakfast and bed, more or less rather than less or more, and fish and chips rather than chips and fish. It is not

grammatical to put the parts the other way around. Finally, collocations have a high degree of predictability (Hill, 2000), if you hear "more or…", you automatically guess that "less" will follow.

Moreover, Smadja (1993) pointed out that collocations are typically characterized as arbitrary, a part of language and dialect; as well as specific, recurrent in context and common in technical language. The arbitrary nature of collocations persists across language and dialects. Thus, in American English the expressions set the table and make a decision are used, while in British English, the corresponding phrases are lay the table and take a decision.

The main characteristics of collocations are that their meanings reflect the meaning of their constituent parts (in contrast to idioms) and that they are used frequently, spring to mind rapidly and are psychologically salient, in contrast to free combination (Cruse, 1986). There are also some interesting properties of collocations; for example, the word cause typically collocates with words expressing negative concepts such as accident, damage and death. Conversely, the word provide occurs more often with positive words such as care, shelter and food (Stubbs, 1996).

2.3 The Causes of Collocational Errors

A number of recent studies have identified several factors that influence the performance level of learners regarding collocations. Experts and researchers have discovered that collocational errors are the result of numerous causes. Huang (2001) pinpointed two major factors; firstly, native language interference, which is greater when the learners use translation techniques, and secondly, the collocational competence of learners in comparison with their native English speaking counterparts, which indicated that EFL/ESL learners produced a lower percentage of conventional collocations, but a higher percentage of deviant combinations.

It can be concluded that there are numerous problems relating to the difficulties experienced by learners producing acceptable collocations. Liu (2000) suggested seven strategies for EFL/ESL learners to use when producing or comprehending collocations, which are as follows:

1. Retrieval; learners try to recall collocations from memory, but fail to store collocations in their memories, and therefore fail to use the proper collocations when communicating in both speaking and writing.

2. Literal translation; learners tend to transfer the thought word for word from L1 to L2. They use this strategy to produce both acceptable and unacceptable collocations.

3. Approximate translation; the process of paraphrasing a thought from L1 to L2. Learners rely on their intuition to create their own collocations, and choose this strategy more often than literal translation.

4. Use of de-lexicalized verbs; most learners use de-lexicalized words such as do, make and take carelessly, using them interchangeably in their writing.

5. Use of synonyms; learners produce erroneous collocations as a result of the insufficient collocational information provided about the synonyms that they use.

6. Appeal to authority; learners would prefer to ask a native English speaker or to consult a dictionary if they are unable to use the appropriate collocation.

7. Appeal for assistance; learners have a tendency to depend on guidance or instruction from the others.

Most linguists and researchers are in agreement that a learner's first language greatly influences their collocational errors. Learners face many difficulties with collocations, such as intralingual problems; for example, the tendency to use the incorrect collocation, several thanks, rather than the correct one, many thanks. Learners must also deal with negative transfer from their mother tongue, and look for general rules for collocations that do not apply in all cases. When learners acquire vocabulary through definitions or in isolation; their chances of using the appropriate collocations or remembering the correct sequence of words decreases, and as a result, they fail to make sense of it. For example, the idiom, raining cats and dogs does not make sense to some learners because this idiom does not exist in their culture, so learners may not recognize collocations as meaningful phrases, which inhibits their understanding.

3. Research Methodology

This research used purposive sampling to select the participants. This was done to ensure that the sample adequately represented the target population to obtain the most relevant information and to allow information and adequacy and appropriateness of data. This study was conducted in three different settings; group one consisted of International College students, who all studied courses in English with native English speaking teachers.

Group two consisted of English major students, who studied English with both Thai and native English speaking teachers. Group three was composed of students from several faculties or other non-English major subjects. All of the participants were all second-year students in General Reading Course in the first semester of 2012 academic year.

The data were taken from the three instruments. The receptive collocational proficiency test consisted of 50 items of several types of collocations in various categories. The students were then instructed to judge whether or not the word in bold in each sentence was an appropriate collocation.

The productive collocational proficiency test was designed to measure the knowledge of the participants regarding the production of collocations. It included 60 target collocations that examined on three types of collocations: 20 items on verb-noun collocations, 20 items on adjective-noun collocations and 20 items on noun-noun collocations. The three types of collocations were used in restrictive structures that allowed only one correct answer so in the test the initial letter of target collocation was provided as a clue. This was to prevent guessing and to ensure that participants selected only the target word.

The questionnaire was designed to check learners' background, attitude and habit in learning English language. It included 10 target items.

The process used to identify norms is the SPSS and the proficiency level of the participants was determined by calculating the mean and the average test score on each test. An analysis was carried out to determine whether or not there was any relationship between the receptive and productive collocational proficiency tests.

4. Results of the study

4.1 Receptive Collocational Proficiency

The participants in the English major setting received the highest scores (46 out of 50) while the participants in the non-English major setting had the lowest scores (20 out of 50). The participants from the International College had the highest mean score (33.79), while the participants from the non-English major had the lowest (27.47).

The receptive collocational proficiency of all three settings are fair, with a total score of 50. The standard deviation of the English majors was at 4.61, indicating that the English ability level of this group was mixed. Similarly, the non-English majors had a

standard deviation of is at 3.59, which also indicates a mixed level of English knowledge and ability. On the other hand, the participants from the International College setting had a standard deviation of 2.65, an indication that their level of English knowledge, ability and proficiency were less mixed and more equal. Surprisingly, the maximum scores for participants from the International College setting and the non English major setting were quite close, 39 and 35 respectively. As shown in Table 1.

Table 1 Maximum, minimum, mean scores and standard deviation for Receptive Collocational Proficiency in the International College setting, the English major setting, and the non-English major setting.

Learning settings	Maximum	Minimum	Mean	S.D.
International College	39	29	33.79	2.65
English major	46	26	32.90	4.61
Non-English major	35	20	27.47	3.59

4.2 Productive Collocational Proficiency
      The International College had the highest mean scores on all of three types of lexical collocations (13.58 on verb-noun, 13.79 on adjective-noun and 17.21 on noun-noun). However, it is remarkable that participants in the non-English major setting achieved higher mean scores on adjective-noun collocations than the participants in the English major setting (12.65:10.90).
      It can be seen that all of the three learning settings had the highest mean scores on noun-noun collocations (17. 21, 15.90 and 15.03). The International College and non-English major settings had the lowest mean scores on verb-noun collocations, whereas the English major setting had the lowest mean scores on adjective-noun collocations.
      Moreover, the non-English major students received the highest scores on adjective-noun and noun-noun collocations, as well as the minimum scores on all three types of lexical collocations. The standard deviation on noun-noun collocations among

the International College and the English-major settings were 0.76 and 1.70 respectively. This indicates the collocational proficiency of all of these three groups were at a similar level and the data was homogeneous and less spread out. As shown in Table 2.

Table 2 Maximum, minimum, range, mean scores and standard deviation for the Productive Collocational Proficiency among the International College, English major, and non-English major settings.

Types of Productive Collocation	Maximum	Minimum	Range	Mean	S.D.
International College					
Verb-noun	15	4	11	13.58	2.14
Adjective-noun	16	12	4	13.79	1.12
Noun-noun	18	16	2	17.21	0.76
English major					
Verb-noun	18	6	12	12.73	2.67
Adjective-noun	17	2	15	10.90	3.03
Noun-noun	20	12	8	15.90	1.70
Non-English major					
Verb-noun	17	3	14	8.85	2.70
Adjective-noun	20	2	18	12.65	4.50
Noun-noun	20	8	12	15.03	3.21

Moreover, the correlation between the receptive and productive collocational proficiency of the International College setting was a moderately positive significant correlation of 0.40. In other words, there was a correlation at a low level of significance between the receptive and productive collocational proficiency of English and non-English majors (r=0.10 and 0.16). Clearly, non-English majors had a higher level of significant correlation than English majors.

There are significant and remarkable differences between verb-noun and adjective-noun collocations, verb-noun and noun-noun collocations, and adjective-noun and noun-noun collocations among the three learning settings. The data showed a significantly positive relationship, at a level of 0.05, which implied a certain amount of overlap among the variables and revealed a substantial amount of unshared variance.

4.3 Results from the Questionnaire

There are 48.07%of the participants were familiar with collocations before taking the test. More than a half of the participants (60.57%) had studied English for more than 15 years. Only 6.73%of participants had frequent contact with English native speakers. There are 30.83%of participants used synonym strategies, and 28.93%used literal translation; while 20.75% and 19.49%of participants used approximate translation and retrieval strategies respectively.

5. Discussion

5.1 Conclusion

The results of this research cannot be generalized for all EFL/ESL students, but it is hoped that the findings have raised an interest in or awareness of the significance of collocational competence for both teachers and students in the field of language teaching and learning. Farghal & Obiedat (1995) claimed that the only way for EFL/ESL students to become proficient in the English language was to highlight the collocational aspects of lexical items. This is similar to the findings made by Zimmerman (1997), who claimed that lexical items are central to language use, so collocational competence is one of the major aspects of successful EFL/ESL pedagogy.

The data in this study revealed that the learning setting had an effect on collocational acquisition, as shown by the fact that the International College setting performed better than the English and non-English majors. However, the participants in all three settings experienced difficulty with both the receptive and the productive collocational proficiency tests. Their productive collocational proficiency was a little higher than their receptive collocational proficiency. A deficiency of collocational knowledge resulted in erroneous production, in terms of both receptive and productive collocations. This is consistent with the findings of Farghal & Obiedat (1995), who maintained that there

was a large gap between the receptive and productive collocational knowledge among EFL/ESL learners.

Moreover, the collocational knowledge levels of the participants were not equal to their knowledge of vocabulary. In other words, they could identify which words were nouns, adjectives or verbs, but they did not know how to use them in a collocation. This may be due to the fact that collocations are rarely taught, and when they are, learners do not pay sufficient attention (Bahns & Eldaw, 1993). Lewis (1993) also claimed that raising awareness of collocations could be incorporated into the teaching and learning process in order to expand the collocational knowledge of the learners.

The findings in this study contradict the findings of Hill & Lewis (2000), which claimed that the receptive collocational knowledge of EFL/ ESL learners was broad, and that they could recall L2 collocations when they listened to and read English, while their productive use of a wide range of collocations was generally limited. The three groups of participants did well on the productive collocational proficiency test. These findings were similar to those of Al-Amro (2006), who concluded that EFL/ ESL learners had higher levels of accuracy on productive tests than receptive tests. This was due to the fact that the collocations in the receptive collocational test were of a lower frequency than those used in the productive collocational test.

The findings also revealed that all of the participants performed best on noun-noun collocations. However, they found the adjective-noun and verb-noun collocations much more difficult. It is clear that the participants from different learning settings faced difficulties forming accurate collocations, with the result that they did not sound like native English speakers. These collocational mismatches were most frequently found in the answers provided by the participants on all three types of collocations. It can be assumed that the teaching of collocations in EFL/ESL environments is often neglected (Al-Amro, 2006).

Based on the findings of this study, the participants experienced the most difficulty with adjective-noun and verb-noun collocations, so more attention should be paid by teachers to training learners to observe and take notes on the specific types of collocations they find in reading or listening texts and then integrate this into the language learning process. Similarly, Biskup (1992) pointed out that noticing collocations might be the first step leading to the successful acquisition of collocations by students. One

recommended method is for the teacher to encourage learners to think in terms of collocations rather than just single words, for example, to submit an application, to float a company, an active volcano, or a person's marital status. This awareness of collocations is something that all EFL/ESL learners should keep in mind (Hill, 2000).

The results of this research also supported the findings of previous studies conducted by Liu (1999a), Liu (2000), Nation (2001) and Baker (1992) with regard to the factors affecting the performance level of the participants. The plausible explanations for the collocational violations committed by Thai learners in different learning settings showed a number of application strategies. The participants used a synonym strategy when deciding which collocations should be used (Liu, 1999a) for example, send and submit, contact and contract, dedicate and donate, fake and false, hard and heavy, trip and travel, fee and fare, or sign and signal.

Additionally, some participants might have a limited knowledge of collocational specialization (Nation, 2001) such as to float a company, a significant trend, a food additive, the force of gravity, a code of ethics, a chronic addiction or a hidden agenda, which led them to rely on simple or general words.

Interestingly, the major source of violations was approximate translation from L1 to L2 (Liu, 2000). The results were similar to those of Farghal & Obiedat (1995) who found that the participants had a collocational deficiency and were unaware of the fact that they translated from their native language to produce English collocations such as clean and clear, extra and excessive, married and marital, hard and firm, or feed and raise. Moreover, the participants lacked cultural knowledge of the target language; they simply did not get or understand some collocations, for example, soap opera, crocodile tears or to swallow your pride. Therefore, when teaching vocabulary to EFL/ESL learners, teachers should integrate some cultural data, such as the metaphorical meaning or the historical origin of a collocation in order to reach the ultimate goal of effective communication (Huang, 2001).

Most of the participants were confused about de-lexicalized verbs such as do, make, have and take as their meanings in Thai are quite similar. Teachers should ensure that learners understand the main concept of each verb and present a new word in context or in chunks; for example to take a bath, to make friends, or to do housework, as learning a single word is not enough to acquire fluency in a second or a foreign language.

To sum up, the strategy choices made by learners may reflect the strategies recommended by their teachers; such as using a L1 translation strategy, the limitations of culturally specific collocations, and the use of synonyms and de-lexicalized verbs. The ability to develop strategies for collocational acquisition is essential as there are no real rules for collocations, which are based on common usage. For this reason, collocations have become one of the most difficult aspects of English for Thai learners, who have more limited experiences of collocations and may combine words to form collocations that a native English speaker might find odd or unusual. Collocations should be introduced with the help of trained teachers, appropriate course materials, effective teaching methodologies, and most importantly, motivated and independent learners. The overall results of this study will improve the quality of teaching lexical items for English teachers and for learners to use language more naturally, instead of merely repeating the words.

5.2 Pedagogical Implication of the Study

The results of the present study have several important pedagogical implications, which can be applied as a generic framework for teaching and learning collocations. The pedagogical implications are listed below, and are as follows:

1. Teachers or instructors should employ authentic or commercial textbooks in an EFL/ESL learning environment as they seem to offer a wider and richer context for exposure to collocations than typical textbooks. Burger & Gallina (2008), who claimed that when students saw words in an authentic context, they learned how the words functioned and what their typical collocations were. It is impossible to teach every single collocation in the classroom, so teachers should encourage students by introducing them to and instructing them in the use of collocational dictionaries, which they can refer to whenever they are uncertain about a particular collocation. This can enhance their collocational knowledge independently, as proposed by Woolard (2000), who also suggested that students collect vocabulary words from their own topics of interest in reading texts. This can lead to increased student motivation to learn collocations and give them a positive experience of using collocations. Moreover, dictionaries of collocations can serve as resources that enrich the learner's L2 mental lexicon with new combinations.

2. Teachers can increase the collocational competence of learners by using consciousness-raising activities, such as brainstorming or using the collocational grids that were recommended by Howarth (1996), Hill (2000), Lewis (2000) and Woolard (2000).

These collocational grids are something that a learner actively notices and can memorize for future use. A mixture of approaches is necessary to generate a productive learning context, for example, explicit and implicit teaching. Frequent and common collocations should be explicitly taught in the English classroom, but students should also consolidate their collocational knowledge outside of the classroom.

      3. Most learners are unaware the nature and necessity of collocations because they can comprehend texts which use collocations, but based on the findings in this study, learners have many difficulties with both receptive and productive collocations, so teachers must present appropriate collocations and let the students realize that there are certain word combinations which are used by native English speakers. More importantly, the students must be made aware that no single word in a combination can be replaced by another word, even if it synonymous, or has the same or a similar meaning. The students must be made aware that it is more useful to learn familiar words in new combinations than learning more words or new words (Woolard, 2000).

      4. The findings showed that Thai learners are affected by L1 translation and the use of synonyms, so teachers should raise the awareness of students regarding how the Thai language can interfere with the acquisition of new English collocations. Thai students used the method of translating collocations word for word, without being aware of the collocational restrictions. Lewis (1997) suggested that learners should try to transfer meaning chunk for chunk rather than word for word. This is particularly useful for those collocations which have no equivalent in the learner's first language, which in this case is Thai.

      One way to consider language competence is through the collocational performance of the learners. However, collocations are usually neglected in language teaching and learning in Thailand, as some language teachers are unaware of the importance of collocations, so it is not surprising that the collocational proficiency of the students is at such a low level. The first priority of a teacher should be to help students acquire collocations by introducing vocabulary as whole chunks rather than isolated lexical items. Words are not normally used alone, but in conjunction with other words which habitually co-occur in a language. Language development must occur in a setting with meaningful social interaction and this interaction does not exist in the EFL/ESL

learning environment. Wei (2007) described EFL/ESL environments as input-poor contexts, and recommended that teachers use different types of activities and exercises to improve and develop the collocational skills of students.

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