

Enhancing Students' Vocabulary Learning through Storytelling for Grade 8 Students at Demonstration School Khon Kaen University

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Abstract

In the present study, it was found that grade 8 students at Demonstration School Khon Kaen University faced problems in learning vocabulary. Many times they directly translated English vocabulary into Thai with incorrect meaning, and also used words with inappropriate situations. To help students enhance vocabulary, the researcher used storytelling which is a suitable technique for the learners' level. Storytelling can be considered to develop their vocabulary and it can also help them to acquire higher level of vocabulary learning.

The purpose of this study was to enhance grade 8 students' vocabulary ability through storytelling. The result of the study after learning should not be less than 70 percent of the total scores, and 70 percent of the students should achieve the determined criteria.

The target group was students in grade 8 at Demonstration School of Khon Kaen University using ELST technique. The research instruments were 5 lesson plans and a vocabulary posttest. The data collection was analyzed by using percentage, mean score, and standard deviation (S.D.).

The research finding of the mean score of students' academic achievement test was 8.61 (86.06%), and the S.D. was 2.29. Moreover, this study showed that the number of students who passed the 70% criterion with a number of 30 students (90.91%). Thus, according to the data analysis, it was shown that ELST helped the students gain and improve their vocabulary which met the condition of 70/70 goal's criterion.

Key words: Storytelling, Vocabulary Learning, ELST technique, Lesson plans, Teaching English

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Background and Rational

As the world change quickly, English has been considered as an international language. We all know that English is very necessary for the way we live. Nowadays, Thailand becomes a part of ASEAN community; thus, we must use English to communicate with others. Rapidly developing Education also leads Thai people to use English as a tool for communication in many businesses, especially for accessing modern standard schools. Even tough, Thai students have had opportunity to learn the English for a longtime, Thai students are still poor in sub skill in learning English. One of the obstacles that obviously has been seen is the knowledge of vocabulary. Therefore, it is necessary to be aware of the importance of vocabulary learning for living in nowadays society.

Vocabulary is essential to English language teaching and learning. Even though Thai students know how to use English grammar, how to write sentences or read passages, without sufficient vocabulary, students cannot totally understand words around them and express their ideas as well. In order to solve this problem, the Ministry of Education set a plan to improve the knowledge of vocabulary by promoting ranges of vocabulary recognition in each level (Ministry of education, 2001). HU, (2004) also claimed that without adequate vocabulary knowledge, a second language learner would face difficulties in using English not only in receptive skills, which was necessary for understanding second language, but also productive skill which required learners to properly create their output. Furthermore, Thai teachers tend to pay more attention on teaching grammar rather than vocabulary. As Chansin (2007) noted that many times English vocabulary teaching was ignored in many lessons. Teachers had been told to teach writing, reading, and especially English grammar which were seen as academic contents and difficult to be mastered. However, if students have poor foundation in vocabulary knowledge, students will definitely have difficulty in learning second language in every level. This can be explained that students are needed to be taught more vocabulary in class as well.

In terms of learning vocabulary, Thai learners also need effective strategies to recognize vocabulary. In classes, it was found that Thai learners did not enjoy learning vocabulary since it was difficult to remember the meaning of words. Traditionally, Thai students have been taught vocabulary by writing words along with meanings on the board. They were allowed to note words down into their notebooks. Wojciechowicz (2003) suggested that there were some importances of storytelling in improving learners' vocabulary knowledge. First, storytelling gave an opportunity for students to expand their vocabulary as they decoded the meaning of words, focused on the context of the story they heard or read. Also, listening to stories improved students' understanding of grammar and literary devices as they saw them within a story. In the second importance, Dujmovic (2006) also stated that learners enjoyed listening to stories over and over again. This frequent repetition led certain words to be acquired while others were being overly reinforced. Many stories also contained natural repetition of key vocabulary

and structures which helped learners to remember detail and gradually created more idea what was going to happen in the story. Storytelling (ELST technique) also encouraged participation in the narrative which as important skill in language learning. Listening to stories also allowed teacher to introduce and revised new vocabulary and sentence structures which brought chance for students to create their own words eventually.

As the researches stated above, the researcher found out that grade 8 students at Demonstration School of Khon Kaen University had problems in learning vocabulary. They lacked of the knowledge of vocabulary and they could not understand many words during the lesson. To help students enhance vocabulary, the researcher used storytelling which appropriate to the learners' level. The researcher believe that storytelling can develop vocabulary for the students and it can also help them acquire higher level of vocabulary learning.

Purpose of Study

To enhance grade 8 students' vocabulary ability through storytelling. The result of the study after learning should not be less than 70 percent of the total scores, and 70 percent of the students should achieve the determined criteria.

Research Questions

How can storytelling help students to improve vocabulary learning?

Scope of the Study

The samples of this study were 35 students in grade 8 of the Demonstration School of Khon Kaen University in the first semester of the academic year 2016.

Definitions of Terms

Vocabulary: the words that selected from grade 8 students text book 'Aim High'.

Storytelling: a way of transmitting a message in an entertaining and memorable manner. Stories allow us to capture our listeners' attention, but they also make it more likely that they will remember what they have heard.

Signification of the Study

This is a study in grade 8 students to enhance vocabulary learning using ELST technique which is another way for helping students to build up their vocabulary. Students could construct more knowledge to understand meaning of words. Furthermore, students could store and recall many words to be used in everyday lives. Moreover, vocabulary could also lead them to develop the four macro skills which are listening, speaking, reading and writing.

Research Methodology

The samples consisted of 33 grade 8 students, studying English 2201 course for the first semester of the academic year 2016 at Demonstration School Khon Kaen University, selected through cluster sampling. The reasons of choosing this particular group of students, because they were weak in vocabulary as they did not have good score for their vocabulary test in the past.

Research Instruments

The instruments used in the research consisted of:

1) A vocabulary test used to investigate the students ability of vocabulary learning.

The 5 units were selected from students' text book included:

- Unit 1 = The real you
- Unit 2 = Winning and losing
- Unit 3 = Town and country
- Unit 4 = Heroes
- Unit 5 = Gift

2) 5 lesson plans were constructed to improve English vocabulary learning by ELST technique described by following these steps:

1. Studying about storytelling and selected the content through student's book.
2. Designing 5 lesson plans based on storytelling
3. Constructing 5 lesson plans (checked by Miss Prapabhorn Udomsiang, Grade 8 Students' class teacher)
4. Using the lesson plans with the sampling group

3) The storytelling that enhance students' vocabulary learning was determined which depended on the storytelling from each unit. Students had chosen and made a story from the vocabulary in each unit (30 words). There was a rubric score to assess student's results.

The English paragraph writing quizzes was from 5 units, as following steps:

1. Preparing vocabulary in each unit
2. Designing storytelling based on vocabulary in each unit
3. Rechecking the vocabulary which related to storytelling
4. Using the storytelling approach with the samples

Research Design

The research design of this study was One-shot case study.

Data Collection

The data was collected during the first semester of the academic year 2016 from grade 8 students at Demonstration Khon Kaen University, as the following stages:

1. Students were taught the vocabulary of each unit. The researcher used 5 lesson plans in 5 weeks. Each lesson plan contained 100 minutes and was used twice a week by separating contents into 2 parts. Each part spent 50 minutes for teaching.
2. The researcher explained what the meaning of storytelling was, and then let students make sentences from vocabulary to practice before going to storytelling.
3. The students worked out the storytelling by using vocabulary from each unit in order to make sure that they could use the words correctly.
4. The researcher collected data from quizzes from 5 units and evaluated students' improvement.
5. After finishing each unit, students took a vocabulary test. The researcher evaluated the result by using statistics.

Data Analysis

The researcher used statistic information which was percentage. It was gained by writing quizzes after finishing all unit. It was used to find the improvement of each student under the criteria that the students should not gain less than 70 percent of total scores and 70 percent of students achieve the determined criteria. The data collection was analyzed by using percentage, mean score, and standard deviation

Results of the Study

The study on the development of the academic achievement in enhancing students' vocabulary learning through ELST technique was a pre-experimental research (One-shot case study), which aimed to enhance the academic achievement in vocabulary learning of grade 8 students by using the storytelling technique with the condition of 70/70 criterion. The results are followed below.

The students' achievement through learning vocabulary by using ELST technique. There were 33 students, total score was 10 points, the mean score of students' academic achievement test was 8.61 (86.06%), and the S.D. was 2.29. Moreover it has shown the number of students who passed the 70% criterion with a number of 30 students (90.91%) while 3 students (9.09%) were not passed the determined criterion. To sum up, this data analysis represents the result of the research's treatment with the condition of 70/70 goal's criterion was successful at 86.06/90.91 percent displayed.

Conclusion and Discussion

This research originating in a concern for the problem that the 8 grade students at Demonstration School of Khon Kaen University found that students had problems about the ability to use Sub-English skills which was learning vocabulary. When students learned English words, they did not understand, remember, or use words correctly. The purpose of the research was to develop students in learning vocabulary after using ELST technique. In the event, analyses and the reading comprehension scores revealed that the students who received the ELST technique reached the higher scores. Approximately 90.91 percent or 30 students of the total students (33 students) had reached the determined criteria.

As observation from the teaching period found that there were many problems through students learning ability, not only in English subject but all areas. The students' behaviors were talkative and less concentrated during the lesson. The weak students were not paying attention on the study because they could not understand the vocabulary. Many studies proved that most Thai students have poor English skills. Kanitha (1998) indicated that Thai students had problems with recognizing English vocabulary and understanding English sentences. Moreover, they also thought that English was difficult. It was often seen in many classes that their attitude toward English subject was not good, afraid of making mistake and not familiar to the words and content. It could be predicted that the vocabulary learning was taken far-distant to them, and they had less background knowledge about English subject. Another interesting reason which affected to students' interests in learning English because there were no places to use English much in Khon Kaen province. This could be a possible reason because in northeastern of Thailand does not have many tourist attractions or business places which have foreigners for students to experience talking to. For these reasons, they had low motivation, and then they became bored of learning English in school for examination, which was not real communication situation, and finally they ignored the English subject.

The result of all analyzed data represented that the ELST technique was effective and appropriate technique for the target group to develop their ability to learn English vocabulary. The data analysis showed that students could reach the determined criteria.

During the lesson, the researcher had put many strategies, for instance using flashcards, motivating students by using reinforcement with matching pictures game, songs and videos to get students' attention and gain more vocabulary. After students got used to the strategies, they could complete all assignments and performance tasks. As a result, story was easily learning task for them. They could be able to apply the techniques to answer the question and complete exercise work, including help their group members to get better. After the teaching processes had done, the students were confident to speak English and enjoy learning more words. Intaraprasert (2004) also defined that ELST technique helped students' learning behaviors, which language learners used in order to discover the meaning of a new word to retain and expand the knowledge of new vocabulary. Moreover, Schmitt (2000) noted that

active learning management was important. Good language learners needed to do many things such as using a variety of strategies to develop their vocabulary learning, reviewing what they have learnt or herd, and practicing those new English words over and over.

The Discussion of Students Who Fail The Test

There were three students who did not pass the criterion score. It was because they had less concentration and attention deficit during the class. They always missed some important points of the teaching process and had problem on learning vocabulary. They could not remember many words from the passages and stories. As a result, they could not understand and catch the main point of the stories. Therefore, three of them needed more time to practice vocabulary, or they would probably need other treatments which were suitable to their level, personalities and interests.

Recommendations

- 1) Lesson plans with ELST technique should be adapted to other students' level and contexts.
- 2) Relevant materials such as video of story, story map, mind mapping should be brought to promote students' excitement and help them to understand stories.
- 3) Cartoon or short story which relates to students' background and interest can be used to get better attention.
- 4) Tasks should be appropriate to students' learning ability.
- 5) Group or peer working is useful in terms of creating cooperative learning. This allows students to deliver their own words and ideas to their classmates.
- 6) Rules and processes of each task should be clearly explained before starting class.
- 7) To analyze the development of the students' vocabulary learning and their feeling, students' behavior observation should be used before and after the treatment.
- 8) It is interesting to investigate and compare between the ELST technique with other vocabulary learning techniques for finding the suitable teaching to indifferent type of learners.

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