



A Lucid Training on the Efficacy of the Lexical Approach in Refining Writing for ESL

Abstract *The study tries to reconnoitre the efficacy of the lexical approach writing in refining writing ESL. In order to find out what upshots the lexical approach can have on the writing in ESL, the researcher departments teaching experiment with an experimental class and a control class. A pre-test and a post-test are used as the tools to amass the data.. End product of the experiments show that a lexical approach to ESL teaching can augment students' cognizance of lexical portions, meaningfully expansion their rate of using lexical portions, and escalation their level of English writing.*

Key Terms - *the lexical approach, ESL, writing competency, lexical portions*

I. Introduction

Writing to communicate poses problems not only for ESL Learners but also for first language (L1) learners, because writing to interconnect is both a language and a writing unruly (Myles, 2002). Widdowson (1984) also points out that the difficulty in writing to communicate is not in the linguistic medium only, but in the communicative mode as well. Written communication, he observes, is an interactive process of negotiation. It is interactive in that there is constant interaction between the writer and the reader but, unlike face-to-face interaction, this interaction in writing is conducted by the writer himself by enacting the roles of both participants—the writer as well as the reader. This stances an inordinate problem for learners, both in ESL learning situations and also in L1 learning classrooms. Hence the aim of the teacher is to teach both writing skills and language proficiency. The purpose may be that there is much discontinuation between language involvement and productivity in the process of ESL, thus how to support students to productivity language successfully, and transmute the language knowledge into language skills becomes an imperative and indispensable mission.

This means that in the writing in ESL the mother tongue thinking and second language thinking are mixed and networked reliably, which tends to result in incongruity, sentence mistakes, bad lucidity, and ambiguous expression. Some language researchers (Nattinger & De Carrico, 1992; Lewis, 1993) find there are a large number of word clusters with a high ratio of reproduction in language. After accumulating, analyzing and reviewing these phrases from solicitous language materials and language communication, language learners get admittance to some language entities and rubrics which can be reclaimed in authentic communication. Based on this, some new-fangled sentences can be shaped, foremost to more profuse forthcoming forms and more influent communicative process. A lexical chunk is a group of words that are commonly found together. Lexical portions embrace collocations but these customarily just involve content words, not grammar.

II. Background

A. The Lexical Approach

In the meantime the publication of the “Lexical Approach” by Michael Lewis in 1993, Language teaching practices have been widely revised and discussed. The Chomsky's notion of a instinctive speaker's productivity comprising of an unbounded number of “ingenious” utterances is at best a half-truth. In fact mass-produced items represent a significant portion of a native speaker's spoken and written output. Instinctive speakers have a vast typical of these lexical prefabricated items or portions and are dynamic for assured production. Articulatory does not be contingent so much on having a conventional of multiplicative grammar rules and a discrete stock of words as on having express entree to a stock of lexical portions. It would seem, then, that speakers prerequisite both a prefabricated, automated element to draw on as well as a artistic, procreative one. There is a discrepancy between vocabulary, conventionally thought to be instituted of solitary items, and lexis, which includes not only the single words but also the word combinations that we store in our mental lexicons. Lexical approach backers claim that language consists of meaningful portions that, when collective, produce unremitting articulate

text, and only a marginal of vocal sentences are entirely unique conceptions.

Michael Lewis present this taxonomy of Lexical items:

- vocabularies (e.g., book, pen)
- polywords (e.g., by the way, upside down)
- collocations, or word conglomerates (e.g., community service, absolutely convinced)
- existing exclamations (e.g., I'll get it; We'll see; That'll do; If I were you . . . ; Would you like a cup of coffee?)
- sentence edgings and pates (e.g., That is not as . . . as you think; The fact/suggestion/problem/danger was . . .) and even text frames (e.g., In this paper we explore . . . ; Firstly . . . ; Secondly . . . ; Finally . . .)

The Lexical Approach pays attention not only to single words but more importantly to collocations and institutionalized utterances and sentence frames. Michael Lewis states that

“instead of words, we consciously try to think of collocations, and to present these in expressions. Rather than trying to break things into ever smaller pieces, there is a conscious effort to see things in larger, more holistic, ways” (1997a, p. 204).

B. Language Information Theory

Language information processing theory holds that language learning is a non-automated information processing process of cognitive activity. The process is divided into five stages: input, attention, analysis, memorization and output. Cognitive psychologists believe that the brain's methods of processing input information are bottom-up and top-down mode. Bottom-up approach structures thoughtfulness to specifics, which is a successions of progression from the subordinate to the developed, from decrypting the words to editing the concluding information; top-down mode focusses the perception of the inclusive structure, accentuating the roles of amassed circumstantial knowledge in appreciative the language tidings. These two methods are organised, and networked in helping to twig the language information with the deposits vacillating from morphology and syntax to sermon. The top-down mode of learning lexical portions quickens the solicitation of portions from the lexical and syntactic level to the dialect level, ensuing in enlightening the learners' writing competency (Yu Xiulian, 2008).

III. Methodology

A. Purpose of the Study

The study tries to reconnoitre how to smear the lexical approach to college English writing and then scrutinize the properties that lexical portions have on refining college students' writing proficiency.

B. Participants

Participants in this experiment are JG College of Business Administration having commercial communication and basic English subjects are ESL students divided into two parallel classes: Class A (42) and Class B(43) with a total of 85 students. Class A is the experimental class and Class B is the control class and both of two classes are taught by the researcher.

C. Method

For the experimental class, the researcher chooses Longman Commercial Communication Student's Book as the text book, espouses the lexical method for teaching and wilfully encourages students' abilities of recognizing and smearing lexical portions to succour them to develop their writing abilities through a series of teaching and learning activities, while for the control class, the conformist method of teaching is implemented with the same text books. Results of the study are principally replicated through students' writing performance in a pre-test and a post-test. After the experiment, writing performance of the two classes were linked and juxtaposed through quantitative analysis. The experiment lasted 16 weeks.

D. Procedure

1. Pre-test

At the beginning of the academic term, students in the two classes were asked to write a opus of no less than 120 words with the title Odd jobs for College Students within 30 minutes. Full mark of the writing is 15. Students were advised to undertake the task seriously and carefully, as scores of their writings would be included in the internal markings on their concluded performance. Writings of the students are scored by two veteran teachers and an average score of each opus is adopted.

Teaching design and teaching activities (based on the lexical approach) in the experimental class

a. Pre-reading activities

Before reading the passage, students are asked to discuss and answer the following questions:

- Have you ever heard of premarital treaties? What do you think they are for?
- Do you think premarital treaty will take the ardour out of marriage for the man as well as the woman?
- Would you ask for a premarital treaty before your marriage? Why or why not?

b. While-reading activities

In this stage, it's better for the teachers to ask students to have a global reading first so that students can have an overall understanding of the main idea and know about the whole structure of the passage, which is beneficial to students' writing. Then a detailed reading activity is followed.

In this part, teaching activities takes the lexical portions as the catalogue with the classification of observation, hypothesis and experiment. Through the perception, learning and application of lexical portions, students are expected to master and apply them efficiently, so that their language competency can be improved.

Recognizing the lexical portions

At the beginning of the study, some knowledge about portions has been taught to the students. While reading a passage, a student is firstly asked to identify and find out the portions in it with the purpose of shifting his focus from grammar and independent words to portions. Aiming more responsiveness on lexical portions rather than on the language rules in ESL to draw the rules of employing language is rather alike to the way of mother tongue acquirement.

- polywords: in contrast to; on some way; owing to; in a pinch
- collocations: come to grips with; work for; be related to; distinguish from; set up; fall through; press for; wonder at; lag behind; exert oneself; at the least; be superior/ inferior to; develop from; from one's point of view; set up
- Practicing and utilizing the lexical portions

This part belongs to the hypothesis and experiment stage and aims at training students to perceive and internalize the usage of lexical portions in various ways. The following ways are advised.

- Sentence completion: From my point of view, the -you to you guidelines is superior to the -I to you approach.
- Sentence making: This is of exciting prominence when wearisome to achieve concord in a company.
- Sentence translate: Use -come to grips with to make a sentence.
- Text retelling or abbreviating: Use the lexical portions in the passage to reiterate or condense the text.
- Text reciting: Students are projected to rehearse the parts which encompass many of the portions in the text.

c. Post-reading activities

In the post-reading activities, students are probable to fuse the portions learned beforehand and then make an all-embracing reading to assemble and directing more portions further. Language learning is a process of accumulation of language knowledge. With more portions stored in the head, it's more likely for the students to output language in closer paces and the more accurateness and eloquence of the writing can be grasped. In order to reassure students to accumulate portions more eagerly and vigorously, they are asked to interchange each others' portions found in their extensive reading after class. Students are also stimulated to make class hearsays orally and literally in class with the portions they have obtained in the extensive reading as the amalgamating way.

2. Post-test

In order to determine the effect of the lexical approach to writing in ESL, a post-test was taken by students in the two classes. All were asked to write a composition of no less than 120 words with the title Academic writing difficulties among College Students within 30 minutes. Writings of the students are scored by two experienced teachers and an average score of each composition is adopted.

IV. Data analysis and results

In order to investigate the effect of the study, a number of descriptive and inferential statistical procedures are initiated. The results obtained through such analysis is explained and depicted in the

following section. A premise of the study is that the experimental group and the control group are comparable and the difference between the two classes is not significant before the experiment. In other words, the two groups of students are expected to indicate no significant differences concerning the levels of writing and they should be of homogeneity concerning the writing competency before the study. In order to check the homogeneity, a pre-test was given to the two classes to judge and evaluate their levels of writing.

TABLE 1

DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS ON PERFORMANCE ON PRE-TEST

	N	Mean	SD
Class A	42	8.67	1.57
Class B	43	8.78	1.76

TABLE 2

INDEPENDENT SAMPLES TEST OF RESULTS OF PRE-TEST

	Group	N	t	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference
Pre-test	Class A	42	0.021	0.192	0.11
	Class B	43			

Table 1 indicates that the means are statistically very close to each other on the pre-test (8.67 and 8.78). Hence, it can be inferred that the students in the two classes don't differ significantly from each other in terms of their writing performance. In the dependent samples test of results on the pre-test t-value is -0.021 and p is 0.192. Table 2 reveals that the value of t is not significant at the level of p (> 0.05), which means the participants' almost equal writing competency statistically.

TABLE 3

DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS ON PERFORMANCE ON POST-TEST

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Class A	42	10.29	2.016
Class B	43	9.36	1.922

TABLE 4

INDEPENDENT SAMPLES TEST OF RESULTS OF POST-TEST

	Group	N	t	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference
Post-test	Class A	42	2.32	0.01	0.93
	Class B	43			

From Table 3 & 4, we can find that the average score of experimental class is 10.29, which is 0.93 more than the average score of the control class (9.36). The independent samples test of the results on the post-test shows that the two groups are significantly different at the level of 0.01 level from which we can deduce that after the lexical approach is adopted in ESL, students' writing performance is greatly improved in the experimental class, while the traditional approach attributes no significant progress to improving students' writing competency in the control class.

TABLE 5

PAIRED SAMPLES TEST OF THE RESULTS OF PRE-TEST AND POST-TEST

Group	Mean Difference	Std. Deviation	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Class A	1.62	2.711	5.014	41	0.000
Class B	0.58	2.426	1.882	42	0.065

Table 5 shows that the average score of experimental class on the post-test is 1.62 more than that on the pre-test while the average score of the control class on the post-test is only 0.58 more than that on the pre-test. For the experimental class, t is significant at the level of p=0.000, while for the control class t

is not significant at the level of $p=0.065$. It can be inferred from Table 5 that although the two classes' writing performance is improved after a term's learning, only the writing abilities of the experimental class are significantly improved.

V. Discussion and Conclusion

From the scrutiny exceeding, we can emanate to find that the lexical approach to refining students' writing abilities is rather operative. The purpose may lie as tails. Only when the learners themselves are cognisant of the fissure between them and the native speakers of English, can it be promising for them to work firmer to condense that gap. Secondly, the lexical approach accentuates erudition texts by core by regarding them as a unabridged unit stored in commemoration. Learners can ice-pick them up as a whole if needed rather than fix them up equably according to grammatical rules, which can reduce the pressure of coding language, save the brain a lot of time and effort to process information, thereby augment the fluency of countenance. Lewis (1997) says, -Fluency is based on the acquisition of a large number of fixed or semi-fixed prefabricated blocks, which is the basis for language innovation (p.120). Also, as a combination of grammar, semantics and context, lexical portions picked up as a whole can significantly reduce the number of wrong semantic collocation, and improve the accuracy and authentic nature of language.

The experiment displays that a lexical approach to ESL teaching unabridged can placed augment students' responsiveness of lexical portions, suggestively develop their occurrence of using pinpoint lexical portions, and conduce to raise the level of English writing. The artefact of the study elasticities traces to college English class teaching, especially to teaching writing. emboldens the process of perceiving of the lexical item, which is a preliminary and fundamental step when allocating with contemporary vocabulary. The researcher located out that going through pre-text activities lead the students to a better understanding of meaning in context, to point out collocations, to predict likely meanings and presumption meaning from clues in the milieu. This is the reason why the researcher plan the warm up and the absorb phase very judiciously. When students experience a personal envelopment and stimulate their personal representations and references, they are more likely to notice and accumulation the lexical items which are the application on teaching unit. The researcher consider conjecturing from context a basic skill to be taught, since if we suggest the meaning straight away, acting as a 'walking dictionary', the new words are stockpiled in the short term memory, and are elapsed proximately after the input is over. Indeed, the amenable language skills of reading and listening are very much underpinned by being able to cope with new expressions, not with understanding every word studied how to apply the lexical approach to every aspect of language teaching better to improve students' comprehensive competency.

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