

Practicum English Language Teachers' Research on Corpus-Based Activities in Teaching English Collocations to Malaysian Secondary Education Students

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Evidence from national-based examinations indicated that English language proficiency among Malaysian secondary education students is at a mediocre level. Literature available also shows that the poor command of English vocabulary especially on using collocations has resulted in students shunning away from productive language skills, speaking and writing respectively. In English language learning, collocations refer to a natural combination of two or more words and corpus-based activities involve activities that help in learning vocabulary and grammar. This study seeks to determine if corpus-based activities help the students in learning collocations and investigate the students' perceptions of using these activities. A set of hypotheses is also established to determine if the results of learning collocations are significant. Quantitative research design is used where it involves the use of quasi-experiment and the distribution of surveys. The study is conducted in the state of Perak, Malaysia where the availability of 42 secondary education students (referred to as Form 4) from a public school is recruited. Four corpus-based activities comprising cloze activities, information-gap activities, error-spotting activities, and Kahoot-based activities are rotated within 12 weeks. Pre and post-tests in the form of 30 multiple-choice questions comprising of collocations identified in an English language textbook are conducted and an adapted, 5-point Likert scale questionnaire is distributed to achieve the objectives. Data analyses involved descriptive statistics and a one-tailed t-test of significance which are performed on the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Findings reveal a difference of means, with pre-test at 22 and post-test at 24.88; at a 95% confidence interval, the p-value in the t-test is .003 which is lower than .05, proving that there is a significant improvement in using corpus-based activities in teaching collocations. Survey results reveal that 95% of the students admit their level of English language proficiency is below than medium level; while they (66%) consider themselves unfamiliar with collocations, 95% of them prefer to learn collocations through the activities conducted. Literature has shown that activities that are engaging help the students to learn the language better, and this is evident from the student's responses in the survey. These findings subsequently prove that the traditional, chalk-and-talk method and teacher-centred teaching method are outdated. English language teachers should teach collocations using engaging methods and corpus-based activities as conducted in this study as this help learning collocations be interactive and meaningful. Students with the help of these activities will become confident language users, consequently improving their existing level of language proficiency. As the study is conducted during the researchers' teaching practicum, following the transition from physical classes to online classes during the COVID-19 pandemic, future research should determine if similar teaching methods help Malaysian secondary education students in learning collocations.

Keywords: *Corpus-based Activities, English Collocations, English Language Teaching, Malaysian Secondary Education, Teaching Practicum*