



Acknowledgements

First of all, I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to my supervisor, Prof. Wu Cheng, who has been instructing me through my postgraduate study and encouraging me in all these years. He helps me solve the theoretical problems and proofreads my thesis in very detail. I have benefited greatly from his thoughtful concern, patient corrections and thorough comments. Without his help, the completion of my thesis would have been impossible.

I shall also thank my colleagues, Ji Zhenghong and Zheng Enjuan, who have provided me with useful materials, given me inspirations, helped me with my research and encouraged me all the time.

Last but not least, I am also very grateful to my family: my husband, my parents-in-law and my little daughter. They have given me consistent support in the course of thesis writing. With their work and help, the painstaking work became light and anxiety was relieved.

Abstract

With the development of corpus linguistics and psycholinguistics, researchers find that native speakers have a large stock of lexical chunks in memory which can help them generate fluent and idiomatic language production. Some linguists discover that language learners may go through a stage in learning. In this stage, learners make use of a large quantity of unanalyzed chunks in language production. Researches conducted on this area have given many convincing evidences to the above discoveries. Therefore, some researchers suggest teachers should emphasize the importance of learning and using these unanalyzed chunks in language acquisition. The application of lexical chunks in teaching practice also gains popularity in recent years. Corpus linguists (Pawley and Syder 1983; Peters 1983) suggest that a large part of the language is formulaic. They state that a large part of language is not constructed by orthographic word but based on unanalyzed chunks. They find these chunks are very common in language and native speakers store large numbers of unanalyzed chunks in memory which can be retrieved wholly in the language output and make the production more easily. Similarly, some psycholinguists suggest that chunks can be easily retrieved from memory and used without the need to piece single components together through word selection and grammatical sequencing. They believe that these chunks play a significant role in both First and Second Language Acquisition.

Compared with individual words, lexical chunks have the advantage of being easily retrieved from one's memory. They can reduce learners' pressure of composing single words into utterances in the process of language output. They can make learners' recall of relevant expressions more easily. And lexical chunks function a lot in improving the accuracy and idomaticness of learners' language production.

This thesis aims to find out whether the approach of lexical chunks in EFL vocabulary teaching could promote vocabulary learning of the students and develop their ability to make correct and idiomatic expressions in English. In addition, the author would also like to find out whether the approach of lexical chunks could

develop students' ability to generalize lexical chunks from authentic language materials. So this thesis is going to answer the following questions:

- (1) Do lexical chunks help students with their vocabulary learning?
- (2) Does the approach of lexical chunks promote the students' ability to make accurate and idiomatic expressions in English?
- (3) Can the approach develop students' ability to generalize lexical chunks from authentic language materials?

Through studies and experiments with 40 students from the Department of Community Management in Taizhou Vocational and Technical College, the research proves that the approach of lexical chunks applied in the present study can foster the vocabulary learning of students in higher vocational colleges and it has great significance in promoting the students' ability to make accurate and idiomatic expressions.

Key words: lexical chunks; vocabulary learning; accurate expressions; chunks generalization ability

摘 要

随着语料库语言学和心理语言学的发展,研究者发现说母语的人脑海里存有大量的语块,这些语块能帮助人们生成流利地道的语言。一些语言学家发现,语言学习者会经过一个特定的阶段,在这个阶段,学习者在语言产出中使用大量的语块。在这方面的一些研究也提供了一些令人信服的证据。因此,一些研究者开始强调在语言习得中学习和使用语块的重要性。近年来,语块在实践教学中的应用也兴盛起来。语料库语言学家,如 Pawley, Syder 和 Peters 等人,提出语言中存在大量的预制语言。他们表示,语言并非全是由单个词构成的,有一大部分语言是建立在语块基础上的。他们发现语块普遍存在于语言中,英语母语者的记忆中储存了大量的未分析的语块,这些语块被整体地提取用于语言表达,使得语言产出更加地容易。同样,一些心理语言学家认为,语块能够被整体地提取和使用,而不需要每次使用语法规则对单个词进行组合来生成语言。他们认为语块在第一语言习得以及第二语言习得中都占据着极其重要的位置。

与单个词相比,语块具有能被整体记忆和提取的优势。在言语交际时,它们可以减轻人们组词成句的压力,它们也可以使学习者对于相关信息的提取更加容易。此外,语块可以有效地促进学习者产出准确地道的语言。

本文主要探讨语块教学法是否能促进学生英语词汇的学习,是否能帮助学生产出更准确地道的英语表达。此外,本文也想探讨语块教学法能否促进学生语块概括能力的发展。所以,本文细化为以下几个问题:

- (1) 语块教学法能促进学生的词汇学习吗?
- (2) 语块教学法能帮助学生产出准确、地道的语言吗?
- (3) 语块教学法能促进学生概括语块的能力吗?

在台州职业技术学院公共管理系 40 名学生中展开的教学实验表明,语块在英语词汇教学中的应用能促进学生的词汇学习,同时也能帮助他们产出更准确地道的语言表达。

关键词: 语块; 词汇教学; 准确表达; 语块概括能力

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Chapter One Introduction

With the development of corpus linguistics, it has been found that native speakers have a large stock of lexical chunks which help them generate fluent and idiomatic production. Some linguists discover that language learners may go through a stage in which learners make use of a large quantity of unanalyzed chunks in language production. They emphasize the importance of learning and mastering lexical chunks in language learning. Recently, more researches put the lexical chunks at a very important position in the process of language acquisition. Lewis (1993, 1997) put forward "the lexical approach" to incorporate lexical chunks into language teaching and learning. He also encouraged learners to advocate a focus on lexical chunks from language input and suggested exercises that concentrate on lexical phrases rather than individual words.

The lexical approach which is applied to second language teaching has received interest in recent years as an alternative to grammar-based approaches. The lexical approach concentrates on developing learner's language proficiency with lexis, words and word combinations. It is mainly based on the idea that an important part of language acquisition is the ability to comprehend and produce lexical chunks as unanalyzed wholes and that these chunks "become the raw data by which learners perceive patterns of language traditionally thought of as grammar" (Lewis 1993: 95).

Corpus linguists (Bolinger 1975; Pawley and Syder 1983; Peters 1983) also suggest that a large part of the language is formulaic and is composed of units beyond the level of the individual word. They make a conclusion that native speakers store large numbers of unanalyzed chunks in memory which can be retrieved wholly in the language output and make the output more easily. Similarly, some psycholinguists suggest that chunks can be easily retrieved from memory and used without the need to piece single words together through word selection and grammatical sequencing. They believe that these chunks play a significant role in both First and Second Language Acquisition.

1.1 Research Background

Generally speaking, the higher vocational college students in China haven't laid a good foundation of English knowledge. They are weak in grammar, have a small vocabulary in memory and have difficulty in speaking. They may be eager to study English well and have tried to study hard but only get little achievement. As a result, many of them lose confidence in English learning and give it up. Many students attribute their trouble in English learning to their small vocabulary. With limited vocabulary, they are unable to read English materials, let alone the listening, speaking, reading and writing skills in English. They complain they would soon forget the words which had been learnt and memorized by them. And there exists another problem: many of them claim that they are unable to choose proper words to express their ideas in English. They often make wrong collocations. They usually translate word by word from Chinese into English in translation exercises. Even worse, some of them can't read and comprehend the texts.

As we teachers observe, besides the students' weak foundation of English knowledge, their ways of learning English are also improper. When learning vocabulary, many of them are used to memorizing individual words on the vocabulary list. They spend much time in memorizing the words after class, but they spend little time in practicing expression activities of the learned words, including both the spoken and written forms. Besides, they spend much time in memorizing the grammar rules but the result is they can't master them.

Some researches on lexical chunks have shown that chunks might be ideal units in language learning. So here is the hypothesis that the approach of lexical chunks in English language teaching would help them improve their English proficiency, especially the ability of vocabulary learning and language expression.

Altenberg and Granger (2001) discovered in their study that about 70% utterances in daily life were made up of formulaic language (namely lexical chunks). So they emphasized the importance of learning chunks in language acquisition. Becker (1975) was one of the earliest people who put forward the notion of lexical

phrases. He (ibid: 61) stated that “utterance are formed by repletion, modification and concatenation of previously-known phrases consisting of more than one word”. Thus, he suggested that phrases such as *let alone*, *as well as*, and *so much for* cannot be ignored by language learners or teachers.

More other researchers also present that the accumulation of lexical chunks can help learners save time and efforts in facilitating fluency and correctness in spoken and written language. Pawley and Syder (1983: 208) suggested that lexical chunks “form a high proportion of the fluent stretches of speech heard in everyday conversation”. As these chunks are ready-made structures in language, learners can use them wholly in language production without much encoding work. They (ibid) further claimed that learners could construct or combine these read-made structures (namely lexical chunks) into discourses. Sperber and Wilson (1988) discovered that the greater the processing effort was, the harder the language output would be. As these unanalyzed chunks or prefabricated language stored in learners’ memory can be retrieved easily to construct sentences without much encoding work, they can greatly reduce the processing effort of language learners in the process of language output. Speakers can have more time to think about how to express their ideas rather than spend much time in deciding which word chosen to express.

Lots of people believe that it’s easier for them to memorize single words than word strings (namely chunks or phrases), as the former is shorter than the latter. In fact, it’s not the truth. Newell (1990) pointed out that chunking is the main principle of human recognition. He stated that a chunk is a unit of memory organization, which is formed by bringing a set of already formed chunks in memory together and welding them together into a larger unit. “Chunking” refers to the ability to build up such structures recursively, and it helps lead to a hierarchical organization of memory. So according to the chunking principle, the memorizing of lexical chunks is easier than that of individual word. And it has also been proved that chunks can be kept into the long memory by information coding, which means they are not so easily forgotten by human.

Based on the above facts, we can assure that once students learn to accumulate

and memorize as many lexical chunks as they can, they would make language output more easily. As they can retrieve the ready-made chunks from their memory which help them avoid making mistakes. On the other land, if students are trained to focus their attention on lexical chunks learning rather than single words, they can reduce the memory pressure and through associative memory they can turn the short memory of words into the long memory. Thus, they will not forget the learned new vocabulary so quickly.

1.2 Research Questions

Nattinger and DeCarrico (1992) believed that language acquired as unanalyzed chunks was later broken down into its constituent elements. These chunks then became available for further use in creative, rule-bound language. For example, these chunks can help learners develop the rules of syntax in language acquisition. However, some other researchers who regard grammar as the center of language think that emphasis on lexical chunks will lead to chaos in rules of syntax. According to them, linguistic competence is regarded as the ability of generating all the sentences of a language through the rules of syntax. Once the learner masters the grammar, he or she can generate lots of sentences by filling in the grammatical structures with vocabulary. So they think grammar is the center of a language and vocabulary is subordinate to it. Putting too much time on the learning of vocabulary will lead to the neglect of rules of syntax.

But researchers like Nattinger and DeCarrico (1992) claimed that focusing on lexical chunks in foreign language teaching will not lead to the neglect of the analysis of regular rules of syntax. On the contrary, learning of lexical chunks will help learners develop their own syntax in the target language. Researches on First and Second Language Acquisition taken out by many linguists have yet given enough evidence on this question.

Compared with the individual words, lexical chunks have the advantage of being easily retrieved from one's memory. They can reduce the pressure of composing

single words into utterances. Learners can recall it more easily from their memory. And lexical chunks function a lot in improving the accuracy and idomaticness of learners' language production. Therefore, they can be taught relatively straight in language teaching. In order to prove this point, the author conducted an empirical study on the possibility of Lexical Chunks in enhancing higher vocational college students' vocabulary learning and developing their ability to make correct and idiomatic expressions in English. This general statement can be broken down into three more detailed hypotheses:

(1) Do lexical chunks help students with their vocabulary learning?

(2) Does the approach of lexical chunks promote the students' ability to make accurate and idiomatic expressions in English?

(3) Can the approach develop students' ability to generalize lexical chunks from authentic language materials?

1.3 Organizations of the Thesis

The thesis is composed of six chapters. In Chapter One, the author presents an introduction to the present English learning state of the higher vocational students and the present researches on lexical chunks. The advantages of lexical chunks in language teaching and learning are also simply stated in this section. Besides, the research question as well as the rationale for the present study is going to be presented in this chapter.

Chapter Two contains a literature review relevant to the present study. In this chapter, the author presents a theoretical background for the research including lexical chunks, vocabulary teaching methods and relevant theories. The nature, definition, classification and functions of lexical chunks are to be stated in this section. Besides, the relationship between lexical chunks and language acquisition are also to be stated. The approach of lexical chunks in vocabulary teaching on the present study is also described in this part.

Chapter Three puts forward the methodology of this thesis. Two tests including

the pretest and the posttest designed in the research are introduced. The detailed description of the research and the teaching procedure are also presented in this part. Then, the data is collected from the students' pretests and posttests.

Chapter Four provides the results and the discussion of the experiment in details. First, the author is going to analyze the collected data. Then, the discussion of the results as well as factors behind the results will be made in this part.

Chapter Five is the pedagogical implications. On the basis of the above chapters, the author will put forward some suggestions on improving teaching ideas and enhancing students' confidence and interests in English learning.

Chapter Six is the conclusion of the whole research. First, the findings of this research are summed up. Then the author is going to state the limitations and gives suggestions for the future study in this field.

Chapter Two Review of Representative Studies of Lexical Chunks

2.1 The Nature of Lexical Chunks

According to Nattinger and DeCarrico (1992), in language acquisition, learners are likely to use a large quantity of unanalyzed chunks in language output in certain social environments. For a long time, these unanalyzed (or prefabricated) chunks were thought unimportant to the main body of language and neglected by learners and researchers. However, some recent researches put these lexical chunks at the very center of language acquisition and see them as ideal units in language teaching and learning.

Lewis (1993) presented that a very important part of language acquisition was the ability to comprehend and produce lexical phrases as unanalyzed chunks or units. He further stated that these chunks became the raw material by which learners observed patterns of language. These patterns of language were traditionally thought of as grammar. In other words, learners can slowly acquire the knowledge of grammar by the acquisition of large numbers of unanalyzed chunks from authentic language materials. In Nattinger and DeCarrico's research, they found the question *what is that?*, which is consisted of three morphemes, is regarded as a single and undivided unit by children. Namely, children use *what-is-that?* like any other individual word in their vocabulary, such as *apple*, *good* and so on. And in children's earlier stages of language acquisition, they are obviously not aware that it is a phrase which has separate lexical components. They treat this phrase as any other single word like *hello*, *mummy*, *daddy* and so on. Children might use the phrase *this-is-a X* to answer such a question, because they think that the three morphemes *this-is-a* also functions as a single word. According to Nattinger and DeCarrico (1992: 24-25), similar chunks that children frequently use as unanalyzed units are such chunks like *give-me*, *this-is-mine*, *I-want-to-go* and so on. After using chunks of the same models repeatedly and

successfully, children enter into another stage in language learning where they begin to analyze chunks into their separate pieces and develop the rules of syntax in their own ways.

Nattinger and DeCarrico (1992) believed that these unanalyzed chunks are the integrated units which have form, grammar and function together. They have the same assertion as Lewis (1993); the latter also agreed that the acquisition of lexical chunks would enable learners to develop their rules of syntax.

Peters (1983) suggested that in language acquisition two approaches are operated simultaneously by learners. They are “the gestalt approach” and “the analytic one-world-at-a-time approach”. In the gestalt approach children attempt to use whole prefabricated utterances or chunks in appropriate social contexts and in the latter children try to make sentences from piecing single words together (quoted in Nattinger and Decarrico 1992: 26). She felt that the above two approaches help learners develop their language ability. The lexical chunks are based on the former approach which serves two purposes in early language production of the children. First, it enables the children to have unanalyzed patterns of language available for immediate use, thus saving processing time in language output. Second, it provides the children with raw data to store without complex analysis. Another linguist Skehan (1998) also pointed out that second language learners develop their language ability through two methods: one is rule-based learning and the other is example-based learning. The learning of lexical chunks belongs to the system of the example-based learning. This view is to some extent familiar with Peter’s.

Wray (1992) also proposed a dual-systems solution to language acquisition. They are the analytic processing and the holistic processing. The analytic processing refers to the construction of utterances or other language expressions by words and morphemes by way of grammatical rules. It enables speakers to generate new, creative or novel utterances. On the contrary, the holistic processing enables learners to use prefabricated strings or unanalyzed units which are stored in memory. According to Wray, the dual-processing systems can explain the phenomenon of the native speakers’ ideal output of language. For example, the native speaker says *It’s on me*

when he or she is going to pay the meal which has been shared with their friend, but the nonnative speaker is likely to say *I'll pay the bill* if they don't know there is such an expression like *It's on me*. The grammar will enable the nonnative speaker generate acceptable utterance such as *I'll pay the bill*, but it would never sound native-like, while the native speaker say *It's on me* showing the function of the holistic processing of language.

Second Language Acquisition research also confirms that like the first language learners, second language learners also use a large number of prefabricated chunks in the language output. Prefabricated chunks are stored in different categories according to their pragmatic functions and users retrieve these chunks entirely from memory to adjust the social and communicative context. In this way, they can gain accuracy and fluency in language output. Becker (1975: 62) pointed out that "this is the reality of language: In order to survive in society we've got to know what to say, and we usually know it in advance by memorizing it". Sinclair (1991) presented that word strings (namely chunks), which have high frequency of appearance in language, are the basic units to constitute English language. Nattinger and DeCarrico (1992) believed that the process of language output is the process of selecting proper prefabricated chunks or lexical patterns of the target language to compose utterances. Lewis (1993) claimed in his book that "Lexis is the basis of language" and he emphasized that in language learning learners should concentrate on lexis or word combinations to develop their language proficiency rather than pay much time on grammar.

Lexical chunks are very common in natural language. Let's see the following passage written by Ellis:

*/In-a-nutshell/ it-is-important-to-note-that/ a-large-part-of-communication/
makes-use-of/ fixed-expressions./ As-far-as-I-can-see/ for-many-of-these-at-least/
the-whole-is-more-than-the-sum-of-its-parts./.../ On-the-other-hand/
there-are-lots-of phrases that/ although they can be analyzed using normal
syntactic principles/ nonetheless/ are not created or interpreted that way./ Rather,
/ they are picked-off-the-shelf/ ready-made/ because*

they-say-what-you-want-to-say// (quoted in Wray 2002: 24)

As the above passage shows, there are a large amount of fixed expressions in language use. In the above passage, Ellis tended to make a point about the ubiquity and naturalness of Lexical chunks in English language by using as many chunks as possible into his text and highlighting their presence in order to draw readers' attention to them.

Therefore, we can assume that these chunks serve effectively in both first and second language teaching. In all, we can say lexical chunks play an important role in language acquisition.

2.2 Definition of Lexical Chunks

Wray (2002) found that the identification of lexical chunks in text was extremely difficult, because there was an absence of any single definition which was able to have all the relevant features of this language phenomenon at once. Many researchers have attempted to define the notion of lexical chunks from a variety of perspectives, but there is still lack of a generally accepted definition of lexical chunks. Different terms have been used by different researchers to name and illustrate this language phenomenon in language. For example, "lexical phrases" (Becker 1975), "pre-assembled speech" or "prefabricated chunks" (Bolinger 1975), "lexical sentence stems" (Pawley and Syder 1983), "lexical chunks" (Lewis 1993), "lexical phrases" (Nattinger and DeCarrico 1992), "formulaic sequences" (Wray 2002), and so on. Pu Jianzhong (2003) stated that there are more than 40 different terms used to describe the phenomenon of chunks. Therefore, in this thesis, for the sake of convenience, the term "lexical chunks" is adopted in the following discussion.

Generally speaking, words and word strings which appear to be processed and retrieved as a whole unit without being analyzed to their lowest level of composition are regarded as "lexical chunks". The following are some representative definitions about lexical chunks from different researchers.

Nattinger and DeCarrico tried to explain lexical chunks in their book, they took

them as:

multi-word lexical phenomena that exist somewhere between the traditional poles of lexicon and syntax, conventionalized form/function composites that occur more frequently and have more idiomatically determined meaning than language that is put together each time. (Nattinger and DeCarrico 1992: 1)

According to them, lexical chunks are the unity of form and meaning, which are fixed or semi-fixed expressions in language with certain social functions.

Jespersen (1976: 88) thought that the form of the lexical chunk (one word or a group of words) varies but “it must always be something which to the actual speech instinct is a unit”, by which he means lexical chunks cannot be analyzed into subordinate elements. Once they are decomposed, the meaning of the chunk will disappear.

From Jespersen’s description, we can see that he emphasized the globality and indecomposability of chunks. So he took lexical chunks as a term for ready-made construction which can be used wholly in the process of language output and which doesn’t need to be built up from single words or morphemes.

Wray used the term “formulaic sequence” to illustrate this language phenomenon. She also emphasized the globality of them and her definition of lexical chunks is:

a sequence, continuous or discontinuous, of words or other elements, which is, or appears to be, prefabricated: that is, stored and retrieved whole from memory at the time of use, rather than being subject to generation or analysis by the language grammar. (Wray 2002: 9)

Wray believed that lexical chunks don’t need to go through the procedure of constructing smaller elements into larger ones, such as from words into phrases or phrases into sentences. They are the products of a special kind of processing in language. They are learnt and stored by learners as whole units.

Another applied linguist Lewis did great work in this area. Lewis (1993) pointed out that “lexical chunk” is a cover term which contains all the features of other terms used by other linguists. He (ibid) also presented that the forms of lexical chunks are diverse, such as individual words, word combinations or sentences builders. Those

structures as an individual whole that convey certain pragmatic meaning in a certain community can be concluded as lexical chunks.

Some domestic researchers also try to explain the phenomenon of lexical chunks in language. Wei Naixing (2003:24) stated that “these (lexical chunks) are some highly routinized collocations or prefabricated phrases with varying lengths and structures; the process of language use is the process of combining these chunks into complete utterances”. Pu Jianzhong (2003) defined lexical chunks as prefabricated, frequently used multi-words, which have certain structure and meaning and which are to some extent abstractive.

Based on the above views, we can conclude that lexical chunks are fixed or semi-fixed multi-words or strings which are composed of two or more morphemes, and are memorized as single, unanalyzed units as well as being acquired as wholes in the process of language input and output. Moreover, they are frequently used in language and they are often retrieved wholly from people’s memory to express certain ideas. They help learners avoid much encoding work of piecing single words together by grammatical rules every time we use them.

2.3 Classification of Lexical Chunks

Wray (2002: 47) stated that “Taxonomies are attractive because they promise a neat categorization”. However, most taxonomies which are applied to classify lexical chunks fail to keep categories separate from each other, because of the different focus of research in different field, for example, in Linguistics, Psycholinguistics, or Second Language Acquisition. Many researchers have classified lexical chunks from their different perspective. Though they have done great work on this question, we still can find there is overlap in their classification of chunks. However, some of the classifications are to some extent reasonable. Here several widely accepted kinds of classifications of lexical chunks are introduced.

Becker’s division (1975:61-62) might be the earliest classification of lexical chunks:

(1) Polywords: e.g. *for good*;

(2) Phrasal constraints: e.g. *by sheer coincidence*;

(3) Deictic Locutions: e.g. *that's all*;

(4) Sentence builders: e.g. *A gave B a song and dance about (a topic)*. (Meaning: A tried to convince B of something, and was cynical and perhaps less than truthful about what he said.)

(5) Situational utterances: e.g. *It only hurts when I laugh!*

(6) Verbatim texts: e.g. *How ya gonna keep 'em down on the farm?*

In Becker's classification, the criterion to classify lexical chunks is not unitary, for example, the polywords and phrasal constraint categories are form-based, but deictic locutions are mainly meaning-based; sentence builders show a functional focus, though it is regarded as a form category; when situational utterance is mainly functional, verbatim text reflects provenance.

The classification given by Nattinger and DeCarrico (1992: 38-44) is prominently based on structural criteria. Their classification is based on that of Becker's. To them, lexical chunks can be divided into four categories:

(a) Polywords: They can be used to achieve many functions, such as summarizing a topic and shifting topics. [e.g., (canonical :) *for the most part*; *at any rate*; *so long*; *for that matter*; (non-canonical :) *so far so good*; *in essence*; *once and for all*]

(b) Institutionalized expressions: This kind of lexical chunks is of sentence length. Proverbs, formulas and chunks that can be stored as whole units are belong to this category. [e.g., (canonical :) *how are you?*; *give me a break*; *have a nice day*; (non-canonical:) *long time no see*]

(c) Phrasal constraints: Compared with polywords, phrasal constraints can achieve more functions. [e.g., (canonical :) *to __ this up*; *as I was __*; *__ as well as __*; (non-canonical :) *you __*; *for better or (for) worse*]

(d) Sentence builders: This kind of lexical chunks is the framework for whole sentences. The slots in sentence builders are for parameters or other expressions or ideas for you to fill in. [e.g., (canonical:) *my point is that X*; *I think that X*; *I'm a great*

believer in X; let me start by/with X; (non-canonical:) it seems (to me) (that) X; the __er X, the __er Y]

In the example of “the __er X, the __er Y”, we see there is overlapping in Nattinger and DeCarrico’s classification. In other words, some kinds of lexical chunks can be put into different categories depending on their variable parts. In the structure of “the __er the __er”, when we put adjectives in the fillers, it is a phrasal constraints, but when we use clausal categories to substitute for adjective fillings here, this lexical chunks enters into the category of sentence builder.

Lewis (1997) also gave his classification of lexical chunks. We can see his classification in the following:

(a) Words and polywords: Words here mean the independent lexis or units. And usually polywords are short phrases which show idiomaticity in the language. Both of them allow no variability. (e.g., *by the way; for one thing; for the most part*)

(b) Collocations: Collocations are those chunks which are pairs or groups of words that co-occur in language and often appear in high frequency (e.g., *to solve a problem; to assess the situation; black tea; heavy traffic*)

(c) Institutionalized utterances: Institutionalized utterances are usually full sentences. These chunks allow no variation but they have special pragmatic meanings. (e.g., *this is my treat; it’s none of your business.*)

(d) Sentence frames or heads: sentence frames (e.g., *can you close ..., please?*) or sentence heads (e.g., *some researchers claim...; I’m afraid...*), may require another sentence or lexical items to complete the utterance.

Among the classifications stated above, classification given by Nattinger and Decarrico or Lewis seems to be more widely accepted. However, each of these classifications has a common problem. Its inner categories are overlapping. Though researchers have tried to solve this problem from many ways, they have found this problem cannot be easily overcome. However, we can see from their classifications that the traditional distinction between “fixed” vocabulary and “generative” grammar is over-simplified. Language consists of items, which occupy all points on the spectrum between vocabulary and grammar.

2.4 Functions of Lexical Chunks

Most linguists now accept the idea that lexical chunks are not rare but very common in language. And they regard lexical chunks as a useful approach in First and Second Language Acquisition, as lexical chunks can be memorized by learners as a whole and learners can retrieve them wholly from memory to generate what they want to express. Becker (1975: 62) pointed out that “this is the reality of language: in order to survive in society we’ve got to know what to say, and we usually know it in advance by memorizing it.” For language learners, lexical chunks enable them to retrieve chunks from memory to composites utterances they want to express rather than generate sentences from individual words by way of grammar rules. And lexical chunks can help speakers produce more idiomatic expressions in the target language.

Here are some major functions of lexical chunks in language acquisition which are related to the present research.

2.4.1 Lexical Chunks Can Reduce the Processing Effort

Crick (1979) stated that many researchers engaged in describing language in way of how the language was obverted, stored and produced. Those researchers found that the storage capacity of human’s memory was vast, but the processing speed was not, which mean the short memory of human being was limited. In order to memorize the maximum information at a fixed time, we should make the best use of the processing time. Miller (1956) found that in human’s short-term memory there are large numbers of sequential units. Further researches have shown these units are likely to be chunks of expression, which consisted of several items rather than single ones. Researchers like Simon (1974) also found that the number of these chunks remains fairly constant in memory. Nattinger and Decarrico (1992) claimed that as learners become more familiar with remembered material, the size of lexical chunks increases, thus permitting us to store and recall more information.

Perkins (1999: 56) claimed that “the main reason for the prevalence of formulaicity in the adult language system appears to be the simple processing

principle of economy of effort.” In this light, we don’t need to generate an utterance by composing single words every time when we want to express something. Instead, we can turn to these ready-make chunks for help. According to Nattinger and Decarrico (1992), these prefabricated or unanalyzed chunks can be retrieved easily from our memory to help speakers express their ideas and they enable speakers to pay more time in composing larger structures of the discourse, as these chunks can help them save time in the process of language output. In this way, they reduce the processing pressure of the language speakers. Wray (2002) also stated that the advantage of the holistic system is that it reduces processing effort. To language learners, they feel great pressure in creating new expressions in language. It is much easier for them to retrieve prefabricated chunks from memory to compose utterances.

Based on the above facts, we can assert here that the learning and using of lexical chunks can reduce the processing effort of the language learners.

2.4.2 Lexical Chunks Are Key to Idiomaticity

Wray (1999) has found that in a certain community, people tend to select a “preferred way” of saying something. This behavior of people means that certain strings are more likely to be used by speakers in such a community. And other words strings are considered as the improper expressions even though they are grammatically correct and acceptable. Pawley and Syder (1983) also pointed out that native speakers tended to use prefabricated chunks instead of exercising the creative potential of syntactic rules to make new utterances. If there is a certain prefabricated chunk in language can be adopted to use in a certain social environment but natives speakers use new utterance created by rules of grammar to express, they might be regarded as not having mastered the use of language well. Though foreign language learners may compose or generate new utterances which are grammatically correct and acceptable, these expressions would seldom be used by the native speakers. So achieving native-like expressions involves not only learning a rule system which will help generate an infinite number of new utterances or sentences, but also learning

lexical chunks and other fixed expressions.

Pawley and Syder (1983) then pointed out that one of the most difficult tasks for even the proficient non-native speakers is learning to select the subcategory of utterances which are customarily used by native speakers. To sound like a native speaker, knowing a large number of lexical chunks are essential. Learners should pay special attention to lexical chunks which the native speakers often use to express certain meanings. Then they store them in their memory, so they can use them when they have to express the same meaning next time under the similar social context. In this way, not only can learners avoid mistakes in generating sentences by the rules of grammar but also they can generate expressions which sound native-like by using of these chunks. So in order to achieve native-like selection and fluency, a good way for learners to take is they'd better turn to lexical chunks for help.

2.4.3 Lexical Chunks Appear to Be Pedagogically Useful

To most people, language is the mean of communication. The aim to lean a language is to communicate with others. Linguists agree that besides the grammar competence of language, the ability of communication includes the pedagogical ability. In the real communicative environment, the speakers use large numbers of lexical chunks instead of individual words in order to well achieve the pedagogical functions in communication. According to Nattinger and Decarrico (1992), the pedagogical functions of lexical chunks are mainly reflected in the following three aspects: social interactions, necessary topics and discourse devices. In the aspect of social interactions, lexical chunks are markers describing social relations, for example, *excuse/pardon me; I must be going; see you later; nice meeting you*. In the second group, lexical chunks refer to topics which learners are often encountered in daily life or those topics that often appear in daily conversations or communications, such as *It's very ... today!; my name is...; what time X?*. As for discourse devices, they are such chunks that organize the structure of the discourse to achieve a certain meaning, for instance, *as a result, in a word, it seems to me that* and so on.

When the second language learners learn these lexical chunks, they also learn the pedagogical functions of them. Thus, their communicative ability can be improved. These lexical chunks can help them generate correct speech in real communication environment.

2.5 Lexical Chunks and Language Acquisition

2.5.1 Lexical Chunks in First Language Acquisition

In the field of First Language Acquisition, a variety of researches have been done on the learning of language among children. And a certain amount of evidence shows that the strategy of using lexical chunks by children is not rare but very common. It seems that at the earlier stage of First Language Acquisition, children tend to treat language strings or patterns they learn as any other single word. They store these patterns are stored in their memory as a whole and later they are adopted wholly by children when they use them. After they have learnt certain amounts of these chunks, children begin to segment and analyze these strings or chunks. The analysis of lexical chunks may take place as a result of children's neurological development and a increase in their analytic cognitive skill. It is believed that the analysis of these chunks would result in the knowledge of grammar. Nattinger and DeCarrico (1992) stated that lexical chunks are not only used by children as memorized formulas but also treated as raw data for their further analysis of language. Children later would develop their own rules of grammar with the segmentation and analysis of these lexical chunks.

Clark (1973) had observed a phenomenon in which mothers taught their children language by providing them with utterances as unanalyzed wholes in certain context instead of teaching the grammatical rules to them. According to Clark (ibid), mothers usually provided three types of these chunks. The first one is "conversational lessons", which is used by children to sustain a conversation. "Mapping lessons" provided children with items or utterances to decode context, they belong to the second type. And the third one was called "segmentation lessons", which gave clues to children

and guide them to observe how utterances are segmented into words, phrases or sentences. As children frequently hear certain structures, they often regard these structures as whole units, so lexical chunks in children's speech are also a result of children's language development.

In a study on children's First Language Acquisition, Peters (1983) described how this process of chunk acquisition and later segmentation of the children might work. She put eight important points about the process as follows:

- (1) First units of language acquired by children often consist of more than one word or morpheme;
- (2) There is no difference in these long units and minimal ones in terms of storage and use;
- (3) All of the units can be broken down into small units in the process of segmentation;
- (4) Smaller units from segmentation are stored in the lexicon;
- (5) Both the original unit and the segmented one may not be deleted and they can coexist in the lexicon;
- (6) Segmentation produces structural information, from the simplest formulaic frames with slots to more general syntactic patterns;
- (7) The lexicon grows through the collection of units perceived in conversation and the result of their segmentation, as well as fusion (storage of combinations);
- (8) The process of fusion continues into adulthood, though adults may have analyzed most of the original units, commonly used chunks are likely to be stored as fused lexical units in the production of language.

According to her study, in children's early stage of language acquisition they develop strategies of extracting meaningful chunks from conversation. Then they seem able to remember and compare them phonologically with other lexical units, and store these new lexical units in memory. Later children manage to analyze the stored chunks to get structural patterns and information revealed by the analysis. Then they try to recognize and remember these patterns and information. In this way, children develop an ability to use lexical and syntactic information already acquired in the

above analysis to analyze new chunks appearing in the social environment.

Similarly, many other researches conducted in this area provide evidence to the significance of lexical chunks in the First Language Acquisition. Cruttenden (1981) claimed that children regarded compounded words and noun phrases as unanalyzed wholes. They regarded *cup of tea* as one word and when they try to express many cups of tea, they might say *cup of teas*. Cruttenden proposed that the child's approach to all aspects of language consists of two stages: item-learning stage and system-learning stage. The item-learning stage refers to the learning of a certain form or fixed expression which is related with another form or with a unique thing. And the segmentation and analysis of such an item are likely to result in system-learning, when the item is broken down and its relationships with other items are analyzed.

As the above facts shows, the lexical chunks play a significant role in First Language Acquisition. In order to satisfy their desires in daily life; children must find an easy way of drawing people's attention to them. Just like other holistic international tools such as gesture, some vocal noises, or facial expressions, lexical chunks can be used by children in language production. By way of lexical chunks, children can communicate effectively with people around them and get what they want.

The role and functions of lexical chunks in the First Language Acquisition can help us understand and summarize the functions of them in the Second Language Acquisition. Just as Pawley and Syder (1983) had suggested that the task the learners facing is not just to acquire a rule system but also to master a set of lexicalized sentence stems which will enable them to produce language efficiently.

2.5.2 Lexical Chunks in Second Language Acquisition

Some linguists believe that lexical chunks also play an important role in Second Language Acquisition. According to Nattinger and DeCarrico (1992: 27), "there is no reason to think that adults would go about the [learning] task completely different [from children]." In many situations, adults are under the same pressure as children in

the language output. So researchers think it's very likely that an adult learner would also find the accumulating and using of lexical chunks is an effective way to learn a new language and helps them produce proper utterances in communication. Nattinger and DeCarrico (1992) thought that the first language acquiring process is to some extent the same for second language learners. When second language learners try to acquire a second language, they would also find it is an efficient way to master a number of lexical chunks in the target language. They also pointed out that compared with first language learners, second language learners would even have an advantage in making use of lexical chunks, "since they would be immediately aware that these units could be analyzed into smaller pieces by the process of segmentation with which they were already adept" (ibid: 28). Linguists Krashen and Scarcella (1978) also agree that lexical chunks are useful and efficient in Second Language Acquisition.

Another linguist Hakuta (1976) followed this trend too. Hakuta once claimed that lexical chunks:

Enable learners to express functions which they are yet unable to construct from their linguistic system, simply storing them in a sense like large lexical items. ...It might be important that the learner be able to express a wide range of functions from the beginning, and this need is met by prefabricated patterns. (1976: 333)

In the above description, Hakuta (ibid) proposed that before the learners can form an utterance by rules of grammar they may find the acquiring and using of lexical chunks is an ideal strategy in learning the language. Lexical chunks would release them from the expression difficulties in the initial stage of language learning.

It is observed that native speakers store many lexical chunks from childhood on. Hakuta (ibid) insisted that it was owing to their (learners') need to communicate with people around them and want to establish relations with them through language. Wong-Fillmore (1976) did a research on the English learning process and result of several Spanish-speaking children. This research lasted one year and during that time, she collected children's natural language. On the analysis of the collected data, she found that children's main part of speech was formulaic language (namely lexical chunks). Then she claimed that children's strategy of acquiring formulaic language is

useful in learning a new language (quoted in Wray 2002). And the situation might be the same for adults. Another research in Second Language Acquisition was carried out in classroom by Stevick (1989) who also conducted a research in this field and he indicated that successful learners recognize that lexical chunks play an important role in Second Language Acquisition. The learners' strategies of acquiring lexical chunks may include memorizing chunks in the texts, practicing these chunks out class as well as memorizing the whole texts.

However, some linguists find learning and using lexical chunks in Second Language Acquisition is different from that in First Language Acquisition. For second language learners, it is common to find that they overuse or underuse certain lexical chunks. Jaworski (1990) observed an American who was learning Polish. The American overused lexical chunks, resulting in non-nativeness. Jaworski stated that the reason lied in the learner's native habits of language use. The learner had transferred the learner's habits of native lexical chunk use into Polish (quoted in Wray 2002: 181-182).

Advanced second language learners also have many problems with learning and using of lexical chunks. Scarcella (1979) conducted a study in which she tested two groups of advanced adult learners' expression on daily communications, such as *who is there* and *look out*. The subjects were asked to give illustrations for given drawings. The result was surprising. She found that the scores were very low, with only 38% and 30% correct responses respectively for the two groups.

Though there exists various kinds of shortcomings of learning lexical chunks in Second Language Acquisition, people still find it's a useful way for them to acquire large quantities of lexical chunks to help them produce utterances in the target language.

Though not all researchers agree that lexical chunks are so vital and integral to language acquisition, most researchers now agree that learners use large numbers of lexical chunks in acquiring language.

2.6 Lexical Chunks and Vocabulary Teaching

2.6.1 Traditional Vocabulary Teaching Methods

Vocabulary is important in learning a language, which is a very complicated task. Vocabulary plays an important role in First and Second Language Acquisition. Learning vocabulary not simply means remembering the form and understanding the meaning of a word. It also includes the competence of using the word properly in production and making it in conformity with the up and down context. Li Tingxiang (1996) concluded that vocabulary learning refers to both rote learning and meaningful learning, which means learners are not only acquired to remember the form and spelling of a certain word, but also required to master the meaning, collocations and common usages of the word.

There are a variety of vocabulary teaching methods applied by teachers in EFL teaching, such as visual presentation method, semantic interpretation method, comparison method, word formation method, contextual understanding method and so on. Among the above teaching methods, semantic interpretation method, word formation method and contextual understanding method are the common ones used by teachers in higher vocational colleges. While each method has its specific characteristic of teaching one or more aspects of words, these methods focus mostly on the single word itself and pay little attention to the collocations or companies of the target word. As a result, learners can not use the word proper in the real language environment.

The theory of lexical chunks places emphasis on language learners' competence in accumulating and using of lexical chunks in learning a language. It differs from the traditional teaching methods in English vocabulary teaching. Its characteristics which have been discussed in the previous parts determine that it's an ideal unit in language learning. Many researches have been carried out on the influence of chunks in the process of language acquisition and have got some good outcomes.

2.6.2 Researches on the Application of Lexical Chunks Abroad

(1) Lewis's Lexical Approach

Lewis (1993) put forward "the Lexical Approach" in language teaching in his book. His claim "Lexis is the basis of language" is well-known among researchers in this field. Unlike some linguists who emphasize the importance of grammar in language learning, he thought the vocabulary was even more important. The Lexical Approach emphasizes the learning of lexis, words or word combinations instead of grammar learning and this approach is challenging the traditional position of the grammar-based approaches. This approach is based on the idea that learning and accumulating lexical phrases as unanalyzed wholes in language learning will help learners acquire a language efficiently. Lewis (1993) believed that in language acquisition lexis is more important than grammar and learners can generate syntax rules in the learning of lexis. Lewis (1993) suggested in his works that:

- 1) Lexis is the basis of language.
- 2) Language consists of grammaticalised lexis.
- 3) Lexis is misunderstood in language teaching because of the assumption that grammar is the basis of language and that mastery of the grammatical system is prerequisite for effective communication.
- 4) One of the central organizing principles of any meaning-centered syllabus should be lexis.

We see from the above statements, he emphasized the importance of lexis and lexical chunks in a language. He opposed teaching approaches which only pay attention to rules of language (grammar). Based on the above findings, major activities designed by Lewis (1993) to develop learners' knowledge of lexical chunks are as follows:

- 1) Guessing the meanings of lexical chunks or other lexis from the context
- 2) Noticing patterns and collocations in the contexts and take notes of them
- 3) Various practice of listening and reading in the target language
- 4) Working with dictionaries and other reference tools

5) Repetition and recycling activities, for example, reciting a text and doing it again a few days later in order to keep learned words actively

6) Translation activities—carried out chunk for chunk

In addition, in Lewis's lexical approach, the Observe-Hypothesis-Experiment model replaces the Present-Practice-Produce model which is used by teachers in language teaching for a long time. Observe means identifying lexical chunks from contexts, therefore the first step for lexical learning would be noticing the chunks and learning to differentiate chunks from other language elements. Hypothesize refers to the learning procedure. In this step, students are required to get familiar with lexical chunks and know their usages. For the second step, chunks input and chunks exposure activities are key points in chunks learning. As for the third step, it means students are required to put all these chunks into practice. In this step, various activities and practice are designed for students to implement and consolidate what they have learned. However, Lewis (1993) didn't give his own specific examples about how to fulfill the above mentioned three steps.

(2) Nattinger and DeCarrico's Approach

For many years, teachers have been adopting the structural approach in their language teaching practice. The structural approach is an approach which depends mainly on the learning and mastering rules of grammar. As it often ignore the appropriateness of language use in certain context, this approach tends to lead to improper use of language. Another well-welcomed approach taken by teachers in the late 20th century is the communicative approach, which emphasizes the ability to use language appropriately. However, this approach often leads to students' lack of necessary grammatical knowledge. In order to avoid the disadvantages of the previous approaches in teaching a language, Nattinger and DeCarrico (1992) suggested that lexical chunks are ideal units in teaching because they exist at the interface of syntax and lexicon. Lexical chunks can achieve learners' aims to develop both their competence ability and performance ability. The nature of lexical chunks let them be ideal units for learners to begin to acquire a language.

In their book, *Lexical Phrases and Language Teaching*, three sections of the

lexical approach applied in teaching are introduced. 1) Teaching spoken discourse: how lexical chunks help learners make good conversations; 2) teaching spoken discourse: listening comprehension; 3) teaching written discourse: teaching reading and writing with lexical phrases. The first section stated here introduces how phrases or chunks can be utilized as practical instruments for language pedagogy and used to teach conversation in English as second language classrooms; the second section deals with application of lexical chunks in teaching comprehension of academic lectures; and the last section stated here puts forward further applications of lexical chunks in reading and writing.

Nattinger and DeCarrico (1992) found that lexical chunks serve as effective tool for both first and second language teaching. They suggested activities which led students to use lexical chunks to comprehend and produce the target language. They thought the process of learning chunks in second language is much the same as that in first language. They strongly believed that lexical chunks acquired as unanalyzed units are segmented into their constituent elements by learners in their later stage of language learning and learners use these elements to generate creative and rule-bound language.

Nattinger and DeCarrico (1992) also gave instructions on how to apply lexical chunks in the teaching practice. Though they haven't done the teaching experiments by themselves, their ideas and suggestions can help teachers design certain teaching activities in second or foreign language teaching.

2.6.3 Researches on the Application of Lexical Chunks At Home

In China, researches on application of lexical chunks in Second Language Acquisition and in EFL teaching have been conducted in recent years. Studies of lexical chunks mainly focus on the following aspects: 1) the correlation between the knowledge of chunks and vocabulary acquisition (Pu Jianzhong and Wei Naixing 2000; Yan Weihua 2003; Zhang Liying and Xu Yong 2007; and so on); 2) the application of chunks to the improvement of spoken and Written English (Jia Linlin

2005; Ding Yanren and Qi Yan 2005; Yuan Ping and Guo Fenrong 2010; and so on); 3) the application of chunks in EFL teaching and acquisition (Yang Yuchen 1999; Lian Jie 2001; Chang Chenguang 2004; Zhou Yan 2007; and so on).

Pu Jianzhong (2003) examined the use of some common verbs in non-English majors' writing in CLEC (Chinese Learner English Corpus). He found that the use of these verbs by learners in China and by the native speakers was very different, either in quantity or in quality. Chinese learners use certain verbs that never adopted by native speakers in language production (e.g., *reach...purpose/objective*), and they also overuse some chunks like *pay/put attention to* while never use others such as *give/call into...attention*. He concludes that teachers should give students more opportunities to learn and practice lexical chunks in and out class.

Qu Dianning and Deng Jun (2010) have done a study to investigate the impact of the corpus-based vocabulary learning model (DPP) on the acquisition of lexical chunks. The DPP model refers to the Model of Discovery-Presentation- Production: Discovery means learners conduct automatic learning in the corpus and conclude chunks of the target words and find typical sentences containing the chunks; Presentation means learners present their work of self-learning in class in groups, and the teacher then makes comments to their work; Production means the teacher designs a variety of activities to train the learners in order to let them turn the learned chunks into their knowledge. This method turns out to be a successful one in their study.

Chapter Three Methodology and Procedures of the Study

3.1 Research Questions

In this thesis, the writer aims to find out whether the approach of lexical chunks in EFL vocabulary teaching could promote vocabulary learning of the students and develop their ability to make correct and idiomatic expressions in English. In addition, we would also like to find out whether the approach of lexical chunks could develop students' ability to generalize lexical chunks from authentic language materials. So this thesis is going to answer the following questions:

- (1) Do lexical chunks help students with their vocabulary learning?
- (2) Does the approach of lexical chunks promote the students' ability to make accurate and idiomatic expressions in English?
- (3) Can the approach develop students' ability to generalize lexical chunks from authentic language materials?

3.2 Subjects

Students from the Department of Community Management in Taizhou Vocational and Technical College participate in this research. These two classes are both form Level A classes. Level-based Teaching Model has been conducted among non-English major students in our college for several years. Usually, students are divided into two levels: level A and Level B according to their English entrance scores. The grades of students in Level A are comparatively higher than those in Level B, which means the English proficiency of the students in Level A is better than that in Level B. And the scores of the students from the same level in the same department are more or less the same. One of the two classes is chosen as the experiment class randomly and the other is taken as the control class. There are 40 students in the experimental class with 12 boys and 38 in the control class with 10 boys.

3.3 Instruments

The text book we use is *English for Careers* (Volume 1) published by Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press. The book containing eight units will be used for two semesters. This semester the students are going to learn three or four units.

The SPSS 15.0 is used to analyze the data collected in the research.

3.4 Research Procedures

The teaching experiment runs nearly four months from September 2010 to December 2010. During the experiment, three hours of English class are arranged per week for the students. The experiment proceeds with designed teaching activities with the approach of lexical chunks in the experimental class whereas the control class is taught in the traditional way.

The whole experiment consists of 3 stages: pretest, experimentation and posttest. The pretest is conducted at the beginning of the semester, the purpose of which is to know about the starting point of the students concerning their English proficiency. The posttest is conducted at the end of the teaching experiment. The purpose is to find whether the approach of lexical chunks in EFL teaching is effective in promoting the students' vocabulary learning and developing their ability to generalize lexical chunks from authentic language materials. In other words, the purpose is to find answers to the research questions presented in the present thesis.

3.4.1 Pre-test

At the beginning of the experiment, both the experimental class and the control class are given a test consisted of (1) lexical chunks generalization, students are asked to generalize as many lexical chunks as they can from the given reading material, and (2) sentence translation, in this section students are required to translate 10 English sentences into Chinese; (3) 10 Chinese sentences into English. Each sentence contains at least one lexical chunk in it. The results of the test are compared to find out the

proficiency of the two classes before the teaching experiment.

3.4.2 Teaching Treatment

The detailed description of my approach of lexical chunks applied in the study is going to be stated in this section. The whole approach of lexical chunks in vocabulary teaching includes the consciousness-raising activity, the model of NPP in vocabulary learning and chunks accumulation activity. It's also in this part the vocabulary teaching model of NPP is introduced to teach the lexical chunks instead of individual words.

3.4.2.1 The Approach of Lexical Chunks in the Present Study

(1) The consciousness-raising activities

Willis and Willis (1996) suggested that teachers can give students consciousness-raising activities that can lead learners to observe and think about samples of language and then students can draw their own conclusions about how the language works. They also stated that learners should be exposed to a body of text, whether written or spoken, as the text can illustrate for them how the language is composed together to give a certain meaning. Then teachers can analyze the texts for students to see what aspects of the language can exemplify for them and what can be learned from them to push the learners to view the language as a whole. All these tasks are regarded as consciousness-raising activities.

Therefore, in this teaching experiment, the author often reminds the students in the experimental class of lexical chunks in both the vocabulary learning and the reading materials, hoping that higher consciousness will promote their acquisition of lexical chunks.

(2) The model of NPP

The model of NPP refers to Chunks Noticing-Chunks Presentation-Chunks Production. In this NPP learning model, Noticing means the students notice the lexical chunks in the text and try to conclude their meanings and usages with the learning of the text. They are required to pay special attention to certain lexical

chunks containing the new words. They can discuss with each other to find the meaning of these chunks in the context. Then the students write down these chunks in their notebook.

Compared with Qu Dianning and Deng Jun's DPP (Discovery-Presentation-Production) model in vocabulary learning, in the present study the author takes the Noticing instead of Discovery. The reason lies in the differences between the students from the two experiments. Students are the main body of teaching and learning activities. The methods teachers take should be suitable for their students. Generally speaking, the students in higher vocational colleges haven't had the ability to discover language knowledge and rules by themselves so the author designs the noticing chunks instead of chunks discovery. The teacher will ask the students pay special attention to certain lexical chunks (especially those containing new words) in the text and give common used lexical chunks of some new words of the text.

Schmidt (1994) stated that what learners notice in input is what becomes intake for learning, with which he means that whether a learner attends to a linguistic form in the input or it is noticed purely unintentionally, the result is different. If it is noticed, it becomes intake. He also claimed that noticing is a necessary condition for Second Language Acquisition.

The detail of the presentation step of the NPP model is described below: The students in the experimental class are divided into several groups with 4-6 people each group. Each student is asked to find at least two sentences containing these chunks from authentic materials such as the dictionary, other reading books and so on. Then they discuss their sentences with the group members to decide the typical expressions of the lexical chunks and present their final work to the rest of the class. The teacher should make comments on their findings and modify the mistakes if there are. This is a good way for students in the experimental class to input the lexical chunks appearing in the text or meeting in the process of learning new words. Besides, students are required to memorize chunks instead of single words.

In the production step, the teacher designs a series of exercises for the students to

take. The purpose is to let them keep these chunks in memory and learn to use these chunks appropriately. The main exercises include:

1) Chunks dictation: after the learning of the text, ask students to accumulate and memorize the lexical chunks learned in the text. Then give them a dictation several days later to check whether have kept these chunks in their mind.

2) Sentence making: let students use the lexical chunks to make sentences. This is a good way to improve their language production.

3) Translation: here the translation activity mainly refers to the Chinese-English sentence translation. The purpose is to let students use the learned lexical chunks. Guide students to pay attention to the differences between Chinese and English language and change their habit of translating word by word in sentence translation. Instead, let them try to translate chunks by chunks.

4) Text retelling: let students retell the main idea of the text with the learned lexical chunks after a new text has been learned.

The above exercises are the common used activities in the experimental class. Laufer (1998) stated that if there were no activities designed to promote learners to use new-learned vocabulary consciously, they would adopt vocabulary which they had learned in the past to express the similar meaning. So it's necessary for them to do a series of output activities to enhance the acquisition of lexical chunks.

(3) Chunks accumulation activities

After learning a text or reading other relevant materials, ask students to generalize the lexical chunks from them. Then ask them to remember these chunks and learn to use these chunks in the same situations. Students may keep a notebook to record all the lexical chunks they have generalized and memorize them after class.

3.4.2.2 The Teaching Procedures

Before carrying out the teaching plan, the teacher should help the students in the experimental class to be aware of what lexical chunks are and how they are different from the traditional "vocabulary". In order to achieve this goal, the teacher first makes the students clear that recent researches show that language is very formulaic and

chunky. Then the teacher should introduce the knowledge of lexical chunks to the students, especially introducing the definition and classifications of lexical chunks. Besides handout including the knowledge of lexical chunks should be made out and distributed it to the students.

Now the author would like to take the text “Secretaries” from Unit Two of the textbook to give the detailed description of the teaching procedure.

Step One: Chunks Noticing

Before going to teach the text, the author gives the students the following lexical chunks: *a variety of; personal assistant; administrative tasks; manage their affairs; a secretary's job is to...; a wide range of; depend on; at a minimum; keep track of; operate equipment; deal with; sb. is expected to; have experience with; in addition to; not as ...as...; solve problems; not...until...; day-to-day chaos; offer sth.for sb.; it's possible to do sth.; it can be challenging that....* Let them pick out the chunks that they don't recognize. And get to know the reason why they cannot speak out the meaning of these chunks. For example, is there unlearned vocabulary in these chunks or other factors?

Then the students are going to read the text by themselves or listen to the record. The teacher generalizes the general idea of the text together with the students and let them guess the meaning of the above unrecognized chunks. If they guess right, the teacher gives additional explanation; if they not, the teacher makes it right.

Step Two: Chunk presentation

Each student is asked to find two examples of sentences containing the above lexical chunks. It should be made clear that the sentences must be found from authentic materials such as dictionaries and online articles. The students couldn't make the sentences by themselves in this step. Then they discuss their findings with their group members. Each group could make a simple PPT to show their final work to the rest of the class. The whole class is going to discuss these chunks together to make clear how these chunks are used in English language.

Step Three Production

In this phase, students have the opportunity of practicing the learned lexical

chunks with all kinds of activities. They are asked to make effort in using these chunks to express their ideas and other communicative tasks. The aim in this phase is to let them master the common usages of these chunks in English. Only in this way can we say they have learnt these chunks.

Step Four Checking and Evaluation

Let students memorize the chunks instead of single words. Give the students a dictation to find whether they have kept these chunks in mind or not. And provide them with opportunities to evaluate their work in using chunks, in which they can develop their chunks awareness of their own learning processes.

3.4.3 Posttest

At the end of the research, both the control class and the experimental class are given a test consists of three parts. In the first part, there are 10 English sentences with one or two lexical chunks. The students are asked to translate these sentences in Chinese. In the second part, the students are required to translate 10 Chinese sentences into English. Each sentence contains at least one lexical chunk in it. And the last part the students are told to generalize lexical chunks from a reading material. The results of the tests are compared to find the effects of the teaching experiment.

3.4.4 Interview with Students in Experimental Class

At the end of the experiment, the author is going to interview some students from the experimental class to learn their attitudes toward the approach of lexical chunks in teaching. The purpose is to find out whether there are changes in the way students learn vocabulary after the experiment and whether they accept and approve of this new approach.

3.5 Data Collection

During the whole experiment, a pretest and a posttest are conducted. Both two tests contain three parts which are chunks generalization, Chinese-English sentence

translation and English-Chinese sentence translation. For the chunks generalization part, each chunk would be given 2 marks if they are picked out from the passage by the students. Three teachers are invited to draw chunks from the given passages and decide how many chunks there are and what they are. As for the second and third part, each sentence is given 2 marks if it is translated properly. The translation should be in accordance with the up and down context. If there are mismatches of collocation or misuse of tense in students' translation, the teachers will take certain marks from each sentence. In order to avoid the teacher's personal preference, the translation part will be scored by two teachers and the final scores are the average of the two marks from these two teachers.

Both the pretest and the posttest are suitable for the students to take. The words or lexical chunks in the posttest are all from the text and they have been taught in the course of the experiment.

Chapter Four Data Analysis and Discussion

4.1 Data Analysis

4.1.1 Data Analysis of Pretest

4.1.1.1 The Analysis of the Result of Chunks Generalization in the Pretest

Wray (2002) found that the identification of lexical chunks is very difficult. He discussed many factors to identify chunks, such as frequency, intuition, and he discovered each of them has its shortage. There is no simple standard to identify chunks from authentic language. Here the author chooses the intuition of the three teachers to decide the chunks in the passage in the pretest. And if the students find the same chunks, each chunk is given 2 marks. And the result of chunks generalization can be seen from the Table 4.1.

Table 4.1 Comparison of the Scores in the Pre-test of Chunks Generalization

	Group	N	Mean	St Deviation	T	P
Pre-test	Experimental Class	40	16.75	3.643	.536	.594
	Control Class	38	16.26	4.366		

From table 4.1 we can see the result of the students' ability to generalize lexical chunks from authentic materials. The mean of the experimental class is 16.75, while that of the control class is 16.26. The difference between the two means is very small. $T=0.536$, and $P=0.594>0.05$, which means there is no significant difference between the ability of the students from the two classes to generalize chunks.

Besides, we have found that the chunks most students select from the passage are phrases which they have long learned before.

4.1.1.2 The Analysis of the Result of English-Chinese Sentence Translation in the

Pretest

There are 10 sentences in total in this part with at least one lexical chunk in each sentence. The total scores for this part are 20. The scores are giving by the author and another teacher in the foreign language department in our college. And the author chooses the mean of the scores as the final scores of the students in this part. The results are as follows:

Table 4.2 Comparison of the Scores in the Pre-test of English-Chinese Translation

	Group	N	Mean	St Deviation	T	P
Pre-test	Experiment Class	40	16.75	3.643	.583	.562
	Control Class	38	16.21	4.503		

As the Table 4.2 shows, the mean of the experimental class and the control class are 16.75 and 16.21 respectively. Though the mean of the experimental class is a bit higher than that of the control class, the difference is quite small. From the table, we see $P=0.562 > 0.05$, which means there isn't significant difference between the scores of the two classes. So we can claim the ability of students to do English-Chinese translation is more or less the same.

From the mean we also can see that the students get comparatively high scores in this part.

4.1.1.3 The Analysis of the Result of Chinese-English sentence translation in the Pretest

In the pretest, there are also 10 sentences for students to translation. In this part, they are told to translate Chinese sentences which contain lexical chunks into English. The total scores for this part are still 20. And the author also chooses the mean of the scores given by two teachers, just as the English-Chinese translation part. Let's see the result from Table 4.3 below.

Table 4.3 Comparison of the Scores in the Pre-test of Chinese-English Translation

	Group	N	Mean	St Deviation	T	P
Pre-test	Experiment Class	40	9.40	3.380	-.325	.746
	Control Class	38	9.64	3.263		

The above table shows that the mean of the experimental class and the control class are 9.40 and 9.64 respectively. The mean of the control class is a bit higher than the experimental class, though the difference is small. Again as the table shows, $P=0.746>0.05$. The mean of the two classes are not significantly different. But we can see the mean scores of both classes here are very low. None of the classes is more than 10, which means students are not good at Chinese-English translation. We get to know that English as a second language in learning, the students have great difficulty in the output of this language. By examining the tests in this part, the author finds that a certain amount of students translate these sentences word by word. They themselves admit that they are afraid of doing Chinese-English translation or English wring, because they just don't know how to express in English.

In all, from the analysis of the data collected form the pretest, we can say that the initial English level of the experimental class and the control class are almost the same, which is proved true by the results of the pre-test. Besides, the learning conditions for students from the two classes are quite the same. The participants are all freshmen from the Community Management Department of Taizhou Vocational and Technical College. They are about the same age (from 18 to 20). They have similar English education background (with at least 6 years' experience of English learning in junior and high school). Besides, there are 40 students in the experimental class including 12 boys and 28 girls; while 38 students are in the control class including 10 boys and 28 girls. So we see here the proportions of each sex in these two classes are very similar (see Table 4.4).

**Table 4.4 Proportions of Female and Male Subjects in the Experimental Class
and the Control Class**

Class	Number	Male	Female	Proportion of Male	Proportion of Female
The Experimental Class	40	12	28	30%	70%
The Control Class	38	10	28	26.31%	73.66%

At last, in the three-month experiment, both of the two classes receive 4 lesson hours' English lessons each week. The two classes are taught by the same teacher. So we can say here that the conditions of the two classes are fit for the experiment.

4.1.2 Data Analysis of Posttest

After the three-month experiment, both the experimental class and the control class are given the posttest. The posttest also contains three parts just like the pretest. The following description is the detailed analysis of each part of the posttest.

4.1.2.1 The Analysis of the Result of Chunks Generalization in the Posttest

The lexical chunks generalization in the posttest is a little different compared with that of the pretest. This time the passage is longer and the difficulty of the reading material is greater. The author still invites the three teachers to identity the lexical chunks in the passage in the posttest. And if the students pick out the same chunks as the teachers, they get 2 marks for each lexical chunk they have selected. First let's see the result of the students' performance in this part. (See Table 4.5)

Table 4.5 Comparison of the Scores in the Post-test of Chunks Generalization

	Group	N	Mean	St Deviation	T	P
Post-test	Experiment Class	40	9.90	2.600	2.477	.015
	Control Class	38	8.37	2.861		

The above table shows that the means of the experimental class and the control class are 9.90 and 8.37 respectively. $T=2.477>2$, and $P=0.015<0.05$, which means there is a significant difference between the means of the two classes. Though the difference is not very big, from the analysis we find that the ability of generalizing chunks of the students from the experimental class is higher than that of the control class this time.

From the table, we also find the means of both classes are relatively low in this part. Some students find less than three lexical chunks. When the author examines carefully with their answers, the author finds 75 percent students in the experimental class have generalized the lexical chunk “it’s normal for ...”, while in the control class only 20.8 percent students have selected it. The types of chunks which the students of the experimental class have selected are more than those that the control class students have found.

4.1.2.2 The Analysis of the Result of English-Chinese Sentence Translation in the Posttest

For this part the total score is 20 with each sentence 2 scores. Each sentence is designed to consist of one or two words or lexical chunks from the learned text in the course of the experiment. The students would get 2 scores if they translated the sentence correctly and properly. If they made mistakes in the translation of the target words or lexical chunks, they would get 1 score at most. If there were some expression problems, the teacher would minus certain score in terms of the mistakes. Two teachers including myself give the scores of students’ work respectively. Then the author chooses the mean of the two scores as the students’ final grade. The results of the students’ final grade are showing in Table 4.6 below.

Table 4.6 Comparison of the Scores in the Post-test of English-Chinese Translation

	Group	N	Mean	St Deviation	T	P
Post-test	Experiment Class	40	18.10	1.317	6.897	.000
	Control Class	38	15.32	2.132		

As the Table 4.6 shows, the mean of the experimental class is 18.10 which is much higher than that of the control class 15.32. $T=6.897>>2$, and $P=0.000<<0.05$. These two data tell us that there is a significant difference between the results of the two classes. In this part, the students of the experimental class do a better job than the control class. Their difference is quite obvious, which means the students of the experimental class master the words or lexical chunks better than the students of the control class.

4.1.2.3 The Analysis of the Result of Chinese-English Sentence Translation in the Posttest

The part is similar to the English-Chinese translation in the form of test. The total score is also 20 with 10 sentences for students to translate in total. The sentence is designed to be translated easily with certain lexical chunks. These lexical chunks are all just learned in the course of the experiment. If the students were aware of using these chunks, they would find the translation much easier. Of course, if they translated the sentences by using some other lexical chunks they have learned before, that is also acceptable. The scores of this part are also given by two teachers including the author. Then the author chooses the means of the scores from teachers as the final score of the students. The analysis of the results of the students in Chinese-English sentence translation can be seen in Table 4.7.

Table 4.7 Comparison of the Scores in the Post-test of Chinese-English Translation

	Group	N	Mean	St Deviation	T	P
Post-test	Experiment Class	40	13.013	2.4897	4.852	.000
	Control Class	38	9.855	3.1940		

We see from the above table, the mean of the experimental class is 13.013 which is much higher than that of the control class 9.855. The difference is 3.158. Here we

see $T=4.852>>2$ and $P=0.000<<0.05$. So the analysis of the results tells us that the scores in the posttest of Chinese-English translation of the two classes are significantly different.

In addition to the above finding, the author also finds that in the translation, compared with the control class, the lexical chunks used by the experimental class tend to be the terms they have newly learned during the course of the experiment. As for the control class, students tend to use words or chunks they have learned in junior or high school.

So we can judge the mastery of the students of the experimental class of the new learned words or lexical chunks is better than those of the control class.

Based on the above analysis, we can assert that there is significant difference between the scores of the two classes in the posttest. The students of the experimental class do a better job than the control class. The experimental class has great progress in the Chinese-English translation in the posttest.

4.1.3 A Vertical Analysis of Experimental Class Students' Performance in the Pretest and Posttest

From the above data analysis, we've already know the approach of lexical chunks in English vocabulary teaching can better promote students' English language learning compared with the traditional teaching method. In this section, the author of this thesis will go further to find the changes of Experimental class students' performance in English learning before and after the teaching experiment. First let's see the Table 4.8 below.

Table 4.8 The Scores of the Experimental Class students in the Pretest and Posttest
(EC = English-Chinese CE = English-Chinese LC = Lexical Chunks)

Class	Test	Mean of EC Translation	Mean of CE Translation	Mean of LC Generalization
Experimental Class	Pre-test	16.75	9.40	16.75
	Post-test	18.10	13.013	9.90

First, we see that on the basis of the similar difficulty of the English-Chinese translation part in the pretest and posttest, students have made some progress. The total score for this part is 20. In the pretest they have got the average score 16.75 and in the posttest they've got 18.10. From these two scores, we find the students do a good job in this part. Compared with the scores they've got in the Chinese-English translation, we find that the latter is more difficult for them to do. The sentences in the posttest are deliberately designed to test whether the students have mastered the words or lexical chunks required to master in the text in the teaching experiment. The result shows the students have basically mastered them. During the teaching, the teacher also trained students to pay attention to the expression differences in Chinese and English, so we also find the score of the translation part in the posttest is higher than that in the pretest.

Second, the scores in the table show the average score for the Chinese-English translation is 9.40 in the pretest and 13.013 in the posttest. We have seen that the students have made great progress in the output of English language, though compared with the total score 20 for these 10 sentences, 13.013 is still a bit low.

After reading on students' translation work of the ten sentences in this part, the author comes to find that they have made great progress in their English language output including their choices of sentence structures. In the pretest, when the students are asked to translate Chinese into English, many of them just translated the sentence word by word. For example, in the pretest there is such a sentence: 一本书是否畅销取决于诸多因素. A student translated it into: *A book will sell good or not due to many factors.* They just put a bunch of words together and don't care whether they are correct or not. And the translation is hard for native speakers to understand, because they are not quite idiomatic. However, in the posttest, most of them have the sense to use lexical chunks to express in a relatively idiomatic way. They seem to find it's easy for them to translate the meaning equivalently into English by using some lexical chunks. As a result, the sentence structure and tense they use are also much better than those in the pretest. For example, most of the students translate this sentence “熟练工

人在这座城市需求很大”into “Skilled workers are in great demand in this city”. But in the control class, there are still many students translate this sentence word by word such as “The practiced workers are large wanted in this city”. In addition, the mean scores the control class achieved are more or less the same in this part, which means there is hardly progress for them in Chinese-English translation. By comparison, it is proved again that the approach of lexical chunks help to improve students’ language output a lot.

Just as being mentioned above, teachers can give students some consciousness-raising activities to draw students’ attention to conclude by themselves how the language works. Willis and Willis (1996) stated that teachers should let students expose to a body of text which will illustrate the important things they need to know about the language—such as the way it is structured and the way particular words or phrases behave. The consciousness-raising activities in the teaching experiment are proved to be successful in fostering student’s language output.

Third, the mean score of chunks generalization part in the posttest is lower than that of the pretest. It doesn’t mean that the students’ ability to generalize chunks has not been improved. As the author compares the types of chunks they have picked out before and after, I find the types of chunks picked out in the posttest is more various than those in the pretest. It means the students’ consciousness of lexical chunks is much stronger than before. Obviously, there are some other factors causing the bad performance of students in this part. The reasons causing the low score in generalization chunks in the posttest may mainly appear in the following two aspects. One is the difficulty of the passage in the posttest is bigger than that of the pretest. The other is that the number of chunks is less in the posttest. So the author should be partly responsible for the improper selection of the passage.

In conclusion, compared with the result of the pretest, the progress of the students showed in the posttest is obvious, especially in the English-Chinese sentence translation.

4.1.4 Description of Students' Attitude towards the Approach of Lexical Chunks

After the experiment, the author invites students in the experimental class to talk about their opinions towards the approach of lexical chunks in English vocabulary teaching. Most students are willing to join in the interview. The purpose of the interview is to find out whether there are changes in the way the students learn English vocabulary.

Most students think the NPP vocabulary learning model changes their way of learning English. The changes can be mainly seen in the following aspects:

1) Students' attention is transferred from memorizing isolated words to noticing the collocations and phrases of the words (namely lexical chunks) in vocabulary learning. In the interview, most students have mentioned it. One of the students' comments is quite representative: "In the past, the way I learn vocabulary is memorizing the single words on the vocabulary list. It's hard for me to remember them. And I find I often forget the memorized words quickly. After this term's study, I have got to know why the previous method can't help me enlarge my vocabulary. Now, though I still memorize single words, I put more effort on memorizing the lexical chunks which often appear as a whole, such as various kinds of phrases or sentence frames."

2) It helps raise students' awareness of lexical chunks in learning and develop their ability to generalize lexical chunks from authentic language materials. Here the author also quotes one of the students' comments to illustrate this point: "Now after learning a text, I will summarize the chunks appearing in the text, write them down on my notebook and try to memorize them and then use them to make sentences after class. I find this method help me express more smoothly in English."

3) This vocabulary learning model also promotes students' autonomy in vocabulary learning. And the students say that they don't depend so much on the teacher to learn the vocabulary now. One of them says: "in the past, I depend on the teacher to learn vocabulary. That is, only after the teacher introduces the meaning and collocation of a word as well as some examples of the word do I dare to use this word."

If the teacher hadn't taught the word to us, I wouldn't use it. But now I can summarize the usages or collocations of the target words by observation by myself. That means I can learn the word by myself now." So this model can help develop students' self-study ability.

Some students also claim the new approach in teaching have inspired their interests in English learning. They think the foreign language isn't a boring task any more.

To sum up, the interview with the students in the experimental class shows that the NPP model of vocabulary learning is accepted and welcomed by most of the students. It can help improve students' vocabulary learning and help improve their language output.

4.2 Discussion

The author of this thesis aims to find out whether the approach of lexical chunks in EFL vocabulary teaching could promote vocabulary learning of the students and develop their ability to make correct and idiomatic expressions in English.

Based on the data analysis, I would like to discuss the research questions from the following two perspectives: (1) the relationship between lexical chunk approach and EFL learners' vocabulary learning; (2) the correlation between lexical chunk approach and learners' ability to identify lexical chunks.

4.2.1 The Relationship between Lexical Chunk Approach and EFL Learners' Vocabulary Learning

As having been discussed above, the results of the pretest of the experiment class and the control class have no significant difference, which means the proficiency of the two classes is on the same level at the beginning of the experiment. During the experimentation, the author adopts different vocabulary teaching methods to give lectures to these two classes. Then the students are asked to take the posttest which is designed to find whether the new approach of lexical chunks in vocabulary teaching is

more effective than the traditional ones in promoting students' vocabulary learning.

For the English-Chinese translation section in the posttest, the sentences chosen by the author contain the words or chunks which the students are required to master. From the performance of the students in this section, we can see that the students in the experimental class do a much better job. They can nearly recognize all the learned words during the experimentation except one or two rarely used words. As some of the students whom the author interviews say, the approach of lexical chunks applied in the vocabulary teaching makes the vocabulary learning more interesting. In the traditional way, teachers teach students the pronunciations of the new words, explain the meanings of them, and then give several sentences to illustrate the usages of the new words. The students are likely to memorize the new words after class but they find they would soon forget them because these words are isolate in their mind and have no relationship with other words. Even when they have memorized the words by reciting it again and again, they often don't know how to use the new words in suitable context.

However, the new approach lets them look the vocabulary learning form a new perspective. Lexical chunks are treated as whole units in language learning. These chunks appear in high frequency in language, so learners can encounter them again and again. Besides, the meanings of lexical chunks are attached to certain context, which are suitable for certain communicative situations. When learners try to acquire certain kind of lexical chunks, they can associate these lexical chunks with certain situations, which makes the learning of chunks easier compared with memorizing the single words which are separated from the context. So the students should get into the habit of learning and using chunks instead of single words.

Attributed to their learning attitude and learning ability, the students in higher vocational colleges are comparatively weak in learning. Their quick forgetting of memorized new words make them lose confidence in English learning. During my experimentation, most of them find it's easier to memorize chunks than single words. And they often come across similar chunks in other reading materials which enable them have high exposure to the new learned chunks. The results of the posttest also

show that the approach of lexical chunks in vocabulary learning can promote high vocational students' vocabulary learning.

In addition, the results of the Chinese-English translation in the posttest show there is significant difference in the performance between the experimental class and the control class, which prove the lexical chunk approach applied in this research is effective in promoting students' ability to make correct and idiomatic expressions in English.

For a long time in the 20th century, language is regarded as highly systematic and rule-governed behavior and the view that learning language should put emphasis on rules of language (mainly referring to grammar). However, many linguists within applied linguistics and psycholinguistics suggest that lexical chunks are as important as productive rules. Some of them even claim that lexical chunks should be put in the central position in language acquisition. Bolinger (1975) had pointed out that though the rule-based system can help people generate novel expressions and original utterances, people have far overemphasized its importance in language acquisition. Factually, in communication people tend to use large amount of chunks stored in their memory. As we know, most communication in daily life is predictable, and people tend to use some routine utterances to express the similar meaning. So the language people use in most communication is idiomatic, not creative. For example, we can say "someone else", "somewhere else" but we can not say "sometime else". Pawley and Syder (1983) claimed that an ordinary English native speaker have stored thousands of lexicalized sentence items or chunks in mind which enable them to produce fluent language in communication. So when the students in the experimental class become aware of the effectiveness of learning chunks, they would find it's easier for them to express their ideas in the target language.

The results of the Chinese-English translation in the pretest show that students' translation ability in both the experiment class and the control class is very weak. In other words, students have difficulty in language output. Many of them just translate the sentences word by word. They also make many grammar mistakes and wrong word matches. After the experiment, the students in the experimental class make

obvious progress, but there is no significant change in the translation section of the students in the control class. The students in the experimental class have the sense of using lexical chunks to express, especially the phrasal constraints and sentence builders, while many of those in the control class still translate sentences word by word. Another significant difference between the performance of students in this section is that the words or lexical phrases used by the students from the experimental class are mostly new learned vocabulary while the students in the control class tend to use words or phrases they have long learned before. This again certifies that the new approach would enhance students' vocabulary learning.

4.2.2 The Correlation between Lexical Chunk Approach and Learners' Ability to Identify Lexical Chunks

Cabrielatos (2005) stated that learners are given fish in consulting a dictionary or grammar but they learn how to fish by engaging in recognizing patterns of language structure. Only when the learners are aware of generalizing lexical chunks from authentic language materials can they accumulate a large amount of lexical chunks for their future use. And only when they have accumulated certain amount of lexical chunks can they produce correct and idiomatic expressions in the target language. So the ability to generalize lexical chunks from the authentic language materials is very important to the students in English learning.

It's obvious that the students of the experimental class generalize more lexical chunks than those of the control class in the posttest. From the perspective of the types of chunks they have identified, the types generalized by students of the experimental class are more various. Most of the lexical chunks the students of the control class identify are polywords such as *make sure*, *turn off*, *get warm* and so on. While the students of the experimental class can identify lexical chunks like *it's normal for...*, *in low temperature conditions*, *Don't leave...* and so on. These chunks fall into the catalogue of sentence builders and phrasal constraints. The difference of them shows that the students of the experimental class are aware that lexical chunks

are unanalyzed chunks which can be learned and used as a whole, just like a single word. Besides, the consciousness-raising activities given by teachers to the students in the experimental class make them know more knowledge about lexical chunks, such as the types of chunks. The results also tell us that the ability of the chunks generalization of the students of the experimental class is stronger than that of the students of the control class. So we can say the approach of lexical chunks applied in vocabulary teaching can enhance students' ability to identify lexical chunks in language materials.

It has to be pointed out that the difference between the performances in the posttest is mainly attributed to the awareness raising activities in the lexical chunk approach. Willis and Willis (1996) proposed that awareness-raising activities can promote students to think about patterns of language and enable them to draw their own conclusions about how the language works. They suggested teachers to let students expose to a body of text and let them discover the important things about the language by themselves. Therefore, during this teaching experiment, the author constantly reminds the students in the experimental class of lexical chunks in the texts and other reading materials, expecting that higher awareness will promote their learning of lexical chunks and develop their ability to identify lexical chunks from the reading materials.

The quantities of lexical chunks generalized by the students from both classes in the posttest are less than those generalized by them in the pretest. One of the reasons is the passage in the posttest is more difficult for them to understand than that in the pretest. Another reason is there are more lexical chunks in the passage in the pretest. From the results of the tests we can conclude that the approach of lexical chunks can develop students' ability to generalize lexical chunks from authentic language materials. Zhang Xiuwen (2009) conducted an empirical study on the correlation between lexical chunks generalization ability of the learners and their second language proficiency. The findings show that the material's degree of difficulty is an important factor hindering learners to identify lexical chunks from the context. And she also stated that there is an obvious correlation between learner's ability to identify

lexical chunks and their language proficiency. The higher the learners' language proficiency is, the higher ability the learners have to identify lexical chunks.

Chapter Five Pedagogical Implications

As the present study shows, compared with the traditional methods, the application of lexical chunks in English vocabulary teaching can enhance the efficiency of students' vocabulary learning and promote their ability to make correct and idiomatic output as well. Just as many researches have proved, lexical chunks play an important role in language acquisition. So it's essential for teachers to make students aware of the importance of lexical chunks in language learning.

5.1 Generation of Vocabulary Teaching Methods

Teachers keep seeking the best way to teach foreign languages all the time. In the history of foreign language teaching in China, there appeared many teaching methods. The structural approach had once been popular with the teachers. However, it puts too much emphasis on the language knowledge and rules, so it often ignores developing students' communicative ability in real social life. In the late twenty century, teachers became aware of the importance of communication ability, so they turned to the communicative approach. This approach stresses the students' communication ability in language learning and suggests teachers to design activities in and out class for students to have more opportunities to practice their use of language. Though this approach helps cultivate students' communication ability, because of its ignorance of teaching language knowledge systematically, students are weak in grammar.

Widdowson (1989) observed that teaching approaches relying too heavily on achievement of rules of grammar might lead to ignore consideration of appropriateness in language output and those approaches relying too heavily on the ability to use language properly might lead to a lack of necessary grammatical knowledge. (Quoted in Nattinger and DeCarrico 1992: xiv) He concluded that the structural approach and the communicative approach have their respective advantages in language teaching on one hand and they have also shown their shortage in one or more aspects of language teaching on the other hand. Under such circumstance,

language researchers and teachers realize they should find new approaches in language teaching and learning which neglect either language competence or communicative competence.

Nattinger and DeCarrico (1992: 1) described lexical chunks as “multi-word lexical phenomena that exist somewhere between the traditional poles of lexicon and syntax”. Lexical chunks are composites with conventionalized form/function which appear in high frequency in language and they often have more idiomatically meaning than those utterances or expressions that are piece together each time. The nature of lexical chunks determines that the approach of teaching and learning lexical chunks would emphasize both the competence of language knowledge and the competence of communication, so they are the ideal units in language acquisition. Teachers should try to improve their teaching ideas by applying this new approach in their teaching practice and guide their students to be aware of the existence of lexical chunks in English language.

As we know, in the past, when teachers apply the structural approach or the communicative approach in their teaching practice, they never put much emphasis on the lexical chunks in language. In the former approach, they stress the importance of language knowledge, or we say grammar, so they haven't put vocabulary in an important position in teaching. Thus, vocabulary hasn't got special treatment. Though in the latter approach, teachers pay more attention to vocabulary in order to meet the need of communication, vocabulary is usually taught separately, in other words, teachers still didn't lay stress on lexical chunks but on single words. Under the above mentioned approaches, teachers create many methods to teach vocabulary, such as semantic interpretation method, word formation method and contextual understanding method. All these methods put emphasis on single words not lexical chunks. The result is there appear many misuses of words or collocations in students' language output. What's worse, some students don't know how to compose words into sentences. The sentences they construct with English words can't be regarded as English sentences. As the present study has shown, the approach of lexical chunks in vocabulary teaching can foster the students' efficiency of vocabulary learning and

develop students' ability to generate correct and idiomatic language in output, we can invite more teachers to change their ways of vocabulary teaching in practice and improve their teaching ideas.

Yang Yuchen (1999) stated that 90% natural utterances in language are composed by those semi-fixed chunks. Wei Naixing (2003) described lexical chunks as highly routinized phrases with different length and structures. These chunks are prefabricated, which can be composed into natural utterances. We can see here lexical chunks are common in language, so it's significant for us to teach or learn vocabulary on the basis of these chunks. This study has already shown the efficiency of teaching lexical chunks instead of single words, so teachers can also improve their teaching ideas and try to find more suitable vocabulary teaching methods under the guidance of the theory of lexical chunks.

5.2 Emphasis on both the Input and Output in Language Learning

As the results of the experiment show the students in the experimental class have done a much better job in the Chinese-English translation section in the posttest. Each sentence in this section is designed to contain at least one lexical chunk learned by students during the experimentation. The results show that the students in experimental class tend to use the chunks which they have just learned during the experiment while the students in the control class are inclined to use words or phrases they learned long before. Su Dingfang and Zhuang Zhixiang (2002) found that the process of understanding a certain word or phrase and the process of producing the word or phrase in language use are totally different. The latter is more complicated and difficult. That's why some students can recognize a word or phrase but they can't use it in language production.

Gu Qiyi (2007) stated that the combination of input and output in language learning is necessary for the development of language ability. The approach of lexical chunks not only raises the students' awareness of the importance of lexical chunks in language learning, but also raises their consciousness of recognizing and

accumulating lexical chunks in learning. When they learn a new text, they pay great attention to the lexical chunks in the article, which is a good way for the language input. Besides, when they look up in dictionaries or surf on the internet to find more examples of using these lexical chunks appearing in the text, they search more opportunities of language input.

Swain (1995) thought the driving force of the output is greater than the input in developing foreign language ability. (quoted in Qu Dianning and Deng Jun 2010) In the experimental class and the control class, students' output ability of lexical chunks is different. The former is better than the latter. The main reason lies in the different opportunities of language output of the students in these two classes. The students in the experimental class have more opportunities to make language output through a series of activities such as sentences making, translation, text retelling and writing. Through these activities, students get to know how to use these newly learned words or word combinations in suitable contexts. Though students in the control class also take exercises in the text book after learning a certain text, they haven't got so many opportunities as students in the experimental class. Because some activities in the text book still put emphasis on the grammar and only a few activities lay stress on the output of newly learned words or phrases in the text. In other words, students in the control class haven't got so many opportunities as the students in the experimental class to produce the newly learned words or lexical chunks in language use. Laufer (1998) stated that if there were no activities designed to promote learners to use new-learned vocabulary consciously, they would adopt vocabulary which they had learned in the past to express the similar meaning. And if the new-learned vocabulary couldn't be activated, it would become negative vocabulary. This has been proved in this study. As we have seen, the students in the control class tend to use vocabulary they have learned before to translate the sentences, as they haven't activated the newly-learned vocabulary after learning them.

In order to develop students' foreign language ability, the teachers should pay attention to both the input and output of lexical chunks in language learning. Thus, the students can turn the new-learned chunks into active vocabulary.

5.3 Cultivation of Students' Autonomous Learning

While the students in the experimental class take the approach of lexical chunks, in the NPP model of vocabulary learning, they are asked to find common used lexical chunks of the new words or other important words and discuss their discoveries with their group members. Then they are told to show their group work to the rest of the class. The whole class will discuss their findings and the teacher also gives certain instructions to their work. After the learning of the text, again the students are asked to generalize the lexical chunks from the text and discuss their results together. Through this procedure, students are required to achieve their work in the form of group learning. In this way, students play the main role in the teaching and learning activities. All these activities can help them develop their autonomous learning. This method in teaching can also stimulate students' learning interests.

In the 21st century, the autonomous learning is regarded as the most important learning style and a way of survival in the society. If the 21st century is an era of learning, then in order to adapt to the times and society, the students should cultivate their autonomous learning ability. In the approach of lexical chunks in the present study, the students in the experimental class are constantly required to find answers by themselves or with their group members. They are the main body of the learning process and they are in charge of their learning. It's different from the traditional way in which the students accept knowledge passively from the teacher. Therefore, we can say the approach of lexical chunks can help develop students' autonomous learning ability.

5.4 Enhancing Students' Confidence in Language Learning

Facing the diversity and flexibility of English vocabulary, as well as complicated language phenomena, learners often don't know where to start in English learning. It's hard for them to memorize isolated words. When they need to express something in English, they always find they have no proper words to speak or write. They also find they are poor in English writing or speaking as their lack of vocabulary. As a result,

many students are frustrated and lose confidence in English learning.

Lexical chunks are common in English language. Nattinger and DeCarrico (1992:1) said “just as we are creatures of habit in other aspects of our behavior, so apparently are we in the ways we come to use language”. Lexical chunks or other language structures are the products of the ritualization. In our daily life, we find we may choose certain words or phrases to say when we meet certain people or find ourselves in certain situations. For example, when we meet a friend in the morning, we may say “good morning” without any process of composing isolated words “good” and “morning” together. In fact, we just search the chunk “good morning” in our memory and retrieve it when we are in the situation to use it. So under familiar situations, we may re-echo a form of words that we have used earlier (Pawley and Syder 2000).

Learners will find lexical chunks are ideal units in learning which release them from the pressure of composing isolated words together by grammar rules every time they have to communicate. To some extent, the approach of lexical chunks in teaching can evoke learners’ learning motivation. When learners find the learning of lexical chunks are useful and they can achieve simple communicative tasks with the help of them, they will have more enthusiasm to learn lexical chunks. The more chunks they accumulate, the more expressions they can generate in the target language. Thus, lexical chunks help enhance learner’s confidence in language learning.

In the field of psychology, American psychologists Miller and Selfridge (1950) once put forward the notion of “chunking”. “Chunking” refers to the ability to build up structures recursively in the mind and lead to a good organization of memory. They found that the width of human’s short memory is about 7 units plus or minus 2 other meaningful units. As human’s short-term memory lasts no longer than thirty seconds, so it is necessary to find ways of breaking down complex materials into related “chunks” before they are put into the long-term memory store.

According to the research of the psychologists, long-term memory has larger capacity, which can organize information in semantic way and maintain it in our mind for a long time. So learners can enlarge the units of memory by way of lexical chunks,

which can enable them to memorize more vocabulary at a time. Learners may also find it's easier to memorize chunks than isolated words, as they can memorize well with the combination of repetition, association and other ways of memorizing. These findings again prove that lexical chunks are good units in language learning. If the students find the way of memorizing lexical chunks is not so easily forgotten as that of isolated words, they would have more confidence in learning vocabulary.

Chapter Six Conclusion

In this thesis, the author aims to find out whether the approach of lexical chunks in English vocabulary teaching could promote vocabulary learning of the students and develop their ability to make correct and idiomatic expressions in language production. Besides, the author would also like to find out whether the approach could develop students' ability to generalize lexical chunks from authentic language materials. So this thesis is going to answer the following questions:

- (1) Do lexical chunks help students with their vocabulary learning?
- (2) Does the approach of lexical chunks promote the students' ability to make accurate and idiomatic expressions in English?
- (3) Can the approach develop students' ability to generalize lexical chunks from authentic language materials?

6.1 Major Findings

(1) Lexical Chunks Foster Students' Vocabulary Learning

Miller and Selfridge (1950) had stated that the width of human being's short memory is limited, about 7 units plus or minus 2 meaningful units. It means that human's memorizing ability is limited. As the lexical chunks include many multi-word units or phrases constraints or even sentences which are larger than single words. When students manage to memorize lexical chunks instead of individual words, the amount of vocabulary memorized by them at a certain time is increased while the difficulty of the memorizing task is not increased.

On the memory of lexical chunks, learners can memorize them well with the combination of repetition, association and other ways of memorizing. Besides, lexical chunks are often connected with functional usage of the language and appear in certain contexts. Students feel it easier to memorize chunks with contexts and they also agree that this way of memorizing usually lasts longer. What's more, the connections between newly-learned chunks and certain contexts make the retrieving

of these chunks much easier for learners in the language use.

The results of the pretest and posttest of the students in the experiment have shown that the students in the experimental class have done a better job in new-learned words recognition. So we can say that the approach of lexical chunks applied in the present study can foster the vocabulary learning of students in higher vocational colleges.

(2) Lexical Chunks Promote the Students' Ability to Make Accurate and Idiomatic Expressions

The results of the present study prove that the approach of lexical chunks applied in this study has great significance in promoting the students' ability to make accurate and idiomatic expressions. Before the teaching treatment of this experiment, students from the two classes have little difference in their Chinese-English translation. The mean scores and lexical chunks or words they used in the translation are all similar to each other.

However, after the approach of lexical chunks over the experiment period, there is a great difference between the achievements of the two classes in this part. The students in the experimental class have achieved more progress in the Chinese-English translation section. Their consciousness of lexical chunks in the textbooks as well as other reading material they come across after class has increased obviously. However, there is no significant change in the translation section of the students in the control class. The students in the experimental class have the sense of using lexical chunks to express, especially the phrasal constraints and sentence builders, while many of those in the control class still translation sentences word by word.

Another significant difference between the performance of students in this section is that the words or lexical phrases used by the students from the experimental class are mostly new learned vocabulary while the students in the control class tend to use words or phrased they have long learned before. This again certifies that the new approach can promote the students' ability to make accurate and idiomatic

expressions in language output.

(3) Lexical Chunks Contribute to Encourage the Students in Their Study

The aim to learn foreign language is to communicate. In order to communicate well with others, one not only has to develop the ability of generating grammar-based sentences but also has to develop the ability of using the language properly.

Many foreign language learners often have trouble in composing sentences in real communication environment. Lexical chunks can help them solve this problem, because they are fixed or semi-fixed expressions with connection to certain pragmatic functions. That means, by remembering large numbers of lexical chunks, students can retrieve them wholly from their memory and use them directly in real communication. They can not only decrease the pressure of coding language but also can help students produce more accurate and fluency language, so we say they can make students more confident and active in their study. Besides, the approach of lexical chunks in the study gives students opportunities to learn by themselves and learn to cooperate with others in learning, which can make them feel they are the central factor in learning.

6.2 Limitations and Suggestions

(1) Limitations of the research

As the research of lexical chunks in English teaching is a complicated process, it is influenced by many subjective and objective factors during the experiment. The following are some limitations in the present research.

1) The number of the subjects is not big enough to reflect the whole conditions of all students in higher vocational colleges. They are non-English majors, who are from the level A in this college. There are lots of students whose English proficiency is lower than them. The number of the subjects is relatively small and results can not represent the language performance of the whole students in this college.

2) The experiment lasts for only four months, so it's not adequate for the experiment. It's likely that some problems haven't appeared in such a short period of time.

3) The identification of lexical chunks is based on the institution of the teachers who have participated in this experiment. It's not so authoritative. And the grading of the pretest and posttest is somewhat influenced by the subjective factors of the teachers.

(2) Suggestions of Further Research

On the drawbacks of this study, suggestions are made for further research.

Firstly, the study on a larger scale is necessary to further confirm the findings of the present study. A larger number of subjects with different English proficiency would provide a more detailed and overall description of the effects of the lexical chunks applied in language teaching.

Secondly, for the further study of other teachers, there should be more teaching methods adopted in the application of lexical chunks in foreign language teaching. Researchers can find a most suitable approach in the teaching of lexical chunks.

Finally, researchers should make deeper researches on the impact of the lexical chunks in both First and Second Language Acquisition.

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Appendix 1 Pretest

一、阅读下面段落，找出“语块”。在文中的语块下面划横线。(e.g.: by the way, in a word, a year ago)

Each time we produce a new English dictionary, our aim is always the same: what can we do to make the dictionary more helpful for students of English? As a result of our research with students and discussions with teachers, we decided to focus on providing more examples for this English dictionary.

Examples help students to remember the word they have looked up in the dictionary because it is easier both to remember and to understand a word within a context (上下文). The examples also show that words are often used in many different contexts. For these reasons, we have included 40 per cent more examples in this new book.

We edit all the examples to remove difficult words and to make sure they are easier to understand. We very much hope this new book will be of use not only to the students of English but also to the teachers.

二、把下列句子翻译成中文。

1. Mary used to share the room with her sister.
2. The professor's new theory went beyond the capacity of the audience.
3. Take it easy. There is no need to be nervous.
4. The moment they boarded the train it began to pull out of the station.
5. Could you please arrange an appointment for me to see Professor White?
6. I took the advantage of the opportunity to tell him what I thought.
7. The reason I didn't attend the lecture was simply that I got a bad cold that day.
8. It's difficult to tell the two sisters apart because they look very much alike.
9. The director approved of his plan and told him to go ahead.
10. The United States is composed of fifty states, two of which are separated(分离) from the others by land or water.

三、把下列句子翻译成英文。

11. 多吃蔬菜和水果有益健康。
12. 我一回到家，就开始下大雨了。
13. 史密斯先生来不来与我无关。
14. 我们大多数人都把这事视为理所当然。
15. 他们意识到旅馆房间里的空调出了问题。(air conditioner)
16. 当时，那位出租车司机别无选择，只能求助于游客。(turn to...for help)
17. 上周因为生病我缺了一些课，但是我会努力赶上大家的。(miss)
18. 这款手机式样新颖，深受年轻人的欢迎。(fashionable)
19. 我们相信农民的生活会越来越好。(believe)
20. 一本书是否畅销取决于诸多因素。(factor)

Appendix 2 Posttest

一、阅读下面段落，找出“语块”。在文中的语块下面划横线，如 result in。

iPod Safety Manual

Important Handling Information

Failure to follow these handling instructions could result in damage to iPod or other property.

Carrying iPod iPod contains sensitive components. Do not bend, drop, or crush iPod. If you are concerned about scratching iPod, you can use one of the many cases sold separately.

Using connectors and ports Never force a connector into a port. If the connector and port don't join with reasonable ease, they probably don't match. Make sure that the connector matches the port and that you have positioned the connector correctly in relation to the port.

Keeping iPod within acceptable temperatures Operate iPod in a place where the temperature is always between 0o and 35oC (32o to 95oF). iPod playtime might temporarily shorten in low temperature conditions.

Store iPod in a place where the temperature is always between -20o and 45oC (- 4o to 113oF). Don't leave iPod in your car, because temperatures in parked cars can exceed this range.

When you're using iPod or charging the battery, it is normal for iPod to get warm. The exterior of iPod functions as a cooling surface that takes heat from the unit inside to the cooler air outside.

Keeping the outside of iPod clean To clean iPod, unplug all cables, turn iPod off, and slide the Hold switch (if available) to HOLD. Then use a soft, slightly damp cloth. Avoid getting moisture in openings. Don't use window cleaners, household cleaners, or other chemical cleaners to clean iPod.

二、把下列英文句子翻译成中文：

1. This area is not safe at the moment, so it's better to stay away from it.
2. The production department is responsible for the production of the goods.
3. The manager was involved in a research on marketing activities.
4. I was not conscious of having made a mistake.
5. The search engine quickly grew in popularity. .
6. A great deal of money has been spent on the new hospital.
7. It's difficult to keep track of the new developments in science and technology.
8. This company is among the first ones that went public in China.
9. It is no surprise that she could saddle the horse
10. He had an idea that this could be achieved by examining the relationships between web pages.

三、把下列中文句子翻译成英文：

1. 除了一本练习簿外，我还给了他一支钢笔和一支铅笔。
2. 从环境保护的角度讲这个工程是了不起的。
3. 这家公司刚刚获得一些新财产。
4. 这取决于你是否想要去做这件事情。
5. 旅途不像我们预想的那样好。
6. 选你去参加运动会是可能的。
7. 熟练工人在这座城市需求量很大。
8. 我清楚意识到我给人留下了好的印象。
9. 面对这些困难，他会怎么做呢？
10. 与朋友分享我喜爱的书对我来说是极大的快乐。

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