

Structure Reviewing versus Discussing Your Feelings with Someone Else Vocabulary Learning Strategies: Which Strategy Serves Better

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Abstract

The aim of this study was to compare the effect of Structure Reviewing as a direct vocabulary

learning strategy versus Discussing Your Feeling with Someone Else as an indirect vocabulary learning strategy on reading comprehension skill of Iranian students. To fulfill the purpose of the study, a vocabulary test was administrated to one hundred male and female EFL university students. Ultimately, fifty students were selected and assigned into two groups. The first group (A) was taught vocabulary through Structure Reviewing and the second group (B) received instruction on Discussing Your Feeling with Someone Else vocabulary learning strategy. The data analysis conducted through Independent samples t-test statistics revealed that there was a significant difference between the two groups in terms of their vocabulary learning. Results showed that Structure Reviewing strategy can lead to higher achievement of vocabulary storage in reading comprehension of Iranian EFL undergraduate students.

Keywords: Vocabulary Learning Strategy, Structure Reviewing, Discussing Your Feeling with Someone Else

1. Introduction

Throughout the previous decades, several studies conducted by different researchers have given special attention to the importance of vocabulary learning for second language learners (Richards, 1980, Allen, 1983; Laufer, 1986; Nation, 1990). However, nowadays, the importance of vocabulary acquisition and its effect in learning a second or foreign language has become more and more in the focal of attention. Many studies have revealed that the English language proficiency of second language learners in great amount correlates with their vocabulary learning (Gu & Johnson, 1996; Kojic-Sabo & Lightbown, 1999). Hence, learning a second language largely means learning its vocabulary (Gass, 1999) as vocabulary skills make a significant contribution to almost all aspects of second language proficiency.

Also numerous scholars and vocabulary researchers agree that vocabulary acquisition is a very important element of enhancing reading comprehension skill (McKeown, et al., 1983; Nagy & Anderson, 1984; Cunningham & Stanovich, 1998 Blachowicz & Ogle, 2001). Furthermore, by applying a systematic and principled approach to teaching and learning vocabulary, learners see vocabulary as a key factor in language learning and reading (Beck, McKeown, and Kucan, 2002; Bormuth, 1966; Davis, 1968). Recent findings also have indicated that vocabulary knowledge is vital to reading comprehension and proficiency, to which it is closely linked (Tozcu & Coady, 2004).

Vocabulary learning strategy is a subcategory of language learning strategies (LLS) (Oxford, 1990, p. 8), vocabulary learning strategy organizes knowledge about what learners do to find out the meaning of new words, retain them in their memory for a long time, recall them when needed in comprehension, and also apply them in language production (Catalan 2003, cited in Ruutemets, 2005). Teaching language learning strategies is beneficial to both English teachers and learners. LLS improve both the learning product and process because it motivates learners and enhances their awareness of how to learn successfully (Rasekh & Ranjbari, 2003). It helps teachers to become more aware of their learners' needs and modify their teaching styles according to their learners' strategies (Oxford, Crookall, et al, 1990), and to direct their teaching efforts (Kinoshita, 2003). Griffiths (2006) points out, that recently the importance of teaching vocabulary has been acknowledged.

Oxford (1996) has argued that a greater emphasis should be placed on identifying effective language learning strategies and on teaching students how to use them successfully. Many scholars have reported the differences between successful and less successful learners based on the language learning strategies they use (Naiman, Frohlich, Stern, & Todesco, 1996; Vandergrift, 1997; Chamot & El- Dinary, 1999). Good language learners seem to be skillful in monitoring and adapting different strategies. They demonstrate flexibility in using strategies to accomplish different language learning tasks. On the other hand, poor learners cling to ineffective strategies that hinder successful language learning. They focus too much on details, whereas effective learners focus on the task as a whole (Chamot & El-Dinary, 1999).

The increasing body of research on Vocabulary Learning Strategy, particularly in the last two decades as Atay and Ozbulgan (2007) also have maintain, wishes to shed more light on

learners' strategy repertoire and facilitate second and foreign language vocabulary learning and recall. All in all, research shows that many learners employ learning strategies in vocabulary learning more frequently than in any other language learning activities (O'Malley, Chamot, Stewner-Manzanares, Küpper, & Russp, 1985). In addition vocabulary learning strategy is a very effective in language proficiency development because it constitutes the basis for learners ability in other skills, such as speaking, reading, listening and writing.

Jones (1998) believes that Oxford (1990) has developed a system of language learning strategies which is more comprehensive and detailed than earlier classification models. Oxford has divided strategies into two major classes: direct and indirect. Direct strategies, which "involve direct learning and use of the subject matter; and Indirect strategies, which "contribute indirectly but powerfully to learning" (Oxford, 1990, p. 11-12). Indirect vocabulary learning is defined as a technique of vocabulary learning which occurs without the specific intent to focus on vocabulary.

As for strategies of focus on form studies regarding the dichotomy of direct and indirect focus on form, this question may come to mind, which is better and produces more beneficial effects. Researchers and teachers cannot seem to agree in using direct and indirect language teaching and learning strategy. With direct teaching methods, the teacher explicitly introduces the vocabulary and provides the definitions. With indirect teaching methods, on the other hand, a teacher provides various activities that lead students.

To date, there are very few studies which have focused on the effect of direct and indirect vocabulary learning strategies in a foreign language in reading comprehension ability in general and Structure Reviewing as direct vocabulary learning strategy versus Discussing Your Feeling with Someone Else as an indirect vocabulary learning strategy on reading comprehension skill in particular, in Iran. So, with the gap existing in the literature, the present study is aimed at identifying the effect of these two kinds of vocabulary learning strategy attempting to find out which one serves better in enhancing vocabulary storage in reading comprehension skill among Iranian EFL learners.

2. Methodology

2.1 Participants

The researcher selected 100 university students studying general English course that students of non English major should pass, in Ahvaz Islamic Azad University (mostly in the second semester) based on non-random judgment sampling . The age of the participants generally ranged from 20 to 25. They participated voluntarily in a homogeneity test adapted from Objective Placement Test (Lesley, et al 2005) as a homogeneity test and finally, fifty students whose scores were one standard deviation above and one standard deviation below the mean ($M= 30$) were selected. Then they were randomly divided into two groups; group A (15 female and 10 male) received direct vocabulary learning strategy (Structure Reviewing), while group B (7 female and 18 male) were taught through indirect (Discussing Your Feeling with Someone Else) vocabulary learning strategy.

2.2 Instruments

Initially, the subjects in the two groups took the Objective Placement Test of Interchange (Lesley, Hanson & Zukowski- Faust, 2005), which was used as a standardized measurement to check the homogeneity level of the subjects in terms of language proficiency. The test contained 40 multiple-choice of vocabulary items. In order to verify the reliability of the test, the researchers selected 40 students from different departments in Ahvaz Islamic Azad University to participate in test. Calculating the reliability coefficient of the test through KR-21 formula, the researchers found the reliability of the homogeneity test at ($r=.74$).

A second test including also 40 items was administered to both groups at the end of treatment period after ten sessions. This test indicated 40 multiple-choice items of vocabulary achievement test which was developed by the researcher based on the materials taught in the classrooms. The vocabulary items in the test were selected mainly from the new lexical items of reading comprehension texts. The reliability of the test was $r=.86$ based on KR-21 formula.

Another instrument was the reading tasks and activities as the course materials which the researchers were afforded to both the group A and group B. These reading tasks and activities were extracted from the *Select Readings* (pre-intermediate level) written by Lee and Gunderson (2002).

2.3 Procedure

In this study, 100 Iranian university students from different majors but non English major studying English course in Ahvaz Islamic Azad University were selected. To make sure of the homogeneity of the learners, the researcher used an Objective Placement Test as language proficiency test (Lesley, Hanson & Zukowski- Faust, 2005). Having obtained the scores and the average mean ($M = 30$) of the scores calculated, fifty learners whose scores were around the mean were selected and divided into two groups. Then, the twenty five homogeneous pre-intermediate students in group A were selected to utilize *Structure Reviewing* strategy for developing their vocabulary storage in reading comprehension and the other twenty five students in group B were assigned to utilize *Discussing Your Feelings with Someone Else* vocabulary learning strategy. In this study, the treatment period lasted for ten sessions. On the first session, the students in Group A received introduction on *structure Reviewing* and for students in group B *Discussing Your Feelings with Someone Else* vocabulary learning strategy was explained in the first session. The instruction was conducted by the corresponding researcher (teacher) for both classes. The next sections introduce the treatment period of the two strategies briefly.

2.4 Structured Reviewing Vocabulary Learning Strategy

Following Oxford (1990), Structured reviewing was utilized as a useful technique for remembering new materials in the target language, entailing reviewing at different intervals. For instance, in learning a set of vocabulary items in English, 15 minutes were followed before practicing them again, they were participated an hour later, three hours later, the next day, two days later, four days later, the following week, and so on until the vocabulary items became more or less automatic. The learners were recommended to put the vocabulary into a context or to recombine words to make new sentences.

2.5 Discussing Your Feelings with Someone Else Vocabulary Learning Strategy

According to Oxford (1990), language learning is difficult, and learners most of the times need to discuss this process with other people. So, learners like to speak and negotiate their daily events with other people. Discussing new items of vocabulary in an authentic context used by students with each other is also essential and necessary for them for the sake of development of their vocabulary knowledge (Carlo, August, & Snow, 2005). In this study, students used diaries to understand and keep track of their thoughts, attitudes, and vocabulary learning strategies, and if they felt at ease enough, they shared their diary entries during group discussion in several groups in class once or twice a week. Discussions of feelings could also take place outside class and continue with a friend, a family members, and so on (Oxford, 1990).

3. Results

After the treatment, to find out the effectiveness of Structure Reviewing and Discussing Your Feelings with Someone Else vocabulary learning strategies on reading comprehension of the two groups and compare their probable improvement, both groups took part in the vocabulary and reading comprehension test as post tests after completing the course.

In this way, the study compared the role of the Structure Reviewing versus Discussing Your Feeling with Someone Else vocabulary learning strategy through using independent-samples t-test, in order to find out whether these strategies influence vocabulary knowledge of Iranian EFL university students at the pre-intermediate level of English reading proficiency or not.

Therefore, an independent sample t-test analysis was run on the mean score of the two groups. The results of t-test analysis for the effect of these two strategies in reading comprehension as an independent variable indicated statistically significant differences that are shown in Table 1. The data obtained through post-test (Table 1) were analyzed (using SPSS 11.5 software) in different steps.

Table 1. Result of the t-test (of both groups)

Group	N	Mean	SD	t	df	p
A	25	34.47	1.85	5.45	48	.00
B	25	29.63	2.87			

The results of the post-test in the two groups compared through t-test showed that the mean scores of group A ($M = 34.47$, $SD = 1.85$) was significantly different from group B ($M = 29.63$, $SD = 2.87$). Also the minimum and maximum scores in group A are 28 and 38 while in group B the minimum and maximum scores are 22 and 34. In other words; group A outperformed group B on the post-test. Also, critical t ($t = 2.000$) was less than observed t ($t = 5.45$) based on $df = 48$. Therefore, there was a significant difference between direct and indirect group in developing vocabulary learning at pre-intermediate level. In other words, Structure Reviewing strategy was more effective than Discussing Your Feeling with Someone Else in vocabulary improvement of Iranian EFL learners at intermediate level.

4. Conclusion and Implication

The major concern of the present study was to explore the effectiveness of two vocabulary learning strategies; namely, Structure Reviewing and Discussing Your Feelings with Someone Else on reading comprehension of the Iranian EFL students. The results of the *t*-tests demonstrated statistically significant difference between the group (A) and group (B) in reading comprehension achievement post-test of the two groups at the end of instruction. It indicated that the Structure Reviewing is more effective in improving EFL vocabulary storage and reading comprehension achievement of university students with pre-intermediate proficiency.

Teachers should help students in selecting the most appropriate strategy for developing skills. Structure Reviewing strategy is suitable and effective in first stages of developing vocabulary of EFL learners as compared to Discussing Your Feeling with Someone Else strategy because of easy application as we experienced it in this study. The results indicated that generally there is a great difference between the learners who are instructed using Structure Reviewing strategy and Discussing Your Feeling with Someone Else vocabulary learning strategy. Concerning the implications related to curriculum developers and material producers, it can be stated that they should definitely work in cooperation with both teachers and students decide what learning strategies they need to identify. It should be the curriculum developers' responsibility to allocate enough time in the curriculum for teachers to conduct strategies research in their classes.

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