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Teaching Vocabulary Through Spelling Strategy on Students' Proficiency in Dictated Writing Achievement of The Eleventh Grade Students at SMP Negeri 1 Siborongborong

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Abstract. This research work aims at evaluating the importance of the introduction of spelling as a vocabulary strategy for students in the teaching of English as a foreign language at senior high school level, and how this can be a beneficial tool as input for the acquisition of new vocabulary, then a helpful means to produce a correct writing. To attain such an aim, the researcher administered a pre-test and a post-test. The former was intended to determine the pre-instructional knowledge of the graphic form of words, whereas the latter was aimed at finding out whether the spelling strategy implemented during instruction was effective in enhancing the subjects' ability to write with less spelling mistakes. The test was interposed by two sequential lessons. The results of this innovative investigation have confirmed the hypothesis which states that if we train students to pay a careful attention to the form of words this would help them to spell them and write correctly. The learners under investigation proved to have learnt most of the vocabulary items of the proposed text.

Keywords: Vocabulary, Spelling Strategy, Writing, Quantitative Research.

INTRODUCTION

"No matter how well the student learns grammar, no matter how successfully the sounds second or foreign language are mastered, without words to express a wide range of meanings, communication in an second or foreign language just cannot happen in any meaningful way." (McCarthy, 1990:1) The primary function of language is communication. We learn foreign languages to be able to understand, speak and be understood when staying abroad or communicating with foreigners. English becomes the most widely spoken language in the world and is also used as an official international language. For this reason, English is of the bigger interest than other languages in some countries.

In the quotation, there is expressed above the necessity of vocabulary acquisition in the second language learning. When the learners know the grammar, when they know how to compose a sentence and words within it, what tense to use and other grammatical rules but they do not know the words with the meaning that they want to express, the knowledge of the grammar is worthless. But when learners want to express something and they know the words but use them in grammatically incorrect sentence, the meaning can be guessed. And this is the primary reason why people learn foreign languages – to communicate and to make oneself understood in the language.

From this point of view, the writer would say that the vocabulary is more important than grammar. In the sense of speaking English correctly and at the high level, the

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knowledge of grammar is of course indispensable. And teachers must pay a lot of attention to teaching it.

Vocabulary acquisition is considered as an integral and fundamental area of language teaching/learning. Whether the language is first, second or foreign, it would be impossible to learn a language without its lexis. Nevertheless, vocabulary instruction and learning has not been recognized as a priority in language teaching until the 1970's and early 1980's. Specialists had given high credit to grammar and phonology at the expense of vocabulary. Wilkins (1972) posits that: "without grammar very little can be conveyed; without vocabulary nothing can be converged". This is evidence that in learning a language, grammar is not sufficient and it is the right time to cast light upon lexis. Vocabulary has been the object of scientific studies, namely lexicology and lexicography and the concern of development in methods investigating how it can be best taught. We will cast light on explicit versus implicit learning; also, vocabulary strategies that were the central field of investigation for years. Among various strategies we will focus on spelling strategy.

Within the context of English as a Foreign Language, it has been observed that students have serious problems in writing. Spelling is one such area where students seem to struggle. Accordingly, should we teach students vocabulary by using spelling strategy? If we do so, this strategy would certainly help them improve their ability to write correctly.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Thornbury (1997) states that vocabulary or lexis in English is frequently used interchangeably. The definition of vocabulary relates to various views about the nature and use made of vocabulary in the Longman dictionary (1995); vocabulary is defined as all the words that someone knows, learns or uses. The Oxford Dictionary (2002) defines vocabulary as the body of words used in a particular language or in a particular sphere. Todd (1987) argues that there is an orthographic, morphological, lexical and semantic aspect of the word. The orthographic word has a space on both sides of it. A morphological word considers the form only. A lexical word considers all the forms a word can take and which are clearly related by meaning. A semantic word considers the distinction between items that may be morphologically identical but differ in meaning.

Spelling strategy is a chosen method to learn and remember spelling using one or all of the senses including the eyes, ears, hands and lips. Choice will often depend on the individual's

preferred learning style. Brown (2000: 119) defines style as a term that refers to consistent and rather enduring tendencies or preferences within an individual. Styles are those general characteristics of intellectual functioning (and personality type as well) that pertain to the individual and that differentiate him from someone else. For example, you might be more visually oriented, more tolerant of ambiguity or more reflective than someone else- these would be styles that characterize a general or dominant pattern in one's thinking or feelings. So, styles vary *across* an individual, whereas strategies vary *within* an individual.

In the past fifteen years, the field of second language acquisition has seen renewed interest in *vocabulary learning* and acquisition. Vocabulary learning and teaching focuses initially on current issues in teaching, i.e. deciding which items to teach and how to teach them, on implicit and explicit learning and vocabulary learning strategies.

In order to provide a digest of recent research on vocabulary acquisition and to pinpoint areas that need further exploration. To this end, we centers upon one particular area in depth, i, e, spelling as a vocabulary strategy.

One way to investigate overall task of vocabulary learning / acquisition is through the distinction between *knowing* a word and *using* a word. In other words, the aim of vocabulary learning should include both *recalling* words and the ability to *apply* them automatically in their writings.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study was conducted by pre-experimental design, one group pre-test and post-test design, Cohen (2007:284). This study describes the use of spelling strategy to master the word form. The aim of this study was to see whether training students in using the strategy improves their ability to maximize their vocabulary knowledge or not. The procedure of this experimental work goes through three main stages: the pre-test stage where the participants are tested through a dictation test to see their current level in writing correctly; the treatment stage which was devoted to the training of subject in using spelling strategy and supplied also with some rules and brief introduction of spelling; finally, the post-test stage where the participants were evaluated by the same test so as to see to what extent the strategy would/would not yield positive results in getting command of the writing form of English language. The results of this innovative treatment were compared to each other.

The data examined in the study were collected in a class experiment on mastering the word form using spelling strategy. The aim was to investigate the value of training students in the use of spelling strategy that would yield a nice paper that was not decorated by the teacher's

comments.

The data of this research was obtained from the result of two tests namely; pre-test (a test before giving the treatment), and post-test (a test after giving the treatment).

The results obtained from the pre-test and the post-test were compared and analyzed to determine whether students have approximately learned something from the spelling-out strategy and its helpful application in writing or not. The analysis of mistakes concerning: *nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs*.

In collecting the data, the writer used writing test. The tests were divided into two namely; pre-test and post-test. The tests administered were dictated by the writer, and the sample wrote down as what they listened.

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DATA ANALYSIS

The results obtained from the pre-test and the post-test were compared and analyzed to determine whether students have approximately learned something from the spelling-out strategy and its helpful application in writing or not.

Table 1. Nouns

	Pre-test		Post-test	
	False Answers	Percentage %	False Answers	Percentage %
1. Immigrants	29/45	46.44	0	0
2. Experience	13/45	28.88	0	0
3. Opportunity	41/45	91.11	5	11.11
4. Ship	20/45	44.44	4	8.88
5. Reasons	7/45	15.55	5	11.11
6. Citizenship	27/45	60	18	40
7. Journey	24/45	53.33	4	8.88
8. Residency	15/45	33.33	7	15.55
9. Receiving	25/45	55.55	8	17.77
10. Diseases	32/45	41.11	1	20
N = 45		100%	9	100%

Table 2. Regular Verbs

	Pre-test		Post-test	
	False Answers	Percentage %	False Answers	Percentage %
Travelled	12	42.22	11	24.44
Arrived	11	24.44	0	0
Allowed	35	77.77	19	42
Stayed	18	40	4	

Table 3. Irregular Verbs

	Pre-Test		Post Test	
	False Answer	Percentage %	False answers	Percentage %
Thought	18	40	7	15.55
wrote	31	68.88	9	20

Table 4. Adjectives**Post Test**

	False answer	Percentage %	False anwer	Percentage %
Weak	22	48.88	6	13.33
Crowded	20	44.44	4	8,88
Famous	2	4.44	0	0
Economic	1	2.2	0	0
Legal	11	24.44	5	11.11
Permanent	17	37.77	10	22,22

Table 5. Adverbs

	Pre-test		Post-test	
	False answer	Percentage %	False answer	Percentage %
There	5	11.11	4	8.88
Quickly	5	11.11	4	8.88
better	3	6.66	1	2.22

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

The pretest findings have revealed that the percentage of spellings mistakes made by the subjects was considerably higher in comparison with the percentage of mistakes committed in posttest. These mistakes could be traced back to various reasons: a lack of one- to-one correspondence between sounds and spelling such as in *opportunity* /,ɒpə'tju:nəti/, an inability to discriminate between similar sounding phonemes such as *ships*, *sheep*, *cheap* and *chip*, the compound structure of certain words (words which can be divided into parts: the root the affix and inflections such as *citizenships*), negative transfer from the already existing second language of the subjects (i.e. French), lack of attention to the graphic forms of words containing silent letters such as *wrote*, last but not least, an inability to differentiate between the phonemes of the spelt word such as *permanent*.

In sum, the present exploratory study has confirmed the paramount role of spelling strategy implemented during instruction in helping the subjects make fewer spelling mistakes. Additionally, this experiment has brought to lights the students' eagerness to such innovative strategy that notably inspired and motivated them.

The results of the test gave a clear view about the learners' degrees of achievement in mastering the graphic form of words suggested in the text. And also, they are in the direction of our research hypothesis which states that if students were trained during the course /lesson for better vocabulary writing using the spelling strategy, they would do minimum mistakes/errors in their writing.

The experiment has showed the need of the learners for strategy/strategies which can be useful to them. Based on that, it is suggested that the use of this genre of strategy in foreign language instruction/learning is a helpful tool, not only to develop the language, but also to boost the learners' capacities to create their own learning styles and teaching techniques.

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