Extracting multiword expressions from texts with the aid of online resources

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Background

Why MWEs?

- MWEs are pervasive in natural discourse (e.g. Conklin & Schmitt, 2012).
- The acquisition of MWEs facilitates learners' fluency and proficiency (e.g. Crossley, Salsbury, & McNamara, 2015)

Why is learning MWEs challenging?

- The learning process is slow and uneven (Qi & Ding, 2011).
- The number of MWEs to acquire is enormous.
- There is a lack of awareness of the pervasiveness and significance of MWEs.

Research questions

1. Does extracting MWEs from texts with the aid of online resources positively affect learners' acquisition of these MWEs?
2. Does extracting MWEs from texts make significant changes to students' awareness of the ubiquity and importance of MWEs?

Methods

Participants

- 56 Vietnamese EFL university students in their second year
- Two intact classes
- Average vocabulary size: 4,500 – 4,800 wds.

Procedures (see Figure below)

- 10 weeks of reading lessons

Experimental group (n=26)

Extracting MWEs from reading texts (Lewis, 1993)

1. Intuitively highlight potential MWEs in reading texts;
2. Choose some phrases from those MWEs to look up in online dictionaries and a corpus (COCA) to verify their MWE status;
3. Note down about five MWEs to learn

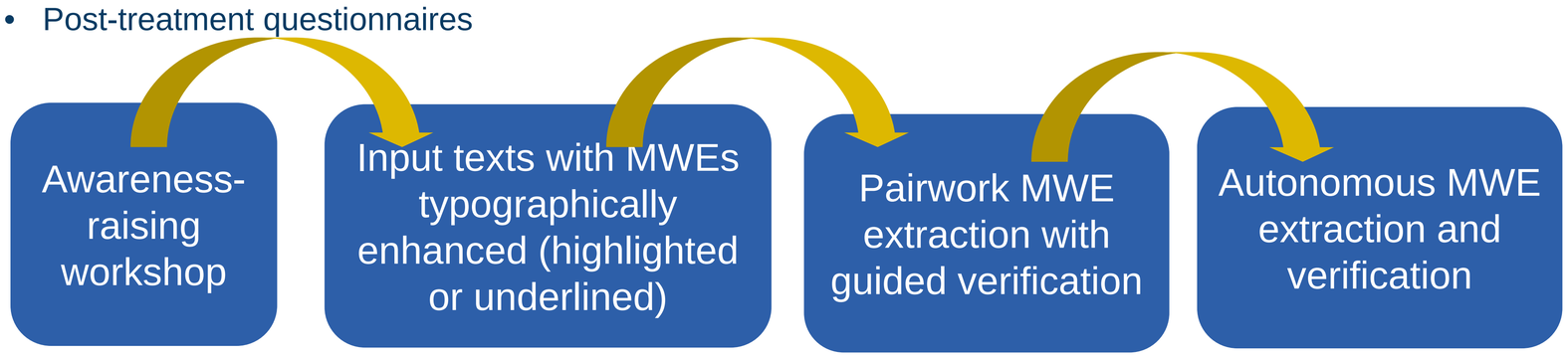
Comparison group (n=30)

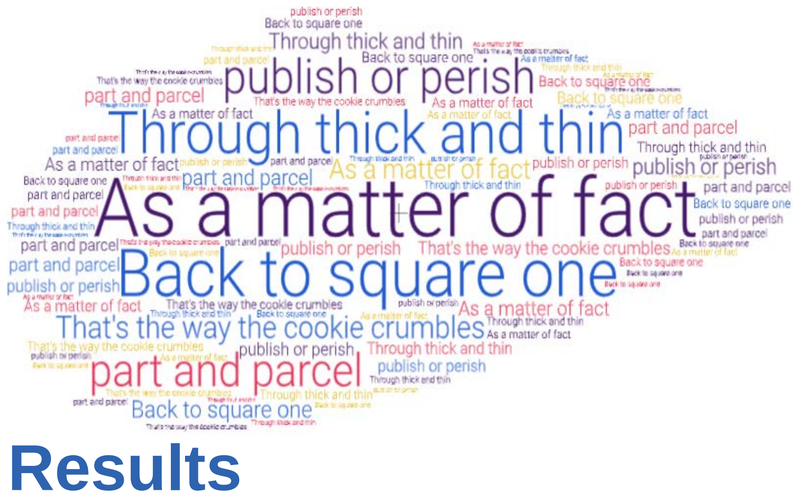
Doing content-related activities

E.g. group discussions, summarizing texts with mind maps, jigsaw reading

Data collection instruments

- 52 target MWEs (included in reading input)
- A form recall pre-test
- Two post-tests (immediate and delayed)
- Post-treatment questionnaires

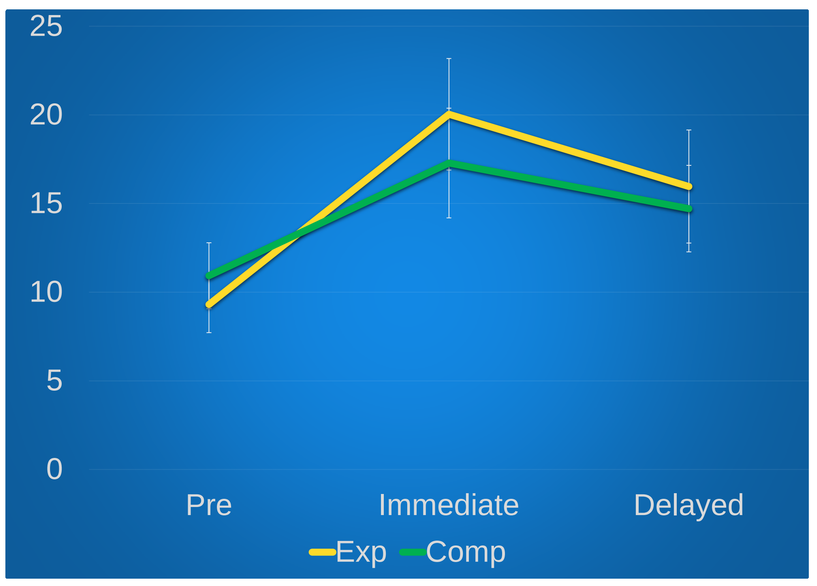




Results

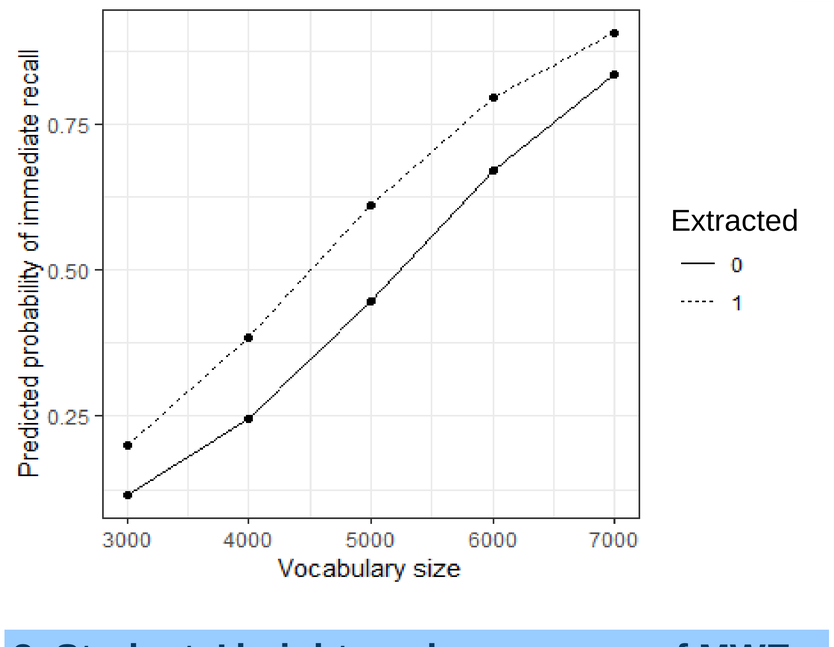
1. Significantly greater learning gains in the experimental group, with a medium effect size

Test results of the two groups (Max = 44)



2. Statistically significant probability that extracted MWEs would be recalled in the post-tests

Learners' vocabulary size and extracted items vs. immediate post-test results



3. Students' heightened awareness of MWEs and autonomous learning strategies

Implications

How can teachers promote MWE learning while teaching to the times?

Step-by-step and explicit classroom instructions

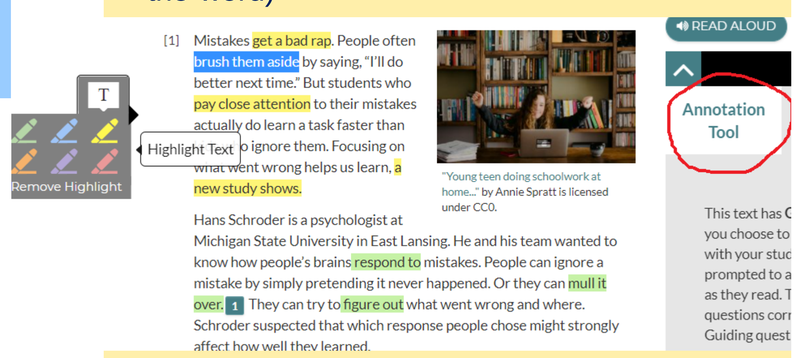
1. Awareness-raising workshop
2. Scaffolding by input with MWEs typographically enhanced
3. Online dictionary and corpus training
4. Autonomous MWE extraction and verification
5. Reinforcement with homework assignments

Selecting rich input materials

1. Suitable vocabulary load, based on learners' vocabulary size (95-98% of running words should be known);
2. High frequency of MWE occurrences;
3. Relevant and interesting reading topics
4. Authentic

Creating online activities

- Choose reading texts from online resources (e.g. CommonLit, theconversation.com)
- Ask learners to extract MWEs from texts by using the annotation tool, then verify them with online dictionaries (e.g. Macmillan, Just-the-word)



- Ask learners to share their list of MWEs through some shared documents (e.g. Padlet, OneDrive, Google Drive)
- Organize review tasks based on learners' lists

macmillan dictionary
COMMONLIT
padlet
OneDrive
jtw

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