

THE DEVELOPMENT OF TEACHING PREPOSITIONS BY A LESSON BASED ON INPUT ENHANCEMENT AND CONSCIOUSNESS-RAISING

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Research Article

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The current study attempted to develop a lesson on prepositions of date and time with limitation to in, on, and at by means of input enhancement and consciousness-raising. The subject of the study was 52 Pibulsongkram Rajabhat University students enrolling in GELN102 English for Learning in academic year 2014. In the process, the students participated in three fifty-minute sessions, one week each, in regular English classes. They were assigned to do a pretest and a posttest related to prepositions of date and time before and after reading five passages with embedded target grammatical features in the form of boldfaced, underlined, and over-sized prepositions together with their phrases. The students also received consciousness-raising in the form of mentioning to the presence of the prepositions in the reading passages. The students were to do a questionnaire concerning the teaching techniques used in the study, input enhancement and consciousness-raising, as well. E1/E2 standard was applied for testing lesson proficiency. The results revealed that the students showed significant improvement after undergoing the experiment at the .05 level of significance, and they were satisfied with the teaching techniques.

Keywords: Input Enhancement, Consciousness-raising, Preposition

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การพัฒนาการเรียนการสอนเรื่องคำบุพบทด้วยบทเรียนเพิ่มประสิทธิภาพข้อมูลภาษาร่วมกับ การสอนด้วยวิธีการกระตุ้นการตระหนักรู้

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บทความวิจัย

งานวิจัยนี้มีจุดมุ่งหมายเพื่อพัฒนาการเรียนการสอนเรื่องคำบุพบทด้วยบทเรียนเรื่องคำบุพบทบอกเวลาซึ่งจำกัดเนื้อหาอยู่ที่คำบุพบท in on และ at โดยใช้วิธีการเพิ่มประสิทธิภาพข้อมูลภาษาร่วมกับการสอนด้วยวิธีการกระตุ้นการตระหนักรู้ กลุ่มตัวอย่างสำหรับการทดลองนี้คือนักศึกษามหาวิทยาลัยราชภัฏพิบูลสงครามที่ลงทะเบียนเรียนในรายวิชา GELN102 ภาษาอังกฤษเพื่อการเรียนรู้ ในปีการศึกษา 2557 จำนวน 52 คน การทดลองใช้เวลาในชั่วโมงเรียนปกติ จำนวน 3 สัปดาห์ สัปดาห์ละ 1 ครั้ง ครั้งละ 50 นาที ในกระบวนการทดลอง 1 กลุ่มตัวอย่างรับคำสั่งให้ทำแบบทดสอบก่อนเรียนเรื่องคำบุพบทบอกเวลา 1 สัปดาห์ก่อนการอ่านเนื้อเรื่องภาษาอังกฤษ 5 เรื่องที่มีคำบุพบทเป้าหมายที่ได้รับการเพิ่มประสิทธิภาพข้อมูลภาษาและได้รับการสอนด้วยวิธีการกระตุ้นการตระหนักรู้ และอีก 1 สัปดาห์หลังการอ่านเนื้อเรื่องภาษาอังกฤษดังกล่าวแล้ว นักศึกษาได้ทำแบบทดสอบหลังเรียนเพื่อวัดความรู้เรื่องคำบุพบท พร้อมทั้งทำแบบสอบถามความพึงพอใจเกี่ยวกับวิธีการเพิ่มประสิทธิภาพข้อมูลภาษาร่วมกับการสอนด้วยวิธีการกระตุ้นการตระหนักรู้ วิเคราะห์ข้อมูลด้วยเกณฑ์ประสิทธิภาพ E1/E2 ผลการทดลองว่านักศึกษามีความรู้ด้านคำบุพบทเพิ่มขึ้นอย่างมีนัยสำคัญทางสถิติที่ระดับ .05 และนักศึกษามีความพึงพอใจต่อวิธีการเพิ่มประสิทธิภาพข้อมูลภาษาร่วมกับการสอนด้วยวิธีการกระตุ้นการตระหนักรู้ในระดับมาก

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Introduction

At present, English is not only a compulsory subject at schools and universities, but it is also considered a global language or a language of the world. There are many reasons to support the idea that English is a language of the world including the fact that about 1,000 million people speak English. English belongs to the world. We live in a global community of English users. Thus, it is becoming more and more difficult to avoid some contact with English in our lives. It is also becoming evident that having no communicative ability in English can be a real handicap for society, culture, economy, politics and study. As ASEAN Economic Community is a uniting of 10 ASEAN countries and all 10 countries agree to use English as the language for communication. When compared to other ASEAN countries, the average English skill level of Thai people lags behind. This indicates that Thais need to improve their English skills to compete with those of other countries.

Instruction can employ different ways to enhance the acquisition of English such as textbooks, instructional packages, lessons and practices combined with certain strategies in English language teaching; for example, input enhancement and consciousness-raising. A good deal of research in language learning suggested that, given exposure to the language, learners could be left only to work out the grammar for themselves. Formal instruction which takes language only as an object to be studied is seen as contributing very little to learning. Such views are associated particularly with Krashen (Krashen and Terrell 1983). Researchers, then, have turned their interest into how to teach linguistic forms while the learners' attention is paid on meaning in order to reach the ultimate advantage for second language (L2) learners, to acquire both form and meaning.

One approach coming in the spotlight to resolving this problem is focus-on-form instruction which aims to draw learners' attention to grammatical form while they are occupied with meaning of language (Long and Robinson, 1998). It is assumed that paying attention to linguistic forms in the input is necessary to maintain language processing (Lee, 2007, p. 88). However, Vanpatten (1990 as cited in Lee, 2007) posed a comment on the focus on form that, due to limited attentional ability, L2 learners hardly ever paid attention to both form and meaning simultaneously; rather, they decided to focus on meaning prior to form, for beginning-level learners in particular. Doughty (2001) provides recommendation relevant to focus on form, stating that it is essential to give learners the right amount of formal integration, so that it does not interfere with the learners while they are trying to

comprehend the meaning of the content. As such, input enhancement by way of textual enhancement, considered a less obtrusive focus-on-form approach comparing to other techniques available (Doughty and Williams, 1998), is deemed a practical alternative for the present study to achieve the aim of focus on form. It is said that input enhancement can be used to draw learners' attention to the target grammatical features by using special techniques such as, bolding, italicizing and capitalizing. Some studies demonstrated positive effects of textual enhancement on increasing learners' attention to grammatical features (White, 1998; Lee, 2007; Hsu 2007; De Santis, 2008; Simard, 2009).

To draw learners' attention to language features, this study, then, employed one additional means to increase the effect of textual enhancement, that is, "consciousness-raising", the term used by Rutherford and Sharwood Smith (1985) to refer to the way to increase learners' awareness of linguistic form. Consciousness-raising involves an attempt to equip the learners with an understanding of a specific grammatical feature to develop explicit knowledge or declarative knowledge. Consciousness-raising is suggested to promote grammatical consciousness, and it is expected to improve students' language performance (White, 1998; Lee, 2007; De Santis, 2008; Simard, 2009; Bunyarat, 2010; Padgate, 2010). Use of textual enhancement plus consciousness raising is assumed to make the target features more visually salient in order to facilitate learners' noticing of the target features since Schmidt (1990) proposed that acquisition of second language grammar took place when learners consciously noticed linguistic features.

Concerning the type of form to be studied, preposition is regarded as one of the most difficult grammatical features for L2 learners to acquire (Kao, 2001). As preposition is considered one of the obstacles for learners of English (Boquist, 2009; Castro, 2013; Estevez et al., 2010; Lasaten, 2014; Tahaineh, 2010), this study, therefore, examines the lesson on preposition but with limitation to that of date and time. Moreover, the result of English proficiency test of Pibulsongkram Rajabhat University showed that students had a great deal of mistakes using prepositions of date and time (60.88%) which was in a high level.

In the satisfactory aspect, research has found that learners tended to be more satisfied with the target grammatical features which were visually salient than ones which were not (Kao, 2001). To conduct lesson development, it is important that the lesson needs to be tested for its proficiency. The efficiency criterion employed in this study was the E1/E2 standard of lesson proficiency cited from Promwong (1978), when E1 is the process

efficiency which, in this study, was the result of an exercise, while E2 is the proficiency of the overall result which was the result of a test. In order for the lesson to be efficient, both the efficiency of the process and the proficiency of the overall result in this study had to meet the percentage of 80.

So far, the study in the fields of textual enhancement and consciousness-raising have mostly investigated linguistic forms or structures that are rule-based in nature; for instance, adverb, possessive determiners (White, 1998; Hsu 2007). The current study focused on examining the effects of input enhancement and consciousness-raising on a grammatical feature whose usage is rather arbitrary. This current study also applied E1/E2 standard to prove the lesson including input enhancement and consciousness-raising proficiency.

Purposes of the Study

There were 2 purposes of the present study. One was to develop and study the lesson efficiency based on input enhancement and consciousness-raising where E1/E2 was the standard basis. The other was to study satisfaction towards input enhancement and consciousness-raising.

Assumption

This research aimed to investigate the effects of input enhancement and consciousness-raising on grammatical features, whether textual enhancement disrupted the process of meaning-focused until it became the grammar explicit instruction was not on focus.

Instruments and Procedure

There are 4 instruments used in this study. The first one is a lesson based on input enhancement strategy. This lesson composed of five reading passages with embedded target grammatical features which were prepositions of date and time ‘in, on, at’ along with their phrases, and they were all typographically enhanced by bold typing, underlining, and enlargement. The average length of each passage was from 106 to 219 words. The first three passages were derived from a website (Main idea practice 3 keys, n.d.) and adapted for the purpose of the current research. The other two passages were written by the researcher. There were 30 target prepositional phrases. Following are sample target prepositions with their phrases from five patterns used in the study.

in + year:	in 2007	in 2013
in + month:	in September	in April
on + month + date:	on June 15	on July 11
on + date:	on Sunday	on Saturday
at + time	at 7 pm.	at 9:30 am.

The second is an exercise on prepositions of date and time. The exercise consisted of 10 sentences which left blank to fill in 4 choices: in, on, at, and for. Prepositions ‘in, on, at’ were the target prepositions needed for study while the preposition ‘for’ was used merely to analyze learners’ notice of the target prepositions. The exercise was checked and evaluated by Thais and foreigners who were experts of foreign language.

The third is a test on prepositions of date and time. There were 10 sentences which left blank to fill in 4 choices: in, on, at, and for. Prepositions ‘in, on, at’ were the target prepositions needed for study while the preposition ‘for’ was used merely to analyze learners’ notice of the target preposition. The test was checked and evaluated by Thais and foreigners who were experts of foreign language. The reliability of the test was considered high (KR-20 = 0.536).

The last one is a satisfaction questionnaire on input enhancement and consciousness-raising. It was checked and evaluated by Thais and foreigners who were experts of foreign language.

Population and Sample

The population of this study was 1,000 Pibulsongkram Rajabhat University students who enrolled in GELN102 English for Learning in 2014 academic year.

Fifty-two participants were selected through a purposive sampling method, 4 for the first trial, 8 for the second, and 40 for the third. All voluntarily participated and were assigned into a preposition lesson based on input enhancement and consciousness-raising.

Procedure

To develop a lesson for teaching prepositions according to E1/E2 standard, the study required 3 repeated steps to try out the lesson with different treatment added to the lesson and with different number of participants. There were 4 people in the first trial (1:1). The second trial consisted of 8 participants (1:10), and the third comprised 40 participants (1:100).

As the purpose of input enhancement strategy is for learners to unintentionally acquire language or grammatical features while their attention is paid to communicative or meaning-focused activities, there was no explicit teaching or explanation of the target prepositions. Therefore, there was no explicit content of prepositions of date and time. Instead, what learners would see was 5 reading passages on general topics with embedded target prepositions of date and time in the enhanced form. The students were told that they had to read the reading passages and find the main idea of each passage. The main purpose of the finding-main-idea activity was merely to give the learners a meaningful activity while their attention was drawn to the target prepositions by input enhancement and consciousness-raising strategies. The result from the finding-main-idea activity was not measured since that was not the purpose of this study.

A lesson used in the present study comprised 5 reading passages. Three were derived from a website (Main idea practice 3 keys, n.d.), and the content was adapted to fit the purpose of the present study. The other 2 were invented by the researcher. The target prepositions together with their phrases of date and time, 30 in total, were enhanced to make them more salience to learners. In each trial, learners met two times, once a week, one for 50 minutes and the other for 20 minutes in a regular English class.

At the first step (N = 4), the target grammatical features were made bold-faced. The learners were assigned to read 5 reading passages and identify the main ideas within 30 minutes. The rest 20 minutes was for an exercise on prepositions of date and time. For the consciousness-raising strategy, they were told to notice the target grammatical features which were all in the enhanced form with no other explanation of the target prepositions. After that, they had to do the multiple-choice exercise on the target prepositions. One week later, the learners did the multiple-choice test on the target grammatical features.

The same procedure went on with other two steps, 8 people for the second and 40 people for the third. However, there were some differences between the second and the third steps on input enhancement techniques used. That is, to increase more salience to learners, bold-facing and underlining were used at the second while bold-facing, underlining, and increasing text-size were employed at the third step. Besides, there was one more difference of the third experiment from the first two. That is, merely at the third experiment that the participants completed a satisfaction questionnaire after they finished the test

Results

In every step of lesson development, all groups had to do an exercise and a test on prepositions of time and date. Each consists of 10 sentences which leave blank to fill in 4 choices: in, on, at, and for. Besides, one week after the treatment of the third step of lesson development, the sample group had to do the test and also the satisfaction questionnaire. The standard basis of E1/E2 in 3 steps 1:1, 1:10, and 1:100 was showed in Table 1. Table 2 shows the students' average score of an exercise and a test. Table 3 indicates the results of students' satisfaction towards input enhancement and consciousness-raising treatment.

Table 1 The 3 steps' results of the lesson efficiency based on input enhancement and consciousness-raising when E1/E2 is the standard basis

Students No.	Total scores	Exercise		Posttest		
		Exercise Scores	Percentage	Total Scores	Posttest Scores	Average Percentage
1:1	40	24	62.5	40	23	57.5
1:10	80	51	63.8	80	56	70.0
1:100	400	321	80.25	10	323	80.75

Table 2 The three different ways of textual enhancement techniques in the lesson

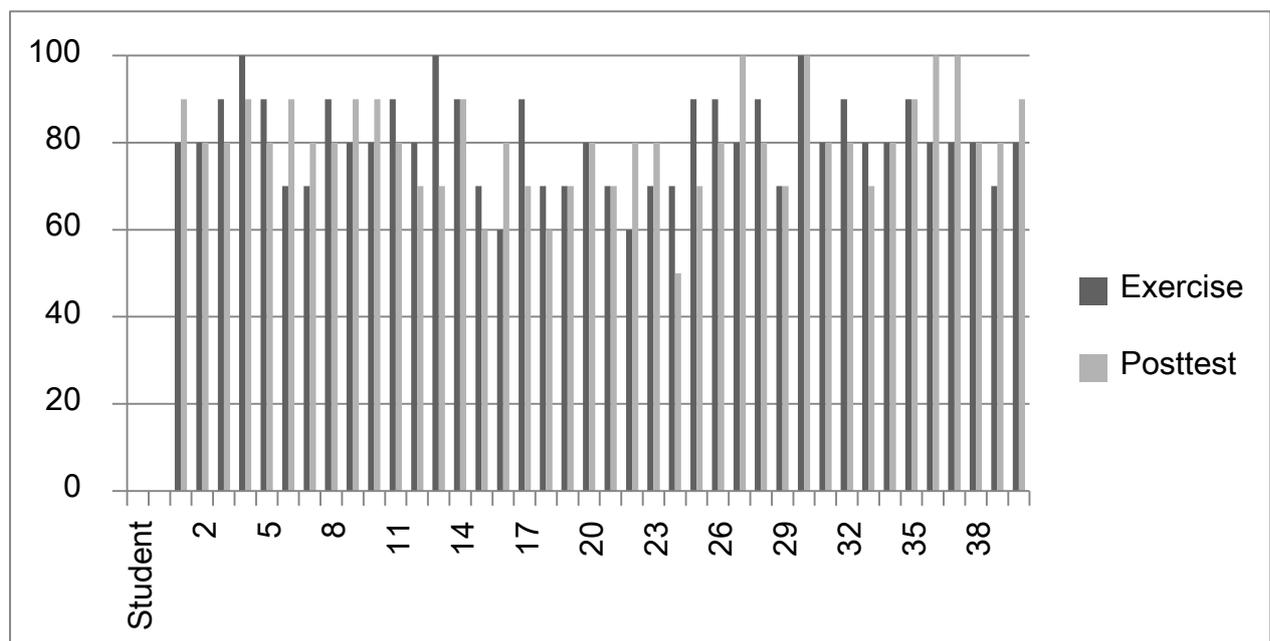
Trial no.	Textual enhancement	Ratio
1.	Bold typing	1:1
2.	Bold typing, underlined, simplified vocabulary	1:10
3.	Bold typing, underlined, simplified vocabulary, and increased font size	1:100

From table 1, the experimental process of 1:1 (N = 4) revealed that the lesson efficiency was at 62.5 and 57.5, and table 2 shows different textual enhancement techniques used in each step of experiment to describe the results in table 1. The researcher found some obstacles in the first step of lesson development and offered solutions to them. The first one concerned the input enhancement technique used. The only one enhancement technique, Bold typing, might not be salient enough for students to notice the target grammatical features. Thus, underlining was chosen to enhance the salience of the target prepositions. The second was about some vocabulary in the lesson which unfamiliar to students. It was simplified because difficult or unknown words might distract students' attention away from the target prepositions typographically enhanced by bolding, underlining, and enlargement and push them to pay attention to other unknown vocabulary.

In the second step (N = 8), the experimental process showed that the lesson efficiency was at 63.8 and 70.0 which were lower than the E1/E2 standard. The researcher found an obstacle in the lesson, that is, the two input enhancement techniques used still might not be salience enough, so the researcher added one more technique which was enlargement or increase of the text size to emphasize the target propositions together with their phrases.

In the third step (N = 40), by receiving three input enhancement techniques, which were bold typing, underlining, and enlargement, as the treatment in the reading passages, as well as consciousness-raising by means of mentioning to the present of the target prepositions for lesson development, the sample group's proficiency on the exercise and the test was 80.25 and 80.75 which met the E1/E2 standard which requires average percentage of 80 for both E1 and E2.

Although the sample group's proficiency improved from the E1/E2 standard, graph 1 below shows the individual scores' distribution by a graph plotted to imply that the improvement in the students' learning happened to some students as shown in graph 1.



Graph 1 The individuals' scores in the third step

It could be said that more techniques of textual enhancement should be added. In the 3rd trial, bold typing, underlined, simplified vocabulary, and increased font size were enough to make better to some students, but for some they were not.

Table 3 The results of satisfaction towards input enhancement and consciousness-raising

Item	\bar{x}	Percentage	S.D.	Level of Satisfaction
1. Interesting method of delivering the content	4.2	83.9	0.54	high
2. Comprehensive review to do self knowledge investigation	3.98	79.6	0.61	high
3. Linking old knowledge to the new one	4.17	83.5	0.61	high
4. Knowledge application from the lesson of preposition of date and time based on input enhancement and consciousness-raising	4.11	82.2	0.6	high
Total	4.11	82.28	0.59	high

From table 3, the sample group was very satisfied with the lesson based on input enhancement and consciousness-raising ($\bar{x} = 4.11$, 82.28%). The highest level of satisfaction was the method of delivering interesting content (83.9%), followed by linking new knowledge to the old one (83.5%), knowledge application from the lesson of preposition words based on input enhancement and consciousness-raising (82.2%), and self-investigation of learners' knowledge (79.6%), respectively.

Discussion

The present study yielded some effects of input enhancement in the form of textual enhancement reinforced by consciousness-raising in the form of mentioning to the target prepositions on the development of the lesson of prepositions of date and time. Overall results were compiled by the participants who studied the lesson on prepositions of date and time. The results of the study showed that, with the combination of input enhancement techniques, in the form of bold typing, underlining, and increasing text size, and consciousness-raising technique the lesson was efficient since it met the lesson efficiency of the E1/E2 standard. That means the lesson is helpful in drawing learners' attention to the target prepositions. Additionally, the results of the present study confirmed the claim made by some researchers (Ellis 2002, Padgate 2010, Bunyarat 2010) that learners often induce greater noticing of the target forms by using special techniques such as, bolding, italicizing and capitalizing. Like the study by Padgate (2010), a treatment group with input enhancement reinforced by consciousness-raising made significant improvement. However, while Padgate's study opted for collocation of verb and preposition, the present study

examined prepositions of date and time. Whereas Padgate's study made use of isolated sentences with embedded target features, the present study employed reading passages.

However, the results of the exercise and the test showed some errors by the students on the use of the preposition 'for'. That is, some students chose "for" which was not the target preposition. This phenomenon could be assumed that those students might not notice that there were only 3 target prepositions "in, on, and at", and no preposition "for" included in the target feature.

According to the satisfaction questionnaire, the overall results were attained in a high level. The students' opinion towards input enhancement and consciousness-raising techniques were at very good level. The highest level of satisfaction was the method of delivering interesting content, followed by linking new knowledge to the old one, knowledge application from the lesson of preposition words based on input enhancement and consciousness-raising, and self-investigation of learners' knowledge, respectively. The results confirmed the claim made by Kao (2001) which supported input enhancement that it highlighted learners' awareness to facilitate further noticing and analysis of the target forms in prepositional words.

Lastly, the current research's results can be applied not only to a grammatical class, but also to a reading class. In a grammatical class, the input enhancement and consciousness-raising can support students to realize and understand more about grammatical forms, although the result showed that the improvement happened to some students. For the future research, use of different input enhancement techniques or addition of more input enhancement techniques is strongly suggested.

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