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THE IMPACT OF TRANSLATION AND DIFFERENT EXPOSURES STYLES ON LEARNING UNKNOWN WORDS IN EFL CONTEXT

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ABSTRACT

The impact of two styles on learning unknown words in EFL context was variable, two groups of students from elementary level were the subjects of our study, translation of words to mother tongue of students and different exposures were two styles which were studied in this research, through this study the researcher found that translation method had better result with high score while different exposures method resulted in low score. Per researcher's study translation method became the better one since students of this method require less proficiency level to acquire unknown words compared with exposure method, as mentioned students of both groups were from elementary level with little proficiency level, in exposure method first words were taught by the instructor by telling stories about those words and the second type of instruction was by asking students to sort words in proper groups.

*Keywords***:** *Treatment, Style / Method, Proficiency Level, Exposures, Translation*

INTRODUCTION

How Important is Vocabulary

The advent of the communicative approach in the 1970s set the stage for a major re-think of the role of vocabulary. The communicative value of a core vocabulary has always been recognized, particularly by tourists. A phrase book or dictionary provides more communicative mileage than a grammar- in the short term at least. Recognition of the meaning –making potential of words meant that vocabulary became a learning objective in its own right. In 1984, for example, in the introduction to their Cambridge English Course, Swan and Walter wrote that vocabulary acquisition is the largest and most important task facing the language learner. Course books began to include activities that specifically targeted vocabulary (Thornbury, 2002).

 For most people, the importance of vocabulary seems very clear. As it has often been remarked, we can communicate by using words that are not placed in the proper order, pronounced perfectly, or marked with the proper grammatical morphemes, but communication often breaks down if we do not use correct words. Although circumlocution and gestures can sometimes compensate, the importance of vocabulary can hardly be overestimated.

 The challenge of acquiring a large enough vocabulary for successful communication in a variety of setting has been the focus of much recent research. Every language has an astonishingly large number of words. English, which has built its vocabulary from a great variety of source languages, is variously estimated to have anywhere from 100,000 to one million words, depending in part on how words are counted. For example, some would treat 'teach, teacher, teaching, and taught' as separate words while others would count all of them as part of a single root word from which all the others are derived.

 An educated adult speaker of English is believed to know at least 20,000 words. Fortunately, most everyday conversation requires a far smaller number, something more like 2,000 words. Similarly, although Chinese and Japanese have tens of thousands of characters, most are rare, and nontechnical material can usually be read with a knowledge of about 2,000 characters. Even so, acquiring a basic vocabulary is a significant accomplishment for a second language learner (Lightbown and Spada, 2007).

 I am interested in the words people use and why they use them. Some scholars snort at such endeavors, since word choice seems the least consequential of the complex decisions people make when communicating with one another. but trying to understand why some words are preferred over others

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(economical VS. cheap), why certain words are never used (cunctator), why other words are considered non pareil, politics is indeed a world of words, but it's also a world of poorly understood words, poorly remembered words, and poorly theorized words (Hart, 2001).

According to Hart in 2001, words that is, are not important in and of themselves, they are important because they point –to speaker's feelings and to the situation in which they find themselves. Words are shaped by cultural experiences, and they point back to those experiences.

Learning Unknown Words through Translation

When I first became an EFL teacher eight years ago I used to translate new English vocabulary for my students into their native language (in this case, Thai), If they had difficulty understanding what the word meant, In my natively, I thought this was helping them learn English faster but, after only a few months teaching, I realized it actually was not.

EFL and ESL teachers are often tempted to translate an English word into their student's native language in misguided attempt to help them learn. There are however many good reasons why experienced EFL /ESL teachers dissuade them from doing so, as translating can be a determine to an EFL student learning English correctly (James, 2010).

Disadvantages of Translating

James (2010) reported that the biggest problem with translating from English to your EFL student's native language though is it causes them to, forever more, think of the word in their language first and then English This slows down their ability to think and thus speak in English, Particularly If they have learned hundreds of words this way.

As an EFL or ESL teacher, although you think translating for your students is helpful, it's really not. If you truly do want students who learn fast, speak quickly and remember vocabulary easily, use hand gestures, facial expressions, photographs, pictures and explanations for every new word you teach, before you think about translating into their own language I now only translate as an absolutely last resort, if any student is never going to get it. Like I said, I am not a dictionary and neither are you.

Translating Wastes Too Much Time

When I would translate from English to Thai, I would often find I would end up wasting 10 minutes or more just explaining one word, as the class would go off on long tangents discussing whether the word I had given them in Thai was correct or not.

At the end of class I 'd realize my hour lesson plan went out the window as 25 minutes of it was spent trying to decide upon the right Thai words to use for new English vocabulary. But, news flash. My students already speak Thai. They needed to learn the English word, not improve their knowledge of Thai (James, 2010).

Learning Unknown Words through Repeated Exposure

Repeated exposure to new words, either within the text of a single book or through repeated readings of the same book, facilitates children's learning of those words (Elley, 1989; Penno *et al.,* 2002; Robbins and Ehri, 1994; Senechal, 1997). As has been discussed, vocabulary development is viewed as a gradual process whereby early representations are increasingly refined with time and exposure.

Elley studied the acquisition of new vocabulary words by 8-year-old children in New Zealand over the course of three sessions for each of two story books.

Children were pre-and post-tested using a multiple choice format on 36 unfamiliar words selected from the story books, as well as 5 control words that did not occur in the books. Ellery's work showed that children made a gain of approximately three new words from pre- to post test for the target vocabulary words as compared to no gains for the control words.

Also the number of times a particular word occurred in a story book text was a powerful predictor in explaining which words children were most likely to acquire. Cited from Justic *et al.,* (2005).

The researcher of current study would like to figure out which of mentioned styles is more effective for Iranian students therefore following hypotheses are formulated:
1. Iranian EFL learners acquire unknown words easily through translation.
2. Iranian EFL learners acquire unknown words easily by repetition of new words by different exposures.

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MATERIALS AND METHODS

Methodology

Subjects

Two pre-primary classes in one single school were selected; the age range of students was between 5 to 6. In both classes we had both males and females. Students were all from a high social class, the school was also located in the northern part of Tehran, through researcher's investigation students' families were mostly educated however, and there was limitation to have a background questionnaire.

Subjects were categorized as follows:

Group A: 12 students (5 males and 7 females).

Group B: 6 students (1 male and 5 females).

It is needful to put forward the point that students' English level was elementary.

Procedure

In this test teaching unknown words through different exposures was given to group A. Teaching unknown words through translation the words to their mother tongue was given to group B. Ten similar words were taught in both classes.

Five selected words were objects which could be found in the Kitchen and five words were objects which could be found in the living room or bedroom. Selected words were as follows:

Washing machine, microwave oven, sinks cooker, dish washer, cupboard, sofa, carpet, curtain and TV.

In both groups we had pretest, treatment and posttest. In group A in which we had instruction through different exposure, words were instructed by two different ways.

1) Words were taught by telling stories.

2) Words were taught by sorting them into two categories.

In Group B words were taught by translation into their mother tongue. Students of both groups were not homogenous therefore the researcher was obliged to act as following:

Group A: 11 out of 12 subjects were invited for further study in this project.

Group B: 5 out of 6 subjects were invited for further investigation in this project.

In order to achieve the goal of this study, the present researcher tried to do the procedure of research in both classes in the same condition however, there was some limitation through the research, this research was done within two or three days for each group.

In Group A (Teaching Through Different Exposures)

For this group our research was done within three successive days with following details: Pretest, two day instruction, posttest were all done in the mornings.

During all three days 12 students were present however, as already mentioned 11 students were regarded as subjects of this study.

On the first day, ten selected words were asked from students as pretest. Also on the same day after pretest, the instructor taught the words by telling stories.

The instructor tried to explain each word by reminding students of relevant objects in their home or when /how their mothers or fathers use some of them.

Also students were asked whether they used / touched any of them or not. on this day except ten mentioned words, the words "kitchen and living room "were pre-taught which were required for our next day treatment.

On the second day of treatment, the same words were taught through sorting, students were requested to categorize these ten words into two groups: Words / objects available in the kitchen, Words /objects available in the living room, on the third day, posttest was done.

In Group B (Teaching Through Translation to Mother Tongue)

In this group our research was done within two successive days. Pretest, treatment and posttest were done in the mornings, during mentioned days 6 students were present however, as already mentioned number of students was regarded as 5. On the first day, the Persian translation of words were asked from students as pretest, on the same day, Persian translation of all words was taught to students. On the second day students were requested to translate the same words into their mother tongue.

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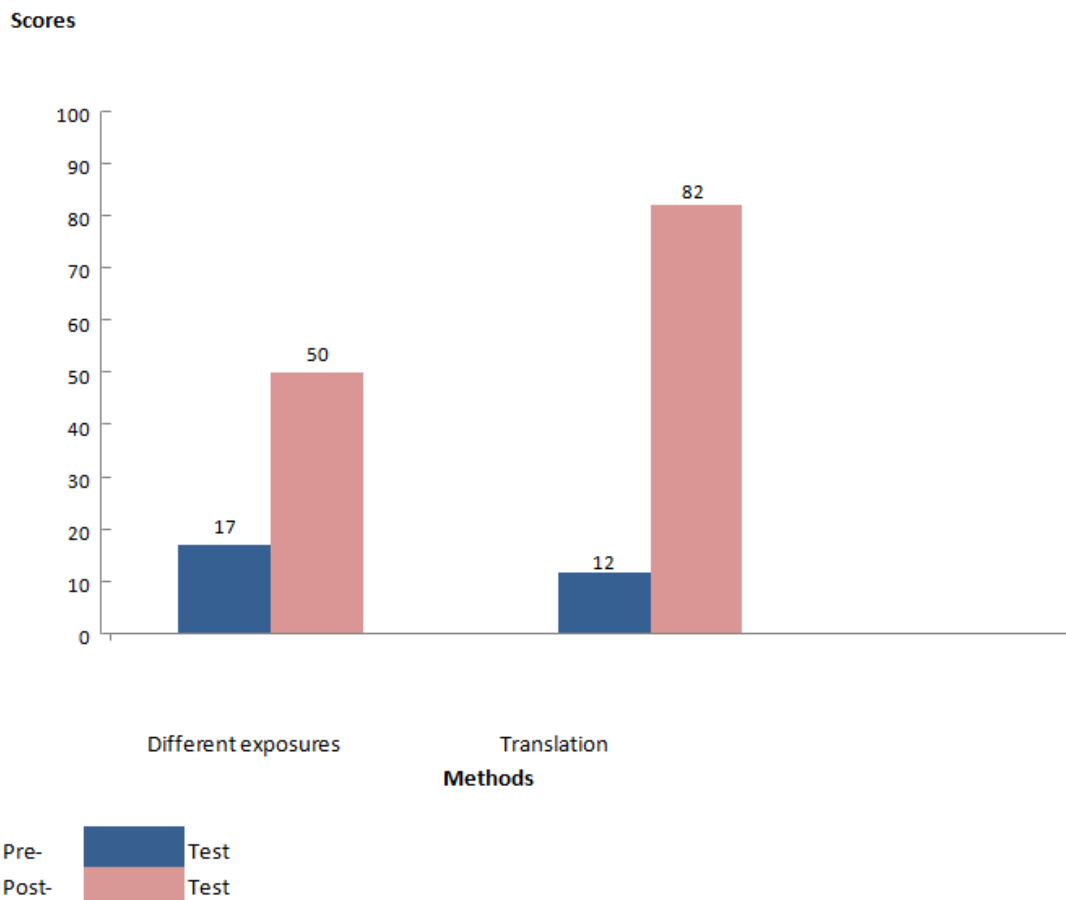
RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Scores

Figure 1: Scores (out of one hundred) for two different styles of learning unknown vocabularies

Table 1: Students mean scores (out of ten) in two different styles for acquiring unknown Vocabularies

Methods	Pre-test mean	Post-test mean	Total
Different exposures	1.72	5.09	6.81
Translation	1.2	8.2	9.4

Per mentioned information group B in which style of teaching was through translation of words into their mother tongue had the better score (9.4). Group A in which method of teaching was through different exposures the score was: 6.81. Relevant with two methods of teaching following information is required to be shared:

Level of required proficiency from the most to the least for reflecting the best result by students in mentioned two methods are as follows:

1) Different Exposures
2) Translation

It was expected that students of translation method get better score since translation requires less proficiency level compared with exposure group and as already mentioned students of both groups were in elementary level with little proficiency therefore, we arrived at our expectation in this part.

Regarding the first research hypothesis (Iranian EFL learners acquire unknown words easily through translation), per this research students who had this method in their class had a high score (9.4), it

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manifests that translation of words to the mother tongue of EFL students is still one of the best ways therefore the first hypothesis is accepted.

In relation with the second hypothesis (Iranian EFL learners acquire unknown words easily by repetition of new words by different exposures), according to this research students of this method did not have high score (6.81) which shows that students did not learn words easily and completely. This method might be more effective in higher levels that students have higher proficiency level therefore this hypothesis is rejected.

Conclusion and Implication

The current research indicated that language proficiency level affected the result of different styles of learning unknown words in EFL context; therefore the following conclusion and implication are taken into account.

Conclusion

In this research the impact of two styles on learning unknown words in EFL contexts was studied, the collected data in this study revealed that English language proficiency level of students had significant effect on the result of learning unknown vocabulary by different styles, in our research the result of translation method had high score of 9.4 while the score of learning unknown words by different exposures was 6.81, The reason of these results were investigated by the researcher as follows:

Generally, students of translation style require lower proficiency level than exposure method to acquire new words therefore students of this style had higher score (9.4), needful to mention that students of both groups were from elementary level with little proficiency level.

Translation slows down student's ability to think and thus speak in English. If you truly do want students who learn fast, speak quickly and remember vocabulary easily, use hand gestures, photos for every new word you teach before you think about translation into their own language (James, 2002). In our research translation style had better result for learning unknown words.

In our research multiple exposures to a word had a low score while Elley studied the acquisition of new vocabulary words by 8-year-old children in New Zealand over the course of three sessions for each of two story books. Children were pre and post tested using a multiple choice format on 36 unfamiliar words selected from the story books, as well as 5 control words that did not occur in the books. Ellery's work showed that children made a gain of approximately three new words from pre- to post test for the target vocabulary words as compared to no gains for the control words. Also the number of times a particular word occurred in a story book text was a powerful predictor in explaining which words children were most likely to acquire.

Implication

This research indicated that proficiency level of students is a key factor to the result of different styles of learning unknown words, It could be advised that not every style of learning unknown words is an appropriate one for any proficiency level of students therefore, students proficiency level should be considered as a significant criteria for choosing the style of acquiring unknown vocabulary.

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