

Beliefs in Using English Dictionaries of Grade 12 Students in Buriram Province  
ความเชื่อเกี่ยวกับการใช้พจนานุกรมภาษาอังกฤษของนักเรียนชั้นมัธยมศึกษาปีที่ 6 ในจังหวัดบุรีรัมย์

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**ABSTRACT:** The purposes of this study were to investigate and compare grade 12 students' beliefs in using English dictionaries, classified by gender and G.P.A. The samples were 94 grade 12 students who were selected by using the table of Krejcie and Morgan and simple random sampling. The research instrument was a 3-part questionnaire, including checklist, rating scale and opened-form. The statistics used for data analysis were percentage, mean, standard deviation, independent samples t-test and one-way analysis of variance. The results revealed as follows:

1. The overall beliefs in using dictionaries by grade 12 students in Buriram Province were at the mediocre level. When considering in each aspect of beliefs, it was found all aspects, namely "beliefs about English dictionaries in general", "beliefs about relative strengths of different types of English dictionaries", and "beliefs about specific types of English dictionaries" were also at the mediocre level.

2. The comparison of the beliefs in using dictionaries of grade 12 students in overall and each aspect of beliefs, classified by gender was not different.

3. The comparison of the beliefs in using dictionaries of grade 12 students in overall and each aspect of beliefs, classified by G.P.A. in overall was statistically significant difference at .05 level. When considering in each aspect of beliefs, it was found with statistically significant difference at .05 of the beliefs about relative strengths of different types of English dictionaries.

**Keywords:** Beliefs, English dictionaries, Grade 12 students

**บทคัดย่อ** การวิจัยครั้งนี้มีวัตถุประสงค์เพื่อศึกษาและเปรียบเทียบความเชื่อเกี่ยวกับการใช้พจนานุกรมภาษาอังกฤษของนักเรียนชั้นมัธยมศึกษาปีที่ 6 ในจังหวัดบุรีรัมย์ โดยจำแนกตามเพศและเกรดเฉลี่ยสะสม กลุ่มตัวอย่าง ได้แก่ นักเรียนชั้นมัธยมศึกษาปีที่ 6 จำนวน 94 คน โดยกำหนดขนาดของกลุ่มตัวอย่างโดยใช้ตารางของเครซีและมอร์แกน แล้วทำการสุ่มอย่างง่าย เครื่องมือที่ใช้ในการวิจัยเป็นแบบสอบถามซึ่งประกอบด้วย 3 ส่วน คือ แบบตรวจสอบรายการ มาตราส่วนประมาณค่า และคำถามปลายเปิด สถิติที่ใช้ในการวิเคราะห์ข้อมูล ประกอบด้วย ค่าร้อยละ ค่าเฉลี่ย ส่วนเบี่ยงเบนมาตรฐาน ค่าคะแนนที่เป็นอิสระต่อกัน และการวิเคราะห์ความแปรปรวนทางเดียว ผลการวิจัย พบว่า

1. ความเชื่อเกี่ยวกับการใช้พจนานุกรมภาษาอังกฤษของนักเรียนชั้นมัธยมศึกษาปีที่ 6 ในจังหวัดบุรีรัมย์ โดยภาพรวมอยู่ในระดับปานกลางเมื่อพิจารณาเป็นรายด้าน พบว่า ทั้งสาม ได้แก่ ด้านความเชื่อเกี่ยวกับการใช้พจนานุกรมภาษาอังกฤษโดยทั่วไป ด้านความเชื่อเกี่ยวกับประเภทของพจนานุกรมภาษาอังกฤษ และด้านความเชื่อเกี่ยวกับข้อดีของพจนานุกรมประเภทต่างๆ อยู่ในระดับปานกลางเช่นกัน

2. การเปรียบเทียบความเชื่อเกี่ยวกับการใช้พจนานุกรมภาษาอังกฤษของนักเรียนชั้นมัธยมศึกษาปีที่ 6 ในจังหวัดบุรีรัมย์ เมื่อจำแนกตามเพศ พบว่า ไม่แตกต่างกัน

3. การเปรียบเทียบความเชื่อเกี่ยวกับการใช้พจนานุกรมภาษาอังกฤษของนักเรียนชั้นมัธยมศึกษาปีที่ 6 ในจังหวัดบุรีรัมย์ เมื่อจำแนกตามเกรดเฉลี่ยสะสม พบว่า โดยภาพรวมแตกต่างกันอย่างมีนัยสำคัญทางสถิติที่ระดับ .05 เมื่อพิจารณาเป็นรายด้าน พบว่า ด้านความเชื่อเกี่ยวกับข้อดีของพจนานุกรมประเภทต่างๆ แตกต่างกันอย่างมีนัยสำคัญทางสถิติที่ระดับ .05

**คำสำคัญ :** ความเชื่อ พจนานุกรมภาษาอังกฤษ นักเรียนชั้นมัธยมศึกษาปีที่ 6

**Background:**

Since 1980's, the use of dictionaries by second language learners has become an increasingly important research issue not only in the field of lexicography but also in the context of foreign language learning and instruction. Studies have shown positive effects of dictionary use on reading comprehension (Summers.1988; Tono. 1989; Knight. 1994; Mccreary&Dolezal. 1999), and on vocabulary learning (Knight. 1994; Hustijin et al. 1996; Laufer& Hill. 2000). In addition, studies of Notohyara( 1987) and Tono (1989) have revealed positive correlation between dictionary skills and overall English proficiency. Although relatively few studies (Ard. 1982; Hatherall. 1984; Nesi&Meara. 1994; Nuccorini. 1994) have been done on dictionary use in encoding activities, there has been a growing awareness that dictionaries may play an important role in second language writing as in reading as a result of the increasing opportunity of email communication and net chatting in the Internet community.

Despite the possibility of transfer of learners' perceptions of Thai dictionaries to their beliefs about English dictionaries, the overall English learning environment in Thailand and the indelible impact of the grammar-translation method on the English teaching appear to be more crucial in influencing learners' beliefs about the importance as well as necessity of dictionary use to improve their English. Although communicative language learning is becoming mainstream in formal English learning and teaching settings in Thailand, the grammar-translation approach still remains relatively alive in diverse types of non-institutional English learning such as English cram schools, and these settings also contribute to shaping learners' belief about the helpfulness of dictionary use in translation and expanding English vocabulary.

In particular, despite teachers' constant advice to avoid it, the use of translation to facilitate English learning is still a dominant learning habit among English learners in Thailand. As indicated by Piyanukool (2001), Thai EFL learners believe that the use of translation was beneficial for their English reading and vocabulary learning for more empirical studies of the influence of using Thai translation in learning English. Moreover, he found most of his Thai EFL learning, and English dictionary use was also found in his study to be one of the most frequently used translation strategies by the students. English dictionaries are efficient translation providers; it is, therefore, not difficult to understand why EFL learners in Thailand make habitual use of English dictionaries to foster English learning. This tendency of dictionary use for the translation purpose is particularly evident in learners' extensive use of electronic dictionaries, which are widely known as translation machines as if they were intended for the translation purpose only.

Despite their frequent use of and heavy reliance on English dictionaries, many EFL learners in Thailand do not seem to gain benefit from dictionary use in improving their English. Habitual English dictionary users do not necessarily turn out to be proficient English learners. The cause of this outcome may reside in how learners envision, and how they make use of dictionaries. Some of the notions, students have about dictionaries and the way they use dictionaries may turn out to be, in EFL teachers' views, deleterious misconceptions and less thoughtful strategy use. One group of learners, for instance, intuitively believe that dictionaries, particularly electronic dictionaries, are intended only for translation, and tend to use electronic dictionaries to meet their instantaneous translation needs, understanding and using the supplied Thai or English translations indiscriminately in reading and writing tasks. Many of these learners are also inclined to resort impulsively to dictionaries upon encountering unknown words while reading English or whenever uncertain how to render a Thai thought into English while writing English. Another group of learners tend to use dictionaries at decontextualized settings, browse dictionaries randomly, and learn vocabulary incidentally, perceiving dictionaries as an important resource for conscious learning of English vocabulary.

Although EFL teachers seem to be aware of students' dictionary perceptions and their dictionary strategy use, their own beliefs about dictionaries may differ from students', and students' actual dictionary use behaviors may run counter to teachers' expectations. For example, despite teachers' discouragement from using electronic dictionaries, students still use them frequently for the sake of convenience, fast accessibility, or even fashion. In addition, despite teachers' advice to make more use of monolingual instead of bilingual dictionaries, students still rely tremendously on the bilingual dictionary for a translation aid while learning English. Unfortunately, teachers' preconceptions of dictionaries may not necessarily reflect the truth of the matter. Students' hands-on electronic dictionary use experience, for example, may lead to some beliefs about this dictionary medium's advantages and disadvantages of which their teachers are not aware. Teachers, consequently, may overgeneralize the disadvantages of electronic dictionaries while ignoring their latest features and potential benefits to students.

Investigating students' dictionary beliefs, especially in high schools in Thailand, is therefore important in that it provides a source of knowledge teachers can build on to communicate with students and to confront nonfactual or erroneous beliefs with the new information. Discussions between teachers and students about their own dictionary beliefs will sensitize students' awareness of their own beliefs, and adjust or increase teachers' understanding of how students perceive and use dictionaries, which ultimately helps to foster more effective learning strategies in their students. In Thailand, there is no more research conducting to investigate the beliefs in using English dictionaries, therefore, this present study will be as the pioneer research related to the dictionary's belief.

#### **Purposes of the Study**

1. To investigate grade 12 students' beliefs in using English dictionaries.
2. To compare grade 12 students' beliefs in using English dictionaries classified by gender and G.P.A.

#### **Significance of the Study**

Despite the urge of many dictionary researchers to teach students dictionary skills (Baxter. 1980; Bejoint. 1981; Huang. 1985 ; Hartmann. 1992; Tang. 1997 ) and the report of positive effects of teaching dictionary skills on language comprehension (Kipfer. 1987), the appropriate role of the instruction of dictionary skills in formal classroom settings still remains controversial among researchers and language teachers. The findings of this study, nevertheless, are expected to generate implications for the role of English dictionary education in classroom settings. Given that communicative language teaching is becoming the current trend of English instruction in Thailand, the findings of this research may provide some directions of thinking as to whether English dictionary education is suitable in the meaning and communication-based language classroom, and how it will be fit into the setting of communicative learning and teaching, as well as what should be imparted to students with respect to dictionary beliefs.

#### **Methodology**

##### **Population and Samples**

The population of this study included 120 grade 12 students studying the first semester of academic year 2014 at Kumuangwitthayakhom School under the Secondary Educational Service Area Office 32 in Buriram Province.

The samples for this study were 94 grade 12 students studying the first semester of academic year 2014 at Kumuangwiththayakhom School under The Secondary Educational Service Area Office 32 in Buriram Province. They were selected by using the table of Krejcie and Morgan and simple random sampling.

### **Research Instruments**

The research instrument was the questionnaire which is called The Beliefs About English Dictionary Questionnaire (BAEDQ). This instrument included 3 parts, namely checklist, rating scale, and open-ended form. This instrument intends to gauge the students' beliefs about English dictionaries in four major areas: 1) expectations and motivations for dictionary use; 2) perceived value of English dictionary use in English learning; 3) perceived value of unconventional vs. conventional English dictionaries; 4) relative strengths of different types and media of English dictionaries. This instrument was developed and adapted from Nesi and Meara (1994). The samples were asked to indicate the extent to which they agree with statements such as "People who are good at English are more skilled than using dictionaries than people who are not good at English" on a 5 – point Likert scale ranging from 'strongly agree' to 'strongly disagree.' Some items such as item 6 "It is not necessary to use English dictionaries to facilitate learning English" was negatively stated to detect inconsistency of students' responses and avoid response set or bias so that the reliability of the questionnaire can be increased.

### **Data Collection**

The survey questionnaire was conducted at Kumuangwiththayakhom School under The Secondary Educational Service Area Office 32 in Buriram Province. Before the real survey, the researcher obtained the permission to do the study from each of the class instructors, and after consultation with the English teachers, was arranged a regular class meeting hour for the administration of the questionnaire with each of the participating classes. On the actual testing day, the researcher went to each participating class at the beginning of each session. Before the students starting to work on the questionnaires, the researcher explained in Thai for the purpose, nature, and procedures of the study, and assured them that participation in the study was entirely voluntary and their identity as well as the research data containing their identity or student numbers would be kept confidential. A Thai consent form for taking questionnaires was first distributed to all of the students of the class. Only those students who agreed to participate in the study will be asked to sign the form. The participating students were then asked to complete the questionnaire. At the beginning and in the middle of the testing, the researcher reminded students to ask questions whenever an item was unclear to them. The researcher then asked some of the students for their opinions of the questionnaire. The entire procedure of administering was taken approximately 30 minutes, an entire class period, including the time spent on instructions and consent forms.

### **Data Analysis**

The data collected were conducted using computer program software. The first statistical procedure yielded descriptive statistics, including frequency, mean, and standard deviation of the questionnaire items. The descriptive statistics were summarized the students' responses to the BAEDQ questionnaire. The descriptive analyses gave an overall picture of students' English dictionary beliefs by addressing the first question "What are grade 12 students' reported beliefs in using English dictionaries?" also, the inferential statistics including independent samples t-test and one-way analysis of variance were used to analyzed the collected data to answer the second question "Is there any difference in using English dictionaries of grade 12 students classified by gender and G.P.A?"

## Findings

### 1. Beliefs in Using English Dictionaries by Grade 12 Students

The overall beliefs in using dictionaries by grade 12 students in Buriram Province were at the mediocre level. When considering in each aspect of beliefs, it was found all aspects, namely “beliefs about English dictionaries in general”, “beliefs about relative strengths of different types of English dictionaries”, and “beliefs about specific types of English dictionaries” were also at the mediocre level. The three highest mean scores were “The most important use of electronic dictionaries is to help me translate from English to Thai”, followed by “On-line dictionaries are more helpful than paper in fostering English reading and writing in a wired environment”, and “It is important to use dictionaries to help me translate while reading and writing English”, respectively. On the other hand, the three lowest mean scores were “It is not necessary to use English dictionaries to facilitate learning English”, followed by “A good dictionary user is also a good English learner”, and “It is more difficult to use English dictionaries than Thai dictionaries”, respectively.

### 2. Similarities and Differences of Using English Dictionaries by Grade 12 Students

The results of comparison of the beliefs in using English dictionaries of grade 12 students in overall and each type of beliefs, classified by gender were not different. When considering each item, it was found with statistically significant difference at .01 level in “People with a strong motivation to learn English also have a strong motivation to use dictionaries” and “Electronic dictionaries with built-in vocal function help to improve English pronunciation” while with .05 level in “How often people use dictionaries is associated with their English proficiency”, and “The most important use of electronic dictionaries is to help me translate from English to Thai”

In terms of G.P.A., the beliefs in using dictionaries of grade 12 students in overall were statistically significant difference at .05 level. When considering in each aspect of beliefs, it was found with statistically significant difference at .05 of the beliefs about relative strengths of different types of English dictionaries. When considering each item, it was found with statistically significant difference at .01 level in “English –Thai dictionaries help to enhance English ability more than English-English dictionaries.”, “Electronic dictionaries help to enhance English ability more than paper dictionaries.”, and “On-line dictionaries are more helpful than electronic dictionaries in fostering English reading and writing in a wired environment.” while with .05 level in “How often people use dictionaries is associated with their English proficiency”, and “People should use suitable dictionaries intended for their English proficiency levels.”, and “English-English dictionaries are suitable only for people of high English proficiency.”, respectively.

## Discussion

### 1. Beliefs in Using English Dictionaries by Grade 12 Students

The findings revealed that overall beliefs in using English dictionaries by grade 12 students in Buriram Province were at the mediocre level. This may be explained by the fact that grade 12 students study English six times a week, and each class met they have to use the dictionaries to find out the words in the English lessons or passages assigned by the teachers. They mention that dictionaries can help them to translate from English into Thai while they read and write the assignments. In addition, they state that they prefer on-line dictionaries to paper dictionaries as we can find from the questionnaire which they rated as the three highest mean score. The reason is that about 80% of students have got the mobile phone that can access the internet; therefore, they use the mobile phone as the dictionary. The finding is

consistent with the study of Bensoussan, Sim and Weiss (1984) who mentioned that the use of dictionary had an effect on reading comprehension.

## 2. Similarities and Differences of Using English Dictionaries by Grade 12 Students

In terms of gender, it was found with statistically significant difference at .01 level in “People with a strong motivation to learn English also have a strong motivation to use dictionaries” and “Electronic dictionaries with built-in vocal function help to improve English pronunciation” while with .05 level in “ How often people use dictionaries is associated with their English proficiency”, and “The most important use of electronic dictionaries is to help me translate from English to Thai”. The findings indicated that the female students rated the higher score than male students. This could be explained from the interview that the female students tend to explore not only the meaning of the words but also the part of speech, how to pronounce and the examples of the words used. Also, the female students have more mobile phones than the male students; therefore, the female students tend and have opportunity to use more mobile phones than the male students.

In terms of G.P.A., the findings showed the statistically significant difference among three groups. The students who have got high G.P.A. had higher score of the significant items than the other groups. This can be explained that the high proficiency students may concentrate on the lessons and eager to learn both inside and outside class; therefore, they tend to use dictionaries very often. The result is similar to Laufer and Melamed (1994) who stated that students with high ability learn more words than those with low ability, and that students who use a dictionary learn more than those who do not. In addition, the finding parallels the study of Rubin (1987) who insisted that good language learners as having the ability and willingness to guess, desiring to engage in communication, being not intimidated attending to the form of the language (e.g. looking for patterns, analyzing, categorizing, and synthesizing), practicing, monitoring their own speech and the speech of others, and paying attention to meaning.

### Pedagogical Implications

1. Although the relatively small sample means that the researcher cannot claim to provide the breath of data to represent the experiences of grade 12 students in Buriram province, Thailand, the study can nevertheless provide valuable insight into how they perceive, experience, and respond to influences on their teaching, and negotiate the professional and personal challenges confronting them in their practice. These insights have implications for other teachers, for teacher/academic developers and for leaders and managers of institutions, faculties/schools and departments.

2. The present study showed that grade 12 students used dictionary when they study English at the mediocre level. Therefore, teachers should tell them the importance of dictionaries since all types of dictionaries can help them to look for the meanings, parts of speech, the examples of the example sentences of the words they found in the English lessons.

3. Since grade 12 students mentioned the electronic dictionaries can help them translate from English to Thai. Therefore, English teachers should tell and teach them the advantages and disadvantages of this type of dictionary. Also, teachers should tell the students how to select and use them when learning English appropriately.

### Suggestions for Future Research

Based on the findings of this study, the following suggestions for future research are made:

1. This study investigated the beliefs in using English dictionaries. It would be interesting if the future research discover the dictionary strategies used in the English classroom.

2. Since there is no more study on beliefs in using dictionaries up until now, this study is the primary step to explore how the secondary school students believe in using dictionaries in Buriram Province. Future research could involve in a larger sample size in order to make a more reliable generalization all over Thailand.

3. The present study conducted in the secondary school level. The future research may employ at the different levels of students such as primary, university levels.

4. The present investigation compared the similarities and differences of the beliefs in using dictionaries classified by gender and G.P.A. It might be interesting to compare the similarities and differences of the beliefs in using dictionaries classified by other factors such as the background and learning styles of students.

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