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Abstract

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The aims of this study were to measure the vocabulary level and readability of a corpus consisting of the collected news passages with 222,917 words from the China Television Sation (CTS) English News Inside Taiwan program. Moreover, some findings from related literature of Technological Vocational Education Systems (TVES) university/college students' vocabulary level were discussed in order to investigate if the vocabulary levels of the news passages in the corpus match with TVES college students' vocabulary levels.

Speaking of the vocabulary level, the news passages in the whole corpus were firstly processed by the program, NationRange12 (Nation & Coxhead, 2002) to find out the coverage proportion of words in news passages by three word lists: the first 1,000 most frequent word list/level (the 1st 1,000 WL), the second 1,000 most frequent word list/level (the 2nd 1,000 WL), and the third 1,000 most frequent word list/level (the 3rd 1,000 WL). Then the vocabulary distribution of different topics by each vocabulary level and that of different vocabulary level by each topic were discovered.

As for the measurement of readability, 10 randomly selceted articles from each topic were processed by Fry's Graph in the program, Readability Calculaton (Micro Power & Light Co., 1984). Then the distribution and ranges of readability of the sub-corpus were found out among the different topics and in each topic.

The main findings of this study were as follows:

1) In terms of the vocabulary distribution in the whole corpus, the corpus covered around 75% of words in the 1st 1,000 WL, and around 85% among the 1st 1,000, the 2nd 1,000, and the 3rd 1,000 WLs. As for the vocabulary distribution among different vocabulary levels by each topic, the topic of culture and art was regarded as the easiest one due to its large number of repeated words with a still comparative higher coverage proportion of words in the 1st 1,000 WL. On the contrary, the topic of sport was the most difficult one because of its large number of new words with a comparative lower coverage proportion of words in the 1st 1,000 WL. Moreover, the majority of words in the topic of weather were specially focused on the 1st 1,000 and the 2nd 1,000 WLs, which accounted for 83% of words in the topic.

2) The range of the reading grade levels among different topics was from the 7th to the 11th reading grade levels in the sub-corpus. The highest reading grade level was the topic of technology, and the lowest one was the topic of culture and art. As for the range of readability in each topics, the

topic of technology got more unstable reading levels among its 10 randomly selected articles; the topic of culture and art got more stable reading levels among its 10 randomly selected articles. Moreover, in view of the results measured by Fry's Graph in this study, it could be inferred that long words were the factor to affect the reading grade levels, rather than the sentences' length.

3) According to the related studies in the vocabulary area (Joe et al., 2002), only around 67% of TVES university/college students were those who possessd the better vocabulary competence and could only reach the vocabulary level of the 1st 1,000 WL. In this study it was found that 74% of words were within the coverage proportion of words belonging to the 1st 1,000 WL. It was then estimated that 67 % of TVES university/college students can figure out 74 % of words in the whole corpus. However, because there were a larger number of local terms in the domestic news passages, those terms were not included within the three word lists yet were easy for Taiwanese learners. Viewing from this, it could be said that though most of the TVES college students' vocabulary levels were still not enough to handle the vocabulary load in the news passages' corpus, yet they are encouraged to accesss some more suitable news passages of certain topic according to their particular phenonmonon in terms of vocabulary levels.

The results of this study show that there existed a gap between the news text's vocabualry levels and the TVES college students' vocabualry levels. In this case, the methodology utilized in this study is of somewhat help to EFL teachers, and curriculum designeres to choose and design suitable levels of matereial for their students and readers.

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