



The Effect of Drawing Pictures on Improving Iranian Elementary EFL learners' L2 Vocabulary Knowledge

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Abstract

Undoubtedly vocabulary is the most important step in the journey of language learning. It is more vital in foreign language situations due to the limited exposure of the language learners to the target language and inadequate opportunities to use learnt items in real situations. They cannot express their ideas because of the lack of word knowledge when they need. It is a safe claim that vocabulary teaching techniques are not effective enough, and words are not kept in long-term memory. There is a serious need for effective strategies. This study tries to present an effective strategy for vocabulary learning of children. Sixty female language learners contributed in the present study which has been completed in one academic semester. They have been divided into two groups: one as an experimental group in which learners learnt new vocabulary items through drawing pictures, and one control group whose students learned the equal items through traditional instruction. At the beginning of the program, the researcher administered a language proficiency test. Afterwards a pretest of vocabulary subsequently was run on learners' L2 vocabulary knowledge. At that point the intervention got started. After completing the program, with the intention of measuring effectiveness of the treatment one posttest was performed. Afterwards, the researcher analyzed the gathered data. Since there were two groups in the study, the researcher applied t-test for analysis. The results demonstrated that drawing pictures were undeniably effective in the process of word acquisition.

Keywords: Drawing Picture, Elementary EFL learners, Vocabulary Learning

INTRODUCTION

On the importance of word knowledge Krashen (1989) has stated that "a large vocabulary is of course, essential for mastery language" (as cited in Schmitt 2010, p.4). Rubin and Thompson (1994) call attention to the role of vocabulary in communication: we won't be able to speak, read or write a foreign language if we don't have a rich word repertoire. The core of learning a foreign language is definitely vocabulary learning. Nguyen and Khuat (2003) also support the role of vocabulary in foreign language learning (as cited in Thuy, 2007). According to Tsubaki (2012) the three dimensions of vocabulary knowledge: (a) partial and precise knowledge, (b) depth of knowledge, and (c) receptive and productive knowledge. As stated by August (2005), ELLs who are not successful in

vocabulary development are not capable of comprehending advanced texts. They further add that these students are of poor performance and as a result are at risk of being diagnosed as leaning disabled students (August, 2005). As a result, in teaching vocabulary the type of instruction is of excessive importance. Educators should apply effective strategies for teaching vocabulary. Psychologists, linguists, and language teachers have attempted to find out the most efficient vocabulary learning strategies (Yongi Gu, 2003). "There is a pure distinction between explicit and incidental learning in second language research" (Yule, 2006, p .163). In vocabulary learning these two different types cause different outcomes. The term incidental is used to meaning learning something without the intention to learn it. For instance, learning vocabulary while learning to read, it can be compared with deliberate learning or explicit learning. Research on comparing these two types of vocabulary learning shows that, "deliberate" or "direct" vocabulary learning is extremely effective.

Pictures & Vocabulary Learning

According to Harmer, (1991) in presenting the meaning of new words to the students, teachers can use pictures; instructor can even draw the picture of new words on the board or s/he can take pictures to the class. Due to the mentioned points, the teacher can present new vocabulary items by means of using pictures. Since using pictures is better and easier. Harmer (1991) further adds that there are numerous ways to show the meaning of an English word with pictures; first, objects have been already in the classroom. Second, objects can simply be taken to the class such as books, scissors, tools, buttons of many colors and sizes, etc. Third, picture can be drawn by the teacher or the students. Fourth, Pictures can also be gained from magazines and newspapers along with commercial sources. And the last point, would be performing the demonstrations to display the actions. Besides, a noun, verb, or adjective can be explained, for instance: they can write noun like: eraser, pen, pencil, and book; and show or draw the pictures that relate to the word to explain it. (Harmer, 1991). Language teachers always use different types of teaching aids to explain the meaning of new words. Picture is one of the teaching aids that teachers depend on in their teaching. English teachers think that the application of using pictures will make the processes of students learning which are enjoyable and memorable. The teachers could improve their students' vocabulary of abstract words, as associating the word with a concrete object makes these words easier to remember. Presenting and checking of meaning has been amongst the most suitable uses of pictures. For instance, one of the easiest ways of explaining the meaning of the word airplane, would be showing its picture (Harmer,2001). It is a safe claim that not all new words can be taught using pictures but most concrete vocabulary can.

METHOD

Design of the study

The design of the current research is quasi-experimental, that is without randomization. In other words, this research involves the manipulation of an independent variable without the random assignment of participants to conditions or orders of conditions- Among the important types are nonequivalent groups designs, pretest-posttest, and

interrupted time-series designs. The independent variable of the study is drawing relevant pictures and the dependent variable is vocabulary learning.

Participants and context of the study

The participants of the study were 60 female Iranian learners of English with age range of 6-9. They have been learning English as a foreign language at Shahid Mahdavi Elementary School in Tehran Iran. All of the participants speak Persian as their mother tongue. None of them had any background of residence in an English-speaking country. The participants were approximately at the same level of language proficiency (elementary) based on the language proficiency test which had been conducted before instruction.

Instruments

With the intention of collecting quantifiable data the researcher made use of the following materials: 1) a language proficiency test before starting the program, 2) a pre-test of which was conducted on subjects' vocabulary performance and 3) a vocabulary post-test for measuring the effectiveness of the treatment.

Procedure

After getting the necessary permissions a language proficiency test has been conducted with the intention of assuring the language proficiency of the participants. Vocabulary items which were the main focus of this study entailed all the new vocabulary items presented in lessons 1 to 4 of *Hip Hip Hooray 3* published by Pearson Education (2004). A pretest was run to achieve information about the vocabulary knowledge of the participants. Then the researcher started the program. In the experimental group the language learners were asked to draw a picture for new words. It was the treatment of the study; they were all free in the kind of picture they preferred to draw in order to learn the new words. Sometimes they drew a scenic stuff to show an abstract concept like happiness. While in the control group the participants were asked to memorize the same words; there was no specific instruction- traditional instruction- there. Afterwards a posttest was applied to measure the effectiveness of the treatment. The scores were collected, analyzed, and then the research questions received answers. The results analyzed by means of SPSS; paired t-test for analyzing the scores within groups and independent t-test for analyzing the scores between groups.

Research Questions and Hypotheses

RQ: Does drawing picture improve Iranian EFL learners' vocabulary learning?

Null hypothesis:

Drawing picture does not improve Iranian EFL learners' vocabulary learning.

Alternative hypothesis:

Drawing picture improves Iranian EFL learners' vocabulary learning.

RESULTS

For this reason, statistical population has been set, and treatment applied on the experimental group. Then scores have been calculated, and the results have been analyzed, they are as follows:

Table 1. Paired Samples Statistics-Experimental Group

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	Posttest	16.7333	30	.73968	.13505
	Pretest	12.1667	30	1.17688	.21487

Indicated in Table 1, the experimental group of the study had a mean score of 12.16 ($SD=1.17$) in the vocabulary pretest. The group, though, scored higher ($M=16.73$, $SD=0.73$) in the vocabulary posttest. It is a safe claim that we witnessed a statistically significant increase in the Vocabulary scores from Pretest to Posttest after the treatment sessions.

Paired Differences						t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
				Lower	Upper			
Posttest - Pretest	4.56667	1.00630	.18372	4.19091	4.94243	24.856	29	.000

Table 2 shows that the mean increase in vocabulary scores was 4.56 with a 95% confidence interval ranging from 4.19 to 4.94. It is also designated that the mean increase in the vocabulary posttest was statistically significant ($t= (29) = 24.85$, $P= .000$). Hence, the Null Hypothesis has been rejected and the Alternative hypothesis of the study has been supported.

Table 3. Paired Samples Statistics-Control Group

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 2	Posttest	12.8333	30	.91287	.16667
	Pretest	12.0333	30	1.06620	.19466

Table 3 shows the descriptive statistics for the control group. By a brief look, it can be noticed that there was not a statistically significant increase in the vocabulary scores from Pretest ($M= 12.03$, $SD= 1.06$) to Posttest ($M= 12.83$, $SD=0.91$).

Paired Differences						t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
				Lower	Upper			
Posttest - Pretest	.80000	.40684	.07428	.64808	.95192	10.770	29	.000

Along with Table 4, the mean increase in vocabulary scores was 0.80 with a 95% confidence interval ranging from 0.64 to 0.95. The mean increase in the vocabulary

posttest is statistically significant ($t = (29) = 10.77, P = .000$). Compared to the experimental group, the control group did much poorly in the vocabulary posttest though.

Table 5. Descriptive Statistics-Pretest

	Groups	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pretest	Experimental	30	12.1667	1.17688	.21487
	Control	30	12.0333	1.06620	.19466

Table 5 depicts the descriptive statistics for the vocabulary pretest. The experimental and control groups of the study had a mean score of 12.16 ($SD=1.17$) and 12.03 ($SD=1.06$) respectively. Specifically, the two groups have not performed differently in the pretest and they used to be homogeneous in terms of their vocabulary performance.

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
Equal variances assumed	.057	.812	.460	58	.647	.13333	.28993	-.44703	.71370
Equal variances not assumed			.460	5.744	.647	.13333	.28993	-.44715	.71382

An independent-samples t-test was conducted to compare the statistical scores of experimental and control groups in the vocabulary pretest. The mean difference in statistics scores was 0.13 with a 95% confidence interval ranging from -.44 to .71. The results revealed no significant difference between the mean scores of experimental and control groups in the vocabulary pretest $t(58) = .460, p = .647$. Therefore, the two groups performed homogeneously in the Vocabulary pretest.

Table 7. Descriptive Statistics-Posttest

	Groups	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Posttest	Experimental	30	16.7333	.73968	.13505
	Control	30	12.8333	.91287	.16667

The descriptive statistics shown in the Table7; the experimental group performed much better than the control group in the vocabulary posttest. The mean score for the former was 16.73 ($SD=0.73$) whereas for the latter the mean score is 12.83 ($SD= 0.91$).

Table 8. Independent Samples Test-Posttest

	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
Equal variances assumed	2.845	.097	18.181	58	.000	3.90000	.21451	3.47061	4.32939
Equal variances not assumed			18.181	55.610	.000	3.90000	.21451	3.47021	4.32979

Another independent-samples *t*-test has been conducted to compare the statistics scores of the two groups in the vocabulary posttest. The mean difference in statistics scores is 3.90 with a 95% confidence interval ranging from 3.47 to 4.32. The results revealed significant difference between the mean scores of experimental and control groups in the Vocabulary posttest $t(58) = 18.181, p = .000$. Consequently, the Null hypothesis is rejected and the Alternative hypothesis is supported.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

According to the findings of the current study it is absolutely a true saying that a picture says a thousand words. The findings of the current study provided strong support for the findings of studies like that of Shoari & Davatgari Asl (2015), who also examined the effectiveness of the pictures on word acquisition. Since they found that drawing picture makes language learners to be deeply involved in the task of learning. more specifically through drawing pictures the information of single words processed at deeper levels not at shallow levels. They further add that when if someone shown a car without having chance to focus on, she would remember just some general features of that car, while if she had a chance to focus, then would remember more details about it. that is to say processing would occur at deeper levels and more information on a word is kept. For them (which also has found in the present study) another advantageous dimension of picture drawing of young learners is the issues of self-confidence. Namely when learners are asked to draw something to learn what are to learn, they believe that they are doing something important, hence feel safer and more confident, and as a result they will be more autonomous language learners. It is a safe claim that teachers and educators had better to use them an instructional tool in their classes.

Regarding the limitations of this study, it is noteworthy that the form of research which was exclusively pictures- drawing is a major limitation of the study. The level of learners all elementary is the second and crucial limitation. The gender of the participants (all female) is also a limitation. The final limitation was that because of time limit the main focus of vocabulary teaching was primary meaning and other aspects have not been worked on in detailed manner. Thus, further research studies are required to cover all of the mentioned drawbacks.

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