"Action Research": Testing the Hypothesis

Following the tradition of "classroom-based research", we performed the following simple experiment with four classes of freshmen English students at Ming Chuan University. We created two 'mini-lessons' based around 25 common MWIs (word partnerships and chunks, for readers familiar with the Leximodel), which were all built from words that students can expect to appear on their end-of-semester exam.

For the control group, consisting of two classes, the mini-lesson consisted of "pencil and paper" lexis learning activities. They heard the teacher read each phrase and give a quick gloss for it, but the emphasis was on sorting word lists and sentence-writing activities on paper. The experimental group of the other two classes, on the other hand, did "listen and speak" lexis learning activities on the same set of 25 chunks and word partnerships, mainly in the form of different types of pronunciation drills (as described below) and did not do any paper and pencil work. We allotted the same amount of time for both mini-lessons. Then, we gave all four classes a short quiz.

The students were given a quiz sheet containing all 25 MWIs. Then, the teacher read a short passage containing 10 of the MWIs on the quiz sheet and students were asked to circle the MWIs that they heard. The two control groups correctly circled an average of 7.6 and 6.9 MWIs, while the two experimental groups correctly circled *an average of 8.5 and 8.2 MWIs!* Pooling our classes, our "pencil and paper learners" (the control group; N = 98) correctly circled only 7.3 items, while our "listen and speak learners" (the experimental group, N = 90) correctly circled 8.3 of the MWIs. The resulting Z-score was 4.579, easily significant at the 0.01 level. We conclude that the experiment supports the approach outlined in this paper.