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Developing English Vocabulary of EFL Learners in Elementary Institute in Iran by Improving Long Term Memory

*–Saheleh Kheirabadi**

Abstract

The study investigated links between long term memory skills and students' abilities to learn the vocabulary of English language taught in class. The purpose of this study is to realize the relation between the left and right hemispheres on learning vocabulary. In this paper we can look at the causes of long term memory and how students can improve it through many techniques such as, Microsoft PowerPoint, Imagination, Leitner box, Pictures and drawing. The aim of this study is to demonstrate that the relation between memory and language remain poorly specified for many years. The learners learn English words by their long term memory. The study's purpose is to examine how a teacher can encourage students to communicate orally in class.

The left hemisphere keeps information for a short time but the right hemisphere keeps data for a long time in memory. In this paper, the researcher wants to study the hypothesis learning vocabulary in the second language for a long time that is possible by utilizing the right hemisphere. The researcher acquired the data collection and also data analysis of the study. Forty learners of 8 to 11 years old attended in this experiment at Amin Institute in Iran to justify methods and techniques. The teacher divided learners into two groups. In group (A), the participants (10 males and 10 females) learned with a memory enhancing method. The last result shows that the learnersof group (A) have significant progress on vocabulary learning rather than the learners of group (B). The data analysis proves that use of audio visual tools improves learners' memory in learning vocabulary for life time.

Keywords: Long term memory, vocabulary, Leitner Box, PowerPoint, learning, imagination.

* *Research Scholar, Pune University, Pune, Maharashtra.*
Email: sahelehkheirabadi@yahoo.com

Introduction

The main focus of this study is about memory enhancement carried out by cognitive scientists, and presenting some insights that form this research of English language teaching (ELT) theory and practice. The basic premise underlying this research is improving long-term memory for learning English vocabulary. When students learn new vocabulary, they remember it for a short time but they may forget it over a long period of time. To remember what students have learned over the short term, they need to move information from short-term memory into long-term memory. That is why teaching foreign language vocabulary by using simple Memory Techniques is useful. The methods for teaching vocabulary are completely different from the methods for teaching other skills. Learning vocabulary needs more practice and takes a longer time. However, there are techniques to teach students how to train their minds to grasp new words and understand how to communicate in other languages.

Many researchers have focused on people who speak only one language. However, some researchers have are interested in studying people who have learned a second language. Many questions remain unanswered about the similarities and differences between first and second language learning, storage, and usage. Substantial evidence suggests the existence of a critical learning period for first languages. A critical period for language is defined as the time period during which a person must be exposed to the spoken language in order to best learn the language. In most cases, if a person is not exposed to a language during the critical period, he or she will never be able to speak the language as well as someone who has learned it normally. Although the person may be able to learn many words, his or her syntax will probably never reach a normal level. Children who suffer from brain damage are often able to regain their language abilities with practice. Adults who suffer from damage to language areas, however, are rarely able to achieve their previous language proficiency. This research further supports the concept that there might be a difference between learning language in childhood and in adulthood.

Significance of the Study

Memory consists of recalling information that you have learned or experienced. Many students struggle with remembering what they have read and recalling information for tests. In order to be successful in school, the learners need to remember the information which has been learned. Although there is not any 'magic' memory pill, it is possible to improve their memory using the following strategies. Long-term memory is the ongoing storage of unconscious and conscious information. We can break down long-term memories into two categories: declarative memory resides in our conscious mind and procedural memory is a largely unconscious or automatic response to our environment such as how to ride a bicycle or play the piano. Students can recall procedural memory without consciously thinking about it. In this study, we will look at the causes of long-term memory loss and how students can actively improve it through cognitive techniques. There are also a lot of techniques that humans use to

improve their long-term memory such as mnemonic devices. All these things can be classified as important issues in the study of human memory and ways of learning.

This research has the potential to influence the way vocabulary is taught by providing a strategy that encompasses the components of instruction designed to help students for a better understanding of word meanings. Teachers can choose items which are relevant to their lives and experiences and use a variety of presentations to appeal to different learning styles and provide interest. Students should be encouraged to make associations and decisions about the new items to promote cognitive processing and thus improve storage in memory. Memory is the storing of information over period of time. It is one of the most important concepts in learning; if things are not remembered, no learning can take place.

Rationale of Research

The aim of this study is to investigate the function of the brain in learning vocabulary of the English language. The subjects of the study comprised students in English courses in academic year 2015. The participants of the study were forty male and female learners at a Private Institute in Iran. They were randomly selected among the eighty students who studied English courses at Amin Institute. All participants were EFL learners who were aged between 8 to 11 years. They had three hours of English per week with the same instructor. Hence, all the students came from the same linguistic background and the teacher was the same for the two groups.

Instruments

There are some vocabulary learning strategies which can be used to improve students' vocabulary, like using authentic language, making creative activities, encouraging self-motivation, creating mental linkages, and doing memory strategies which are used to organize words like using flashcards, imagination, Microsoft PowerPoint, and Leitner's box (Schmidt and McCarthy, 1997). Long-term memory allows us to retain the material learnt over a long period of time. It has been noticed that in order to acquire long-term knowledge, you have to periodically come back and re-learn or repeat the material.

In the research on the psychology of learning English vocabulary by Leitner box, a series of experiments with the goal to improve learners' long-term memory were carried out. Leitner used a physical box to store learners' flashcards. The box contained several compartments. Flashcards, which were new, were put into the first compartment. This compartment contained the flashcards, which were repeated every day. Flashcards that were correctly answered were moved to the second compartment. The repetition interval in the second compartment is set to two days. Flashcards that are successfully answered in the second compartment are moved to the third one, etc.

PowerPoint presentations can be used in the classroom for initial teaching, for student projects, practice and drilling, games, reviews, and for tests as well. This format is attractive to learners, and it appeals to learners' diverse learning styles, such

as visual, auditory, kinaesthetic, and creative by employing multimedia methods, such as sounds, images, colour, action, design, and so on. Therefore, it is believed that PowerPoint presentations can improve the efficiency of English language in classroom instruction.

The imagination effect occurs when learners who imagine a procedure or concept perform better on a subsequent test than learners who study materials physically. Cognitive load theory predicts that information is more likely to be transferred from working memory to long-term memory under imagination conditions.

Pictures are more complex than the words that label the pictures, so more time and attention is needed to identify, or "name" a picture. We spend more time looking at pictures (or real-life objects) before we can name them, so we remember pictures better. We spend less time looking at words in sentences, so we do not remember the sentences exactly—though we remember the gist. Pictures are also more distinctive and more unique than the words that label them, which further make pictures more memorable. Adults gain experience with reading words, so reading becomes faster and faster.

Methodology

This research investigates whether Microsoft PowerPoint presentations improve student learning and attitudes compared with traditional classroom presentations. The effect of Microsoft PowerPoint on long-term memory might depend on other factors such as the topic under discussion and the students' preferred representation styles.

Direct Method

In group A, the participants were taught with a memory enhancing method. In this group, there were 20 participants (10 males and 10 females) who were taught the English language by Microsoft PowerPoint, imagination, and Leitner box. This class was conducted three times a week for an hour. We tested and witnessed that using Microsoft PowerPoint in an English course enhanced students' long-term memory and attitudes toward the class presentation and the instructor. This research investigates whether Microsoft PowerPoint presentations improve students learning and attitudes compared with traditional classroom presentations. The effect of Microsoft PowerPoint on long-term memory might depend on other factors such as the topic under discussion and the students' preferred representation styles. For example, for more difficult and challenging chapters, students with higher use of imagery performed better on quizzes in Microsoft PowerPoint section than did students in the traditional section. The teacher also used imagination for teaching English. Imagination develops creative thinking among students for learning new vocabulary. Imagination helps to reduce the effect of boredom in learning vocabulary. So, the teacher taught vocabulary to the learners by Microsoft PowerPoint and forced them to use their imagination for better comprehension and at last used Leitner box for improving long-term memory and also for learning vocabulary for a long time. The teacher should provide many flashcards

and put them in the first step of Leitner box. He drew the picture of one word on a side of a paper and wrote the word on the back side of the paper.

Grammar Translation Method

The traditional vocabulary learning method (TVLM) is mainly referred to as the grammar-translation method as defined by Richards and Rodgers (1986).

In group B, the control group (n= 20) was taught by using the traditional vocabulary teaching method when introducing all the words.

Grammar translation classes are commonly conducted in the native language of the students. Students learn the vocabulary and grammar rules from the teacher or a book and practise by doing drills and translation exercises from the target language. In my opinion, the GTM has a number of disadvantages in so much that it lacks speaking practice, reduces creativity in the class, and leaves students with very little working knowledge of the spoken language. Learners need the security of the mother tongue to translate vocabulary into the target language. This method is teacher-centered and students memorize vocabulary which they forget after a long time. The teacher used the grammar-translation method for teaching vocabulary and taught them five words in each session while the learners participated in the class three times a week for an hour.

Sometimes also known as the classical method, this was a traditional teaching technique that was used to teach Latin and Greek and was particularly in vogue in the 16thcentury. The focus at this time was on the translation of texts, grammar, and rote learning of vocabulary. There was no emphasis on speaking and listening comprehension, because Latin and Greek were taught mostly as academic subjects rather than means of oral communication. It was a traditional technique of foreign language teaching based on explicit instruction on the grammatical analysis of the target language and on the translation of sentences from the native language into the target language. It was originally used to teach 'dead' languages such as Greek and Latin. It was a way of teaching students to study grammar and translate words into their own language. They do not practise communication and there is little focus on speaking. A teacher presents a grammar rule and vocabulary lists and then the students translate a written text from their own language into the second language.

Scope for Further Research

The teacher tries to improve long term memory of learners for better vocabulary learning in English language. For the collection of data, the participants of the study were forty learners who are aged between 8 and 11 at Amin School in Iran.

(1) The study focuses on techniques like Ppt, Leitner Box, can be used for other language skills as speaking, reading, writing skills.

(2) The study of grammar is taught indirectly. The learners learned grammar rules in sentences without teaching grammar in class. Grammar is important

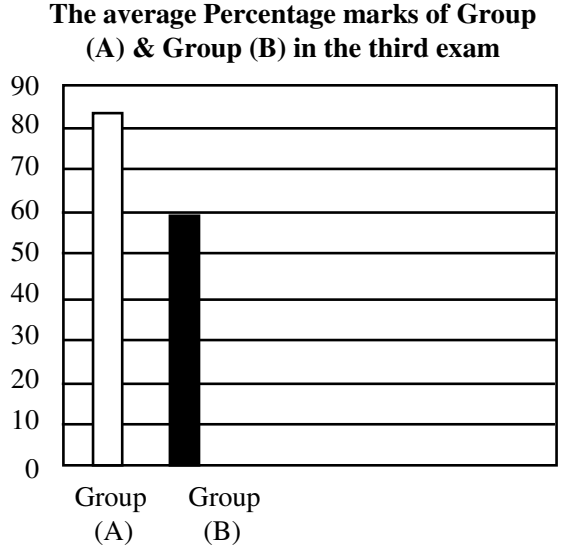
within the English language, in fact the glue that holds the language together. This study shows that how teacher can improve learner's grammar indirectly.

(3) Speaking skills can be significant area of study.The study's purpose was to examine how a teacher can encourage students to communicate orally in class. Teachers need to create situations where students get the chance to speak and communicate with each other. Speaking activities in the classroom are an important part of teaching English since they help students to develop their language and fluency when talking.

(4) Writing skills can be a purpose of the study. The learners learn spell words by using Leitner Box, that is why they can write words after a long time.

(5) Reading skills can improve in this study. Good reading skills can improve learner's language skills. Reading is the best way to learn and remember the proper spelling of words. The constant repetition of words and patterns in reading helps learners learn and remember vocabulary and grammar structures.

Main Finding



The chart shows us comparative learning of English vocabulary of two groups (A & B) within 12 weeks and 36 hours in classes. This chart proves that visuals tools as Ppt and picture and also the use of Leitner box and imagination were useful effects in learning language. The last exam result shows us the learners group (A) passed the exam with 83.4% and learners group (B) passed the exam with 58.7% score.

(1) These percentages prove that learners of first class have significant progress on vocabulary learning after three months. They can remember the words better than the learners of second class.

(2) This progress shows that Ppt and Leitner box tools have positive effects on the learning of the learners in three months.

(3) Teacher finds that Ppt helps to direct the student's attention. She teaches English words and the real learning experience is actually doing class exercises and student participation. She can easily insert videos, pictures and even games for reviewing materials. So, Ppt can be an effective and powerful communication tool.

(4) The learners often forget words which learnt that's why teacher wants to create a good Ppt for helping to learn them. Additionally, it helps students learn and also can help students to better understand the complexities of the words. She teaches her students how to improve their speech by Ppt. The aim of the teacher is to teach to them to think and evaluate, to be able to decide what is important enough to learn. For better vocabulary learning, the teacher forces the learners to practise by the Ppt.

(5) Although the students of group (B) learn these words by GTM . This study finds that the learners cannot remember the words which they learnt after a long time, because they emphasize on the rules rather than the meaning and understanding of the words. In addition they donot have repeated practice of the words. In fact, they learn by rote, that's why they forget the words after some time.

(6) This study shows that it is possible to improve long term memory of learners while learning English words. The memories are encoded and strengthened every time with practice and more practice makes the bonds between the surrounding cells increasingly stronger and gets more neurons involved.

(7) Students can improve their long term memory by participating in activities that they enjoy and recollect such memories through Ppt and Leitner's box games.

Conclusion

Thus, before boys or girls are born, their brains are developed with different hemispheric divisions of labour. The right and left hemispheres of the male and female brains arenot set up exactly the same way. For instance, females tend to have verbal centres on both sides of the brain, while males tend to have verbal centres on only the left hemisphere. This is a significant difference. Girls tend to use more words when discussing or describing incidence, story, person, object, feeling or place. Males not only have fewer verbal centres in general but also, often, have less connectivity between their word centres and their memories or feelings. When they have to remember the vocabularies, girls tend to have an advantage, and they tend to have more interest in talking about many things.

Teachers can help students to be better learners and acquire good learning habits by setting structured learning tasks that can be done out of class. Materials

should give space to personal learning logs, like Leitner's box, and encourage students to continue learning outside class. Students now have access to vast resources such as the Microsoft PowerPoint, Leitner's box, and pictures. If students are trained to use these resources and understand how they can provide information on improving long-term memory, they can exploit these resources more effectively and become more independent in their learning. Materials can also provide students with ideas to activate and practise vocabulary in their everyday lives, which is especially useful for students who live in non-English-speaking environments. When students watch Microsoft PowerPoint and pictures, multiple areas of their minds become engaged and active. In this research, we test whether using Microsoft PowerPoint, picture, imagination, and Leitner's box in an English course enhances students' long-term memory and attitudes toward class presentation and the instructor.

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