An experimental study on the vocabulary level and vocabulary consolidation strategies
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Abstract
The purpose of the research is to determine the effects of “Vocabulary Consolidation Strategy Training” on vocabulary learning and the use of Vocabulary Consolidation strategies. The population of this study was the 34 students (12 female, 22 male) from a university preparatory class in the Spring Term of the 2009-2010 Academic Year. The research presented in this study was based on a randomized pretest posttest control group design.

In this research, “Vocabulary Level Test” based on Paul Nation’s Vocabulary Levels Tests (Nation, 1990) and “Vocabulary Consolidation Strategy Inventory” adapted from Fan (2003); Schmitt (1997); Gu and Johnson (1996) were used. In the analysis of the data, arithmetic mean, standard deviation, percentage, and t-Test techniques were used, and KR 20 reliability test was administered for the Vocabulary Consolidation Strategy Scale. The significance level of the tests was .05.

As a result of the research, there were statistically significant differences between the experimental and control groups in favor of the experimental group at the vocabulary levels 1000B, and 2000, but there was not any statistically significant difference between the groups at vocabulary level 1000A.

Keywords: Strategy Learning, Vocabulary Consolidation Strategy, Vocabulary Levels.

1. Introduction

Vocabulary, being once a neglected domain of second language acquisition, has gained interest as a field of research for two decades. These research studies defined the incremental stages in vocabulary acquisition and also highlighted the new ways of learning vocabulary (Coady & Huckin, 1997). Together with the current trends in learner autonomy, vocabulary learning strategies outlined the seemingly demanding processes for language learners (Cohen, 1998; Wenden, 1991). However, the ultimate aim has always been to define the “best” strategy for vocabulary retention (Gu & Johnson, 1996). Catalan (2003) compared the vocabulary learning strategies to “the mechanisms involving processing and strategies” through which the learners gradually attained the level of using a word skillfully. The levels of this gradual attainment were coined in various ways. Gu and Johnson (1996) divided vocabulary learning strategies into two main categories as metacognitive and cognitive, both of which were subcategorized as guessing, using a dictionary, note-taking, rehearsal, encoding and activating. By using a different taxonomy, Schmitt (1997) considered the vocabulary strategies by dividing into determination, social, memory, cognitive and metacognitive. While doing that, he made the distinction between discovery and consolidation on the process of vocabulary learning. Discovery strategies refer to the gradual increase in the familiarity of an unknown word after the first encounter. Whereas, consolidation strategies explain the retention of the words previously encountered. Partially resembling to the previous distinctions in vocabulary learning strategies, Nation (2001) claims that there exist, three stages in the path of vocabulary learning through strategies. These stages are planning, sources and processes. Planning covers the initial stages in vocabulary learning as the determination process of what to focus; sources refer to the exploitation of the available sources to reach a familiarity level of any word; processes...
explain the retention of the gained knowledge as the final destination in vocabulary teaching (Nation, 2001). Considering all these working definitions, it is difficult to state precisely a clear cut among the strategies used in vocabulary learning (Fan, 2003). Despite the number of books and research studies, the field of language learning lacks studies specifically based on vocabulary learning strategies (Schmitt, 1997).

Rasekh and Ranjbery (2003) investigated the effects of explicit metacognitive strategy training on the vocabulary learning through a ten-week treatment. Their study revealed the significant positive effect of explicit metacognitive strategy instruction on the vocabulary learning. Schmitt (1997) examined the relationship between strategy use and its perceived usefulness. Similarly, Fan (2003) investigated the frequency in the use of strategies and perceived usefulness of vocabulary learning strategies through which she identified not only the strategies used most often and perceived as most useful but also the strategies used least often and perceived as the least useful. Her study revealed the strategies relevant to learning high and low frequency words, and also highlighted the discrepancy existing between the frequency of use and perceived usefulness of vocabulary learning strategies. Gu and Johnson (1996) investigated the vocabulary learning strategies used by advanced learners and found out that use of some strategies were tightly linked to both vocabulary size and general proficiency and that some strategies served as the predictors of success. In a study comparing the gender in terms of vocabulary learning strategy use, Gu (2003a) found that females were more willing to use learning strategies than males. In a similar study, Catalán (2003) found out that the females used more strategies than the males did. Though there are a couple of categorizations on the strategies on vocabulary, the scope of this study was confined with only consolidation strategies, as categorized in Schmitt’s taxonomy (1997) on overall vocabulary learning strategies.

With its narrow research array on vocabulary, the literature still lacks and in need of studies which will illuminate the impact of vocabulary strategy use.

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of the research is to determine the effects of “Vocabulary Consolidation Strategy Training” on vocabulary learning and the use of Vocabulary Consolidation strategies.

2. Method

The population of this study was the 34 students (12 female, 22 male) from a university preparatory class in the Spring Term of the 2009-2010 Academic Year.

**The Model of the Research**

The research presented in this study was based on a randomized pretest posttest control group design.

**Data Collecting Instruments**

The data of the research were gathered by a Vocabulary Level Test” based on Paul Nation’s Vocabulary Levels Tests 1000A, 1000B and 2000 (Nation, 1990) and “Vocabulary Consolidation Strategy Inventory” which was adapted by the researchers from Fan (2003); Schmitt (1997); Gu and Johnson (1996). The language validity of the inventory was carried out by cross-language translation. Initially the inventory consisted of 60 items. Some 23 items which were found low in reliability were eliminated and the scale used in the research consisted of 37 items. In the analysis of the data, arithmetic mean, standard deviation, percentage and t-Test techniques were used, and KR 20 reliability of the Vocabulary Consolidation Strategy Scale was found .92. The significance level of the tests was .05.

The independent variable of the research was vocabulary consolidation strategy training. The dependent variables of the research, on the other hand, were the students’ achievements on Vocabulary Level Tests and their skills to use vocabulary consolidation strategies. Therefore, to measure the dependent variables of the research, the following scales were used: Vocabulary Level Test” based on Paul Nation’s Vocabulary Levels Tests 1000A, 1000B and 2000 (Nation, 1990) and “Vocabulary Consolidation Strategy Inventory.

**Analysis and Interpretation of Data**

In the analyses of the obtained data, SPSS for Windows 15.0 Statistics Program was used. While analyzing the data, the statistical techniques frequency, arithmetic means, percentage and standard deviation were made use of. When the two groups were compared and contrasted, the t-Test was administered. The significance level was taken as .05.
Statement of the problem
What are the effects, if any, of vocabulary consolidation strategies training on students’ vocabulary level?

Research Question:
Are there any significant differences between the vocabulary levels of the students who received vocabulary consolidation strategy training and those students with no consolidation strategy training, a. at 1000A Level, b. at 1000B Level and c. at 2000 Level?

3. Findings and Interpretation:

Table 1 Differences between the vocabulary levels of the groups and the Results of t-Test (at 1000A Level)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Groups</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>$X_{post}$</th>
<th>$X_{pre}$</th>
<th>$X_{difference}$</th>
<th>Sd</th>
<th>Se</th>
<th>t Value</th>
<th>p Value</th>
<th>Significance Level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Experimental</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>-.41</td>
<td>4.92</td>
<td>1.19</td>
<td>1.61</td>
<td>.12</td>
<td></td>
<td>p&gt; .05</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>-.3</td>
<td>4.41</td>
<td>1.07</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Experimental group students’ progress level was $X_{difference}=-.41$; and the control group students’ was $X_{difference}=-.3$. The difference between the groups was -2.59 (at t=1.61, p>0.05 level), which was not statistically significant.

Table 2 Differences between the vocabulary levels of the groups and the Results of t-Test (at 1000B Level)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Groups</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>$X_{post}$</th>
<th>$X_{pre}$</th>
<th>$X_{difference}$</th>
<th>Sd</th>
<th>Se</th>
<th>t Value</th>
<th>p Value</th>
<th>Significance Level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Experimental</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>.94</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2.08</td>
<td>.045</td>
<td>.045</td>
<td></td>
<td>*P&lt; .05</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>-2.11</td>
<td>3.44</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

The progress level which was obtained by comparison of the pre and post test results of the experimental group was $X_{difference}= .94$, and that of the control group students was $X_{difference}= -2.11$. The 3.05 point difference obtained by the experimental group students was found statistically significant in favor of the experimental group at (t= 2.08, p<.05) level.

Table 3 Differences between the vocabulary levels of the groups and the Results of t-Test (at 2000 Level)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Groups</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>$X_{post}$</th>
<th>$X_{pre}$</th>
<th>$X_{difference}$</th>
<th>Sd</th>
<th>Se</th>
<th>t Value</th>
<th>p Value</th>
<th>Significance Level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Experimental</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>1.47</td>
<td>3.16</td>
<td>.77</td>
<td>2.30</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td></td>
<td>*P&lt; .05</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>-1.47</td>
<td>4.24</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
The progress level which was obtained by comparison of the pre and post test results of the experimental group was \( \bar{X} \) difference=1.47, and that of the control group students was \( \bar{X} \) difference= 1.47. The 2.94 point difference obtained by the experimental group students was found statistically significant in favor of the experimental group at (t= 2.30, p<.05) level.

4. Conclusions-Discussions and Suggestions:

As a result of the study regarding the research question 1a, no statistically significant difference was observed between the experimental and control groups.

For the research question 1b and 1c, there were statistically significant differences between the groups in favor of the experimental group.

To conclude, as the research results indicated, the students who received vocabulary consolidation strategies training achieved higher scores at the Vocabulary Level Tests 1000B and 2000 Levels. The results of the present study support the retention of vocabulary through the explicit vocabulary strategy training, which also emphasizes the importance of being autonomous in language learning (Cohen, 1998; Wenden, 1991).

Along with the research findings, the following suggestions can be offered to educators, education planners and managers, language teachers and coursebook writers and those who will do research in this field:

1. Language teachers may give explicit strategy training to support the autonomy of learners, especially on vocabulary consolidation strategy as it helps learners retain the vocabulary level and make use of that linguistic domain in other basic grammar domains (Cohen, 1998; Wenden, 1991).

2. Both Curriculum developers and course books writers may also consider including the importance of explicit vocabulary learning strategy training while developing the curriculum and writing coursebooks.

3. Managers of the language programs may allocate extra course hours focusing on specifically strategy training in the language programs.

References


