

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY AND PROCEDURES

This study was an experimental research study which aimed to investigate the effects of collocation vocabulary instruction on students' writing ability. The study was carried out for twelve weeks during the second semester of the academic year 2007. The instruments used in this study consisted of ten-period lesson plans to conduct explicit collocation vocabulary instruction and writing instruction, and two parallel forms of English writing tests. Details about the participants, the research design, the instruments, data collection, and data analysis are presented in this chapter.

Population and Participants

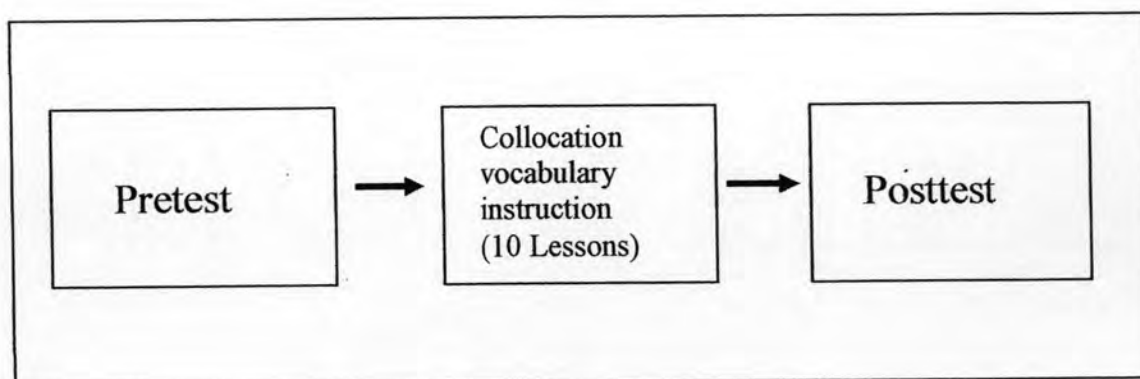
The population in this study was lower secondary school students in public schools. The participants were selected from Nonthaburipittayakom School, which was a public secondary school in Nonthaburi province with approximately 1800 students. The researcher chose this school to be the participants in this study because this school possessed typical characteristics of public secondary schools in Thailand. First, this school employed a similar way of student admission to other public schools in Thailand. Presumably, the students' average academic ability in this school was comparable to that of students in other public schools. Secondly, the school curriculum offered courses to students based on the Basic Education Curriculum A.D.2001 as other public schools in Thailand. Next, this school was a medium-size school. The majority of public schools in Thailand were medium-size schools. Therefore, the researcher decided to choose a school of this size to be the representative of the population. Last, but not least,

Nonthaburipittayakom School offered a course that aimed to promote students' writing ability, which was the major goal of this present study.

The lower secondary school students participating in this study were chosen from eighth grade classes. A class of thirty- six eighth grade students at Nonthaburipittayakom School was selected to be the participants in this study. This class consisted of 8 male students and 28 female students. Their ages were in a range of 13-15 years old. This class had to take 2 periods more for studying this compulsory elective course. The participants took two English courses at this level. One was a required core course of English which required five periods (50 minutes each) of class time per week. The other course was an elective but all eighth grade students in this school took. This course was offered two periods in a week.

Research Design

This study was one group pre-test and post-test experimental design to find the effect of using collocation vocabulary instruction on English writing ability. The participants were tested their writing ability once before receiving the instruction and, after ten periods of the collocation vocabulary instruction, they were tested again as shown in Figure 3.1. The scores from the two tests were then compared to examine the effects of the instruction.



Figures 3.1: *Research Design*

Research Instruments

To examine the effects of the collocation vocabulary instruction, two research instruments were used in this study. The first instrument was ten lesson collocation vocabulary instruction used as the treatment in the study. The other instrument was two parallel forms of English writing ability tests used to collect the data.

Collocation vocabulary instruction

The collocation vocabulary instruction designed by the researcher was implemented in an elective course entitled “English for communication”. The course was offered for eighth grade students at Nonthaburipittayakom School. This course took 2 periods (50 minutes each) per week. The course syllabus stated that the course would cover the practice of all four skills of English – listening, speaking, reading, and writing. The main objective was to improve students’ four skills of English for communication. Due to the evaluation system used during the time of the study, lower secondary school students in Thailand were evaluated on a yearly basis; therefore, this course continued for two semesters. The course was designed to focus on listening and speaking skills in the first semester, and reading and writing skills in the second semester.

The collocation vocabulary instruction was implemented in ten periods in the second semester. The main objective of the instruction was to promote students' writing ability. Ten lesson plans were designed by the researcher based on Hill (2001) and Wei (1999)'s ideas of how to teach collocation vocabulary. In these lessons, the students were also required to practice their reading skills when being asked to read sample written texts.

Lesson Plan Development

To design the ten lessons, the researcher, first, studied the course description and the expected learning outcomes for the reading and writing course from the school's curriculum. Overall, the course description and the expected learning outcomes cover the following reading and writing skills:

- Understanding and interpreting various kinds of texts
- Comparing and contrasting the use of words, phrases, idioms, sentences, and cultures between English and Thai
- Reading and pronouncing different genres accurately and appropriately
- Using language and gesture to communicate appropriately
- Using language to learn and give information in order to develop themselves and family

In addition, the researcher consulted the course owner for more specific information about the course. The teacher described that this English for communication course generally covered the topics related to daily life and the writing tasks that would be useful for lower secondary school students such as daily routine, free time activities

and so on. Based on the English fundamental course syllabus designed by the course owner, the following topics were selected for the ten writing lessons in this present study.

1. Daily routine
2. Chores
3. Free time activities
4. Appearance
5. Part-time jobs
6. Travel plan
7. Giving direction
8. Health
9. Transportation
10. Recipe

The researcher, then, developed ten lesson plans to teach writing. In these lessons, the students were taught collocation vocabulary explicitly. The knowledge of collocation vocabulary was assumed to enhance students' English writing ability. Each of the ten writing lessons consisted of two stages: pre-writing stage and writing stage (See Figure 3.2).

Selection of collocation

The collocations selected to be taught in the collocation vocabulary instruction were medium collocations that were necessary for each writing task. As suggested by Hill (2001), teachers should focus their instruction on medium collocations because weak collocations are too easy and strong collocations are too specific and not predictable.

Selection of writing task

For the writing tasks that the participants were assigned in the ten lessons, the researcher selected the types of writing that eighth grade students are likely to have opportunities to produce in real life including informal letter, diary, e-mail, note, notice, travel plan, and recipe. Some tasks were practiced in more than one lesson (See Appendix A)

Teaching Procedure

To teach collocation vocabulary, the researcher combined Hill (2001) and Wei (1999)'s ideas about how to teach collocation because Hill and Wei have proposed practical ideas for teaching collocation. During the course of instruction, students had to create their own collocation notebook and stored the collocations they learned in the course in their collocation notebook.

In each lesson, selected collocations were taught explicitly according to Hill's and Wei's ideas as follows (See a sample lesson plan in Appendix B):

Pre-writing stage

Before assigning students to write, the teacher prepared the students with explicit collocation vocabulary instruction and provided them with a sample written text. This stage was comprised of four steps.

Step 1: Hill's idea of raising awareness of collocation

In this first step, the teacher let the students read a text that contained samples of the writing task and selected collocation and asked the students to find the sentences in the text in which the collocations appeared. The teacher showed the sentences on the board and added more sentences to illustrate the use of collocations in sentences. For

example, for the lesson on 'Daily routine' that the students had to write an informal letter, the teacher used a text in a form of an informal letter to present the focused collocations. The students would read the sample informal letter to find the collocations in the letter and observed how the collocations were used in contexts.

Step 2: Read (Wei's RDRR)

In this step, students studied collocations by observing sample sentences to see how words co-occur in the sentences found in Step 1. By reading the sentences emphasized collocations in focus, the students were asked to guess the meaning of the collocation from the context and also to induce the pattern of word occurrence. Presumably, after the students learned the meaning and rules of how to use collocations, they would be able to produce sentences using the learned collocations in their writing.

Step 3: Don't Read (Wei's RDRR)

After learning the meaning and patterns of collocations, students had to create sentences by using the collocations they learned. The teacher designed activities for the students to create their own sentences. For the lesson of daily routine, the teacher had a diagram to show daily routine of people. Then, each group was asked to create sentences according to their diagrams by using the collocations they learnt.

Step 4: Reread (Wei's RDRR)

When the students finished creating sentences, the teacher and students discussed the use of collocations in the sentences students-produced to check whether the students used the collocations correctly or not.

Writing stage

After learning the selected collocations explicitly in the pre-writing stage, the students were asked to produce various kinds of texts.

Step 5: Reuse (Wei's RDRR)

In this step, the students had to practice using collocations to write a long text. First, the teacher brainstormed ideas from students to activate their schema about the topic that they were going to write. Then, the teacher guided the students to write a text as an example together. Last, the students were assigned a writing task that was similar to the one they wrote with the teacher earlier.

During Step 5, the teacher taught writing to students by using the reading text in steps 1 to 4 as a model for the writing task. All the reading texts used in these ten lessons were written by the researcher, so that the researcher could find suitable contexts to place the collocations interesting for the students at this level. These texts were written in various types in order to expose the students with the kind of writing they may have to produce in their daily life.

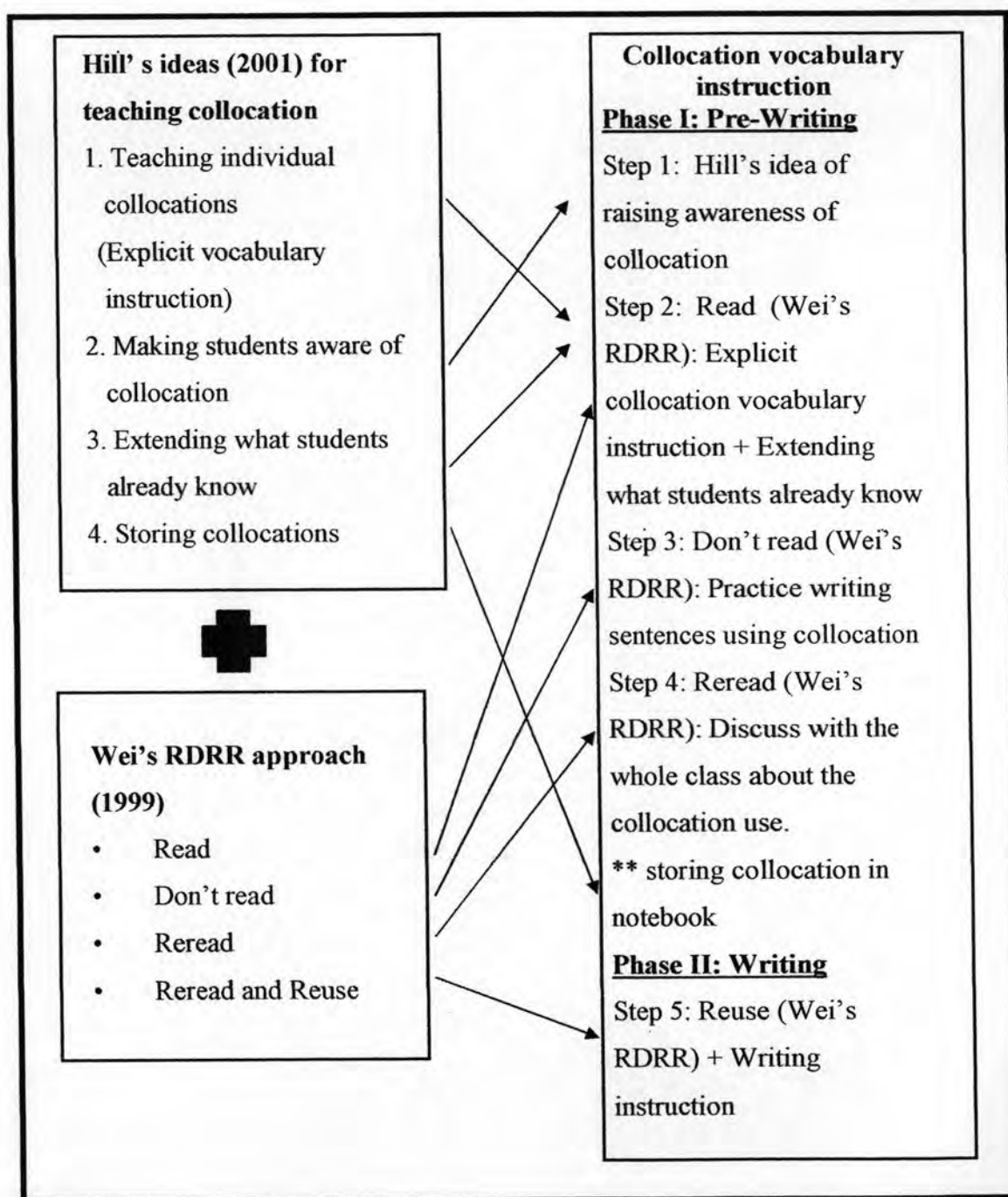


Figure 3.2: *The integration ideas used to design the collocation vocabulary instruction to enhance writing ability*

Validation of lesson plans

Three lesson plans were checked for the teaching steps, objectives, contents, and materials by three experts (See Appendix C). The criteria used in choosing the experts were their teaching experiences and their understanding of collocation vocabulary instruction.

The comments received from the experts concern two aspects as follows:

1. The difficulty of the content and activities.

Some experts commented that the content of the materials and the activities was too easy. For the first comment, the researcher adjusted the activities according to the experts' comment. However, the content of the materials was not adapted because the course owner insisted that it was appropriate to the participants' English proficiency.

2. The clarity of the language used in the lesson plans.

The experts commented that the language used in some parts of the lesson plans was not easy to understand. For this comment, the researcher revised and edited the problematic sentences according to the experts' comment.

After the revision, the other seven plans were designed using the three validated lesson plans as models. The researcher tried out three lesson plans with a group of thirty-nine eighth grade students that had similar English proficiency to that of participants to check how well the procedures and activities flow in the real classroom. The plans were used to conduct instructional activities effectively. The researcher could turn all the activities smoothly and finish in time. Also, the materials and the activities seemed to work well with the students.

English writing ability tests

In order to examine the effects of the collocation vocabulary instruction, the researcher developed two parallel forms of English writing ability tests. The two tests had the same type of writing tasks aimed to test the same abilities. The objectives of the tests were determined according to the expected learning outcomes concerning writing ability, the course objective concerning writing ability, and the objectives in the ten lesson plans used in the present study (see Appendix D). The tests covered the following writing objectives:

1. Students will be able to understand, interpret and transfer the data from non-text materials in their own word correctly.
2. Students will be able to express their opinion about the matter in their daily life.
3. Students will be able to present the story in their daily life.

Each test consisted of three writing tasks that aimed to examine the students' writing ability regarding the three objectives (See Appendix E). Each writing task can obtain the total score of 35 points, therefore, each of the English writing ability test contained 105 points. In the first task, the students were checked their ability to understand, interpret, and transfer data in their own word by writing a note to give directions. For the second task, the participants had to write their opinion about the matter in their daily life. In the two tests, the students were asked to write a letter to express their opinions about some issues. The final task checked the students' ability to present a story in their daily life. The students were asked to write e-mail about an activity they did.

Validation of the tests

Both of English writing tests were validated by three experts who were experienced in writing assessment (See Appendix F). The three experts agreed that the two tests had the content validity. However, one expert suggested that the researcher should switch the writing task 3 between the pretest and the posttest because the content of the writing task 3 in the pretest had similar to the writing task 2. The researcher, then, revised the two tests according to the suggestion.

The researcher tried out the two tests with a group of twenty eighth grade students which was different from the experimental group. The data from the try out was used to validate for the power of difficulty (P) and discrimination indexes (r). The power of difficulty were in range of 0.42 – 0.54 that showed every writing task in the two tests could be applicability for the study (Laothong, 2007). For the discrimination indexes (r) of each writing task, only writing task 1 showed the low ability to discriminate. The other writing task in the two tests had the discrimination indexes in range of 0.21 – 0.34 that could show the applicable ability to use as the tests.

Moreover, the researcher used Cronbach's coefficient alpha (α) to measure the internal consistency. The result of the pretest was $\alpha = 0.78$, while the result of the posttest was $\alpha = 0.80$.

Also, the data were used to validate whether the two tests were parallel or not in terms of overall mean score, power of difficulty, and discrimination indexes. The results from the two tests showed that the two tests were parallel because the overall mean scores of the two tests, the power of difficulty, and discrimination index were not significantly different as shown in Table 3.1

Table 3.1

The results of the three parallelisms from the pretest and the posttest

Analyses	Tests	Mean	t.	Sig.
Overall mean score	Pretest	49.70	.898	.801
	Posttest	51.50		
Power of difficulty	Pretest	0.47	.500	.073
	Posttest	0.49		
Discrimination indexes	Pretest	0.23	.107	.507
	Posttest	0.23		

* $p < .05$

Scoring Rubric

The two tests were scored using Beginning Writer's Continuum or BWC (NWREL) as the rubrics (See Appendix G). This rubric was chosen for this study because it was designed for language learners who are in the beginning level for writing skills while the other rubrics were designed for the higher level that the language learners can write an essay. BWC consists of seven aspects to be scored as follows:

1. Ideas

In the first aspect, the rubric is used to determine how well the writer develops ideas in the text.

2. Organization

The second aspect in the rubric focuses on the organization, the internal structure, of the text. The rubric is used to determine the writer's ability to order words, to use transitions, and to sequence ideas in the text.

3. Voice

The third aspect focuses on the writer's ability to express meaning using tone and flavor.

4. Word Choice

This aspect of rubric determines how well the writer chooses vocabulary to convey the meaning he or she wants to express.

5. Sentence Fluency

This aspect focuses on the rhythm and flow of the language. The rubric is used to determine how well the writer uses grammatical structures in the text.

6. Conventions

This aspect focuses on the correctness of the writing task. The rubric is used to determine how well the writer writes English language, for example, the space between words, the use of punctuations, and capitalization in the text.

7. Presentation

This aspect of the rubric focuses on the neatness of the writing task. The rubric is used to determine how well and easy the writer presents the text to the reader.

Each aspect was scored using scores from 1 to 5. Each score indicates a level of writing ability as shown in Appendix G. The following is general description of the five scores.

1 point Experimenting: the lowest level

The piece of writing that received 1 point is labeled as 'experimenting'. This kind of writing shows that the writer dictates labels or a story or unclear response to task. The ability to order or group not yet presents, also the awareness of audience not presents.

2 points Emerging: the low level

The piece of writing that received 2 points is labeled as 'emerging'. This kind of writing shows that the writer can string words together into phrase and attempt to use simple sentences. The writer can use recognizable words but still be nonstandard grammar.

3 points Developing: the intermediate level

The piece of writing that received 3 points is labeled as 'developing'. This kind of writing shows that the writer attempt to make a point and expresses some predictable feeling. The writer can use general or ordinary words and also use simple sentences. The writer has an attempt to use other sentence patterns and standard grammar.

4 points Capable: the high level

The piece of writing that received 4 points is labeled as 'capable'. This kind of writing shows that the writer can tell a story and use favorite words correctly. Simple and compound sentences are presented effectively.

5 points Experienced: the highest level

The piece of writing that received 5 points is labeled as 'experienced'. This kind of writing shows that the writer can present a fresh and original idea. The topic is narrowed and focused, and also uses interesting and important details for support. Also, the writer can use everyday words well.

To illustrate how the BWC rubric was used to score students' writing, a sample text is shown in figure 3.3. In this example, the students received a total score of 19 out of 35. For each aspect, the student received a score ranging from 2 to 3 points. The following section describes how the researcher evaluated this sample of writing.

1. Ideas

For the first aspect, ideas, the student got 3 points because the student showed an attempt to make a point and the general idea is recognizable. Some ideas are clear but some are still fuzzy.

2. Organization

In term of organization, the student also got 3 points because limited transitions are presented.

3. Voice

The student got 3 points for the voice aspect because the student used the word 'you', which shows that the student was aware, that the writing would be read by someone else.

4. Word choice

For word choice, the student got 2 points for word choice because the student was able to construct phrases and used recognizable words.



5. Sentence fluency

The student got 3 points for sentence fluency because the student used simple sentences that tended to begin the same. The reader may have to reread the text to follow the meaning.

6. Conventions

The student got 2 points for the mechanic of the writing because the student used mixed upper and lower case letters and used inappropriate spaces between letters and words. Nonstandard grammar was presented in the text.

7. Presentation

The student got 3 points for the presentation because most letters and words were readable with an attempt at spacing. The letters were grouped to make distinguishable words and phrases.

PRE-TEST

Instructions: There are three items for this test. You have 90 minutes to complete the test. Read the explanation for each item carefully and do the test.

1. Your foreigner friend, Kate, is staying at your house. Today she wants to go to Pantip to buy a new laptop but you are too busy and cannot take her there. Write a note to your friend. In a note, tell her how to go you're your house to Pantip. She will drive there using your directions. Use the map to help you give her the directions.

Ideas	1	2	3	4	5
Organization	1	2	3	4	5
Voice	1	2	3	4	5
Word	1	2	3	4	5
Choice					
Sentence	1	2	3	4	5
Fluency					
Conventions	1	2	3	4	5
Presentation	1	2	3	4	5

19

Kate,

Sorry, I can't take you to Pantip. I have an exam today. Here are the directions to Pantip. First, from the house, Go straight and turn right is Tiwanon Road. You go straight to Kae Rai intersection and you turn left is NgamWongWan Road. And you Go straight to Pantip.

.....

.....

Sorry again that I can't take you . Have fun at Pantip. There are a lot of laptops you can choose from there.

.....
Bow.....

Figure 3.3: Example of scoring student's work

Inter-rater reliability check

To check the reliability of the scoring, the researcher trained herself how to grade writing tasks with an experienced English writing teacher. This expert was a native speaker of English and had four years of teaching English writing in Thailand. The researcher trained to score writing tests using Beginning Writer's Continuum (NWREL, n.d.) with this expert to assure that the researcher's scoring was reliable. Twelve papers from the pretest were scored by the two raters. Then, the mean scores from the two raters were compared using Cronbach's Alpha. The result was 0.734. The result of Cronbach's Alpha indicated that the interreliability level was higher than 0.7 that related at the high level. It is apparent that that the researcher scoring could be reliable at the high level.

Data Collection

In the second semester of the academic year 2007, the students' writing ability was assessed using two paralleled forms of English writing ability tests. The week before the instruction began, the pre-test was conducted to examine the students' writing ability before receiving collocation vocabulary instruction. Then, the researcher conducted the collocation vocabulary instruction for ten weeks. After the instruction finished, the post-test was conducted to examine the students' writing ability after receiving the instruction later.

Data Analysis

The scores from the two English writing ability tests were analyzed by means of arithmetic mean and standard deviation. The scores from the pre and post tests were compared using t-test to check whether there was a significance difference at $p \leq 0.05$ in

participants' writing ability before and after receiving the collocation vocabulary instruction. The data were analyzed and compared by using the total scores of the tests first. Then, the researcher analyzed the scores obtained in each of seven aspects according to the BWC rubric, and finally the scores obtained in each writing task.

Moreover, the data were analyzed to examine the effectiveness of the treatment using effect size. According to Cohen'd (1988), the effect size means the degree to which the phenomenon is present in the population or the degree to which the null hypothesis is false. He presented that the null hypothesis always means that the effect size is zero, so it is false to some specific degree. That means the larger the effect size posited, the greater the power of the test.