

Investigating the Effect of Graphic Organizer Strategy Instruction on Iranian Vocabulary Learning Ability

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ABSTRACT

This study was conducted to investigate the effect of graphic organizer vocabulary instruction on Iranian vocabulary learning ability. For this purpose, 80 learners of English participated in this study. All the groups were taught the same textbooks. Oxford Placement Test was used in order to get homogenized groups of participants. They were also given a vocabulary pretest, to measure the learners' initial knowledge of the target words. The treatment procedure took ten sessions and thirty-minute each session. During each session, the students in the experimental groups were presented with 10 new words' pictures on A4 papers. In the control groups, the learners got the list of the new vocabulary with the synonyms and definition. Finally, at the end of the course all the groups sat for the posttest of lexical knowledge. Then the statistical analysis was run through Independent-sample T-test. The results showed that the experimental group which was taught with graphic organizers outperformed the control group which was taught with a traditional method

Keywords: Graphic organizer, vocabulary learning

1. Introduction

Among the difficult task which language learners face in their long journey to learn a L2 is its lexical component. L2 learners have to internalize hundreds of L2 words which bear arbitrary relationship with the objects or concepts they are associated with, they have to learn a great deal of lexical items to be able to understand and make themselves understood in real situation tasks. These words are not only different from those of learners' L1, but also in many cases show internal inconsistencies. For example, the plural form of *child* is *children* and the past form of *go* is *went*. They do not follow the conventional rule for making plural and past tense (*s* and *ed*) respectively (Yongqi Gu, 2003).

We as non-native language learners in the past and language teachers in the present have experienced the deadening task of internalizing L2 words. We all have experienced the frustration that we have felt after spending a month or so memorizing a self-study vocabulary textbook. After apparent memorization, we have found ourselves incapable of remembering a particular word of the book. Considering the fact that lexis is an important, if not the most important, ingredient part of every language, we as language teachers must encourage our students to take the bull by the horn and set out internalizing new words in more efficient ways. In their difficult but rewarding task of word learning we should teach them to employ beneficial strategies based on their preferred style(s) to make this arduous task more pleasing and fruitful. We should determine the general preferences of our learners and prescribe appropriate methods of language learning based on that understanding. Having determined the general preferences of our learners we will be in a better position to guide our learners toward more efficient learning in general and vocabulary learning in particular.

A widely used strategy for vocabulary learning is guessing or inferring the meaning of the new word in context. Despite its advantages, over reliance on this method for enhancing repertoire of vocabulary can be detrimental. Ling (2005) points to a couple of problems that may arise when learners make use of guessing and inferring strategy as the main technique for improving vocabulary knowledge: "acquiring vocabulary through guessing in context is probably a rather slow process given the limited amount of time learners can afford in class. In addition, guessing from context does not necessarily help learners commit the guessed words into their long-term memory" (p. 29). After referring to a number of studies whose results show the superiority of explicit vocabulary instruction to more implicit ones, Ling (2005) calls for a greater need of an explicit approach to vocabulary instruction, such as word unit analysis, mnemonic devices, etc.