

The Effects of Peripheral Teaching on Iranian EFL Vocabulary Improvement

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Abstract

As language teaching involves the acquisition of thousands of words, teachers and learners like to know how vocabulary learning can be fostered. The aim of this study was to investigate the effects of peripheral teaching on students' vocabulary. To this purpose, two intact classes of 30 elementary learners were chosen for teaching the targeted words through the same method of reading instruction except that the experimental group received a lot of vocabulary exposure via posters on the wall of the classroom. The results indicated the outperformance of the participants in the experimental group over the performance of the participants in the control group in receptive mode. The findings support the arguments regarding the importance of subconscious awareness in language learning.

Keywords: peripheral teaching, receptive mode, reading instruction

I. INTRODUCTION

One of the techniques of language learning suggested by Lozanov (1978) is “peripheral learning”. He believes that students can learn a lot of things that they see around them. In the environment of the class, a lot of language materials are presented in the form of posters and students are not assigned to study them. The purpose is to provide students with peripheral learning. According to McGlothlin (1997) who observed his children’s first language development, a child does not use language for its own sake. In reality, he never pays attention to language by any means. For a child, language is considered a means to an end, that is, his joy. Therefore, first language acquisition in early stages is mainly peripheral. In the present study, the researchers have suggested some ways for enriching the environment for the elementary students who study English as a foreign language.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. *Researches on vocabulary*

Traditionally, learners had to memorize large lists of vocabulary without using any special techniques to retain. Allen (1983) claims that sometimes after months or even years of English learning, there may be many words that have never been learned although teachers have devoted much time to vocabulary teaching.

As many scholars (e.g., Ellis, 1993) have argued, students can increase their vocabulary knowledge formally in the classroom and informally through communication with others and through class activities, so in order to foster their learning of new words, it has been suggested that students need to work on exercises that cause them to pay careful attention and make deeper processing of these new words.

Johnson and Steel (1996) argue that many strategies are devised and utilized by L2 language teachers to develop the general and academic vocabulary of students. They recommended several generative vocabulary learning strategies: Vocabulary selection strategies, personal word lists, semantic mapping, imagery, and computer-assisted instruction. Smith (1983) reviewed the literature and found three basic assumptions to be accepted as important for direct vocabulary instruction and for facilitating vocabulary achievement. These assumptions are; teaching collocations; knowing word details knowledge of the network associations between that word and other words in the language; and knowing a word means knowing the semantic value of the word.

Nation (2001) mentioned that, acquiring vocabulary can be looked at, as consisting of four or two approaches, depending upon your viewpoint: (a) direct teaching (teacher explained and peer directed), (b) direct learning (study from dictionary and word cards), (c) incidental learning (guessing from context in extensive reading and use in communication activities), (d) planned encounters (graded reading and vocabulary exercises).

B. *Importance of vocabulary*

Nunan (1991) claims that the development of rich vocabulary is an important element in the acquisition of a second language. Vocabulary learning is central to language acquisition, whether the language is first, second, or foreign (Celce-Murcia, 2001, P. 285).

Allen (1983) states that in many English language classes, even where the teachers have devoted much time to vocabulary teaching, the results have been disappointing, sometimes after months or even years of learning English, many of the words most needed have never been learned especially in countries where English is not the main language of communication. Lindstromberg (2003) states, it is believed that the lack of researches that have revealed the effective techniques of vocabulary leads to these problems.

There are various reasons for saying that the lexicon is important for language learners. Language learners are typically conscious of the extent to which limitations in their vocabulary knowledge prevent their ability to communicate effectively in the target language,

since lexical items carry the basic information load of the meanings they wish to comprehend and express (Craik & Tulving, 1957; Rodriguez & Sadoski, 2000).

C. Peripheral learning

Lazanov (1978) suggests that the purpose of peripheral learning is to trigger 'paraconscious' part of the mind. Peripheral teaching is a technique that helps students to learn from what presented in the environment, even if their attention is not directed to it. For this end the researcher stuck colored posters on the wall of the experimental group classroom. Posters display pictures along with vocabulary information. The posters were changed every two weeks to create a sense of novelty.

III. METHODOLOGY

A. Participants

The participants for this study were chosen among the elementary EFL learners of Safir English Institute in Kangavar. 30 students (two classes) were selected out of 75 learners (eight classes) as the participants of the study, and then they were randomly assigned to an experimental and a control group.

All participants were female, and differed in terms of age. They range from 10 to 12 years old. None of them had ever lived in a foreign country or traveled to an English speaking country. The classes were conducted in the afternoon twice a week and 60 minutes a session.

B. Instrumentation

Three instruments were utilized to achieve the goals of this study: reading comprehension test (extracted from different sources including; interchange, select reading, etc.) at the beginning of the research in order to homogenize the student's general English.

Two parallel test of vocabulary were utilized for the pre-test and post-test of the study both of which were extracted online. In order to ensure the reliability of the tests, the researcher used coefficient Alpha reliability analysis to compute the reliability and to determine if they could be employed in the language center classes in Iranian EFL context. According to Coefficient Alpha formulae, the reliability was 0.74, 0.71, and 0.72 respectively which indicated that the tests were reliable enough.

C. Procedures

The study was conducted at the start of the semester. In order to determine the participants' level of reading comprehension, a test of reading comprehension was administered. Those students (classes) whose scores were 1SD below and above the mean were considered elementary. Then the researchers selected two groups (classes) randomly and

assigned them to a control group and an experimental group of the study. Afterward, all participants were given a pre-test of vocabulary. The test was extracted from the Internet. The questions were in the form of the multiple choices; the next phase of the study started with some treatment sessions. Both groups received reading comprehension model i.e., pre-reading, reading, post-reading (Chastain, 1988, p. 225). The experimental group got a lot of exposure to target words (peripheral teaching) though. The treatment lasted for ten sessions (two sessions a week). After the treatment sessions came to an end. A parallel test of vocabulary was administered. Parallel tests are tests which measure the same construct; they have the same mean and the same standard deviations (Bachman, 1990, p. 168). Finally, the results of both the pretest and the posttest were compared.

IV. RESULTS

This section outlines the entire technical and statistical procedures involved in the study. It describes all the steps taken by the researcher in the analysis of the relevant data and elaborates on the results.

A. Statistical Analysis

Data were analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics encompassed the means, standard deviations. Inferential statistics comprised the application of an Independent sample T-Test to test the null hypotheses at the .05 level of significance.

B. Statement of the Problem

The present study tried to answer the question raised about the effects of task types on listening comprehension.

Q1: Does a 'peripheral teaching' have any effect on improving Iranian EFL learners' vocabulary?

To reveal the purpose of this study, the researcher tried to find the confirmation or rejection of null hypotheses presented here:

H01: The 'peripheral teaching' does not have any effect on improving Iranian EFL learners' vocabulary.

C. Data Analysis

As mentioned above, 75 learners participated in this study. The participants were female studying English at Safir Institute in Kangavar. Some statistical analyses were run to prove the homogeneity of the participants:

Table 1 Reading comprehension test

	N	Range	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
reading	75	25.00	40.00	65.00	53.8000	5.25306
Valid N (listwise)	75					

All the data including mean, maximum score, minimum score, range, and so on were shown in Table 1.

Independent sample t-test as the pre-test

First of all it is worth noting that Independent Pair t-test is used to determine whether there is any significant difference between the means of two independent groups. Since there were two groups in the present study, the researcher used Independent Pair t-test to compare the means of different groups.

Table 2 Descriptive data for two groups in pre-test

	N	Range	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
control	15	15.00	50.00	65.00	57.00	3.68
peripheral	15	10.00	50.00	60.00	55.33	3.51
Valid N (listwise)	15					

Table 2 provides useful descriptive statistics for two groups. The data include the mean, the standard deviation, minimum / maximum scores, and range.

Table 3 Output of the independent pair t-test analysis for two groups in pre-test

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means							
	F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		
						Lower		Upper		
peripheral	Equal variances assumed	.542	.468	1.267	28	.216	1.66	1.315	-1.02	4.36
	Equal variances not assumed			1.267	27.94	.216	1.66	1.315	-1.02	4.36

Table 3 indicates the output of the Independent Pair t-test analysis and whether there is any significant difference between the means of two independent groups. As can be seen in this table the significance level is 0.216 ($p=.216$) which is above 0.05, therefore, there is not statistically significant differences between groups. Therefore, the null hypotheses could not be rejected. The other data indicated in the table was the degree of freedom between groups (28).

Table 4 descriptive data for two groups in post-test.

	N	Range	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
control	15	15.00	50.00	65.00	57.00	3.68
peripheral	15	15.00	70.00	85.00	76.66	4.87
Valid N (listwise)	15					

Table 4 shows useful descriptive statistics for two groups. The data include the mean, the standard deviation, minimum/ maximum scores, and range.

Table 5 Output of the independent pair t-test analysis for two groups in post-test

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means							
			F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference
										Lower
peripheral	Equal variances assumed	2.441	.129	-12.45	28	.000	-19.66	1.578	-22.90	-16.43
	Equal variances not assumed			-12.45	26.04	.000	-19.66	1.578	-22.91	-16.42

Table 5 indicates the output of the Independent Pair t-test analysis and whether there is any significant difference between the means of two independent groups. As can be seen in this table the significance level is 0.000 ($p=.000$) which is below 0.05, therefore, there is statistically significant differences between groups. Therefore, the null hypotheses could be rejected. The other data indicated in the table was the degree of freedom between groups (28). It means that peripheral instruction was effective.

V. CONCLUSION

This study investigated the effects of peripheral instruction on increasing vocabulary repertoire of Iranian EFL learners. The participants were 30 EFL learners studying English at Safir institute in Kangavar. They were divided into an experimental group and a control group.

The research question addressed in the present study was whether peripheral instruction can lead Iranian EFL learners to greater increase in L2 vocabulary or not. To analyze the data the researcher used pre-test and post test scores on vocabulary test and he ran independent T-test using SPSS Version 22 (SPSS Inc., 2012) for this study. Results displayed an increase in students' performance in vocabulary enhancement due to the effect of peripheral instruction.

One of the most important facets of this technique is that it promotes learners' vocabulary repertoire by providing them with plenty of opportunities to receive language in the classroom. Other important aspect of this technique is that it triggers learners' subconscious mind by providing them with a lot of visual aids (Larsen-Freeman, 2000, p. 81).

Finally posters are colorful and automatically attract learners' attention and there is no need to compel them to memorize words.

Generally speaking, according to the obtained results, the peripheral teaching in EFL students tended to improve through exposure to pictorial input. Specifically, peripheral instruction not only affected the vocabulary storage of the participants and improved it but also the researcher assumes that this technique corresponds to all level of language proficiency and to nearly all academic subjects: Arabic, law, biology, chemistry, etc. The conclusion that may be made from the above statistics analysis is that the participants who were taught based on peripheral technique generally tended to score higher in vocabulary test.

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