The Effect of Using Images on Vocabulary Learning On EFL Learners

Shahnaz Baralaei (M.A)¹, Abedin Najmabadi (M.A)²
1. M.A in TEFL, Department of English Language, Khorramshahr Branch, Islamic Azad University, Khorramshahr, Iran
Email: miss.baralaei@gmail.com
2. Teacher of Education, Behbahan, Iran

ARTICLE INFO
Article history:
Received 1 April 2015
Accepted 7 April 2015
Available online 30 April 2015

Keywords:
Learners’ Retention, Random Sampling, Proficiency Test

ABSTRACT
The aim of the present study was to determine the effect of images on Iranian EFL learners’ retention of vocabulary. To do this, a sample of 120 EFL learners was selected based on random sampling from Khorramshahr Islamic Azad University. After administering a proficiency test, 62 participants were chosen and divided in two homogenous groups of 31; one group is the control group and the other one is the experimental group. The experimental group received instruction with images, whereas the control group taught the same lessons but the instruction was inform of giving text and definition. At the end of 8 sessions, a post-test was administered and the results showed that there was a significant difference between the two groups.

© 2013 Academic IJELTS Publisher All rights reserved.

1. Introduction
Among various techniques suggested in teaching vocabulary item, applying visual images is one of the most common techniques. Mayer (1999) found that words and pictures are presented together to help students recall better, actually picture is very useful and motivates students to learn more and better. In recent years, teachers have taught English with traditional method or combination of old methods. Teachers use translation, repetition and memorization to learn vocabulary. According to cook (1991), words are related to each other in many ways and that is why they are remembering in terms of maintaining their treasures. In this regard, Harmer (2001) believes that "one of the most appropriate uses for visual images is for the presenting and checking of meaning and also students’ comprehension. Actually, picture is one of the most interesting and effective ways to learn and remember vocabulary” (P.17).

1.1. Statement of the Purpose
Vocabulary learning in English may take a while because the students have to learn them through memorization and rehearse them. Today’s, teachers have a problem with students’ learning. The student does not have the patience to learn by memorizing and it is not useful to repeat the words with their Persian equivalent. This is because, according to cook (1991) is a kind of low-level mental process. It should be pointed out that one of the problems the Second Language Acquisition (SLA) students face is that why learn today will be forgotten tomorrow. Teachers should motivate the students through their interest to make the students able to learn vocabulary with enthusiasm, and the teacher should assess the students’ interest so if he finds a process of accelerated learning should follow it. It should be noted that the teacher plays an important role in learning and even he can increases their motivation through games and video games and even images. Now the question is that why students cannot mostly remember meaning of vocabulary in general. One area that needs more attention is investigating the effect of using pictures on vocabulary learning on EFL learners. Therefore, the present empirical study intends to find the relationship between using and retention of vocabulary.

1.2. Research Question
1. Do the images have an impact on vocabulary learning?
1.3. Research hypotheses
1.3.1. The images have an impact on vocabulary learning.
1.3.2. The images do not have an impact on vocabulary learning.

1.4. Significance of the Study
Since vocabulary learning is an important source of speaking and writing, special measures should be recommended in this study in this respect. The researcher used a technique of using images that can increase motivation and learning. Actually, when the students see the image or occasion of one world, they hold a concept of that in their mind so they do not need to repeat and memorize. Students utilize the images so that they have empirical activities and will not be bored. Mackie’s (1995) games are a good tool that can provide comfort and entertainment in language learning while remaining within the context of learning and reinforcing.

2. Review of the Literature
Determining the effectiveness of visuals, WU (2008) conducted a study concerning the effect of pictures on Chinese college students’ understanding of vocabulary. Rivers (1981, p. 207) assumes that “pictures associated with the teachers voice Can possibly eliminate the need to use the native language, because a direct bond is established for the learner between meaning, as demonstrated in the image, and the foreign language utterance”. Learners find language more interesting and enjoyable with well-constructed pictures, for instance, when they see the situations. Rivers (1981, p. 208) believes that “pictures, with accompanying voice, has a greater sensory impact than lines on a printed pages, or even than that of the Voice alone”. Harmer (2001) states that “applying pictures in teaching is extremely useful for a variety of activities and it can motivate students for Learning” (P. 135). Materials accomplished by visual images and presented in the classroom can make language learners see the gestures and facial expressions which play an essential role in clarifying that part of the meaning which is conveyed by intonation and tone of voice through observation of the personal relationships portrayed. The attention of the language learners is kept focused on the picture so that all the members of the classroom are concentrating on the same thing at the same time. Rivers (1981) believes that this centering of attention is particularly helpful for weaker students who frequently find their minds wondering to other things than the point on which the teacher is concentrating. Cowie (1988) discusses the role of visual images in presenting new materials as vocabulary items. He states that a series of pictures with accompanying teacher's voice should be provided several times to language learners giving them the opportunity to absorb image and sound and associate the two. Cowie (1988) also suggests that the new presented materials must be reintroduced in the classroom and re-practiced regularly until it is obvious that the students have assimilated them completely. According to Harmer (2001), applying picture creates motivation and involvement necessary for learning to occur. Chastain (1988) claims that “for longest retention, knew knowledge must be associated with Previous knowledge, that is, it must be tied up to existing information nodes in the Cognitive network” (P, 42). This is in line with Anderson's claim (1983) that meaningful information is retained longer and recalled easily than the materials that are not completely understood by the learners. Chastain (1988) also assumes that language learners’ left and right hemispheres of the brain are also major factors contributing to retention and recall of information.

3. Methodology
The purpose of the present study is to investigate the effect of using pictures on vocabulary learning on EFL learners. Here, the methodology includes the participants, instruments and procedure.

3.1. Participants
74 participants (male) from Khorramshahr Azad University were participated and their performance on a proficiency test was based on Nelson English proficiency test (fowler & Coe, 1976). Those whose scores fell between one standard deviation above or below the mean were selected as the participants of the study. These participants were divided in two groups of the control group (31) and the experimental group (31). The age of the participants was 20-25.

3.2. Instruments
The researcher prepared 50 items of Nelson proficiency test (fowler and Coe, 1976). The second test included 20 items extracted from (101 American English,) Collis.

3.3. Procedure
The two groups were instructed; the control group had text and definition and the experimental group had images for their instruction. The treatment lasted 4 weeks (8 sessions). Each session lasted 75 minutes twice a week. At the end of the treatment sessions, the post-test consists of 30 multiple choice items were administered for the two control and experimental groups and the data were collected.

3.4. Data analysis

Corresponding Author: M.A in TEFL, Department of English Language, Khorramshahr Branch, Islamic Azad University, Khorramshahr, Iran
Email: miss.baralaei@gmail.com
The data were analyzed through ANOVA to determine the possible difference between the two groups.

4. Results

The present study investigated the effect of using pictures on vocabulary learning on Iranian EFL learners. The data were collected and the ANOVA was performed for both groups. The results showed that there is a meaningful relationship between images and vocabulary learning. Table 1 indicates the ANOVA results of the control group and Table 2 indicated the ANOVA results of the experimental group.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics: Pre-Test and Post-Test Results of the Control Group

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Min</th>
<th>Max</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Variance</th>
<th>DS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Group 1 pretest</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>16/38</td>
<td>15/03</td>
<td>3/87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group 1 posttest</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>14/41</td>
<td>13/80</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics: Pre-Test and Post-Test Results of the Experimental Group

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Min</th>
<th>Max</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Variance</th>
<th>DS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Group 1 pretest</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>17/38</td>
<td>10/45</td>
<td>3/23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group 1 posttest</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>18/90</td>
<td>7/04</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Therefore, the results indicated that using pictures had a meaningful and significant effect on vocabulary learning of EFL learners.

5. Discussions and Conclusions

The following null hypotheses were proposed to investigate the effect of using pictures on EFL learner's vocabulary learning.

1. The images have an impact on vocabulary learning.
2. The images do not have an impact on vocabulary learning.

Based on the results, the first hypothesis was accepted but the second hypothesis was rejected. The participants of the experimental group enjoyed experiencing the exposure to visual images and performed better than the control group who were provided with definition and text. The results also showed that using pictures can improve their vocabulary learning and led them to go through significant comprehension and retention, so vocabulary learning using pictures is a good way to promote their retention of vocabulary. Brown (1993, p, 109) states that "the left hemisphere is associated with logical, analytical thought, with mathematical and linear processing information, while the right hemisphere Perceives and remembers auditory and visual images better". The present study indicated that Iranian EFL learners can enhance their retention of vocabulary learning through enough exposure to situations in which vocabulary have been visualized by illustrations. During the treatment, the participants of the experimental group were so enthusiastic and motivated paid enough attention to the picture. Since the participants of the experimental group were actively involved in the Classroom, it was more effective on embedding vocabularies into their long term memory. The present study showed the effectiveness of pictures on vocabulary learning better and easeful. The instruction was about 8 sessions on the two groups but the treatment was different; the experimental group with images and the control group with placebo (definition and text). After administering the post test, the results indicated that the instruction using pictures affected the learners. Actually, when the treatment was over, after an interval of 28 days from the end of the treatment, the experimental group and the control group were administered 30 multiple choice items and the results of the test were compared to find the effect of the instruction. Mayer (1999) investigated the effect of visual images on language learners reading comprehension. He claimed that "lexical items and pictures presented together can help students recall better". The students can understand the materials (images) more easily and comprehensible"(P, 7). Therefore, applying visual images for EFL learners was effective and the experimental group performed better than the control group.

References


Corresponding Author: M.A in TEFL, Department of English Language, Khorramshahr Branch, Islamic Azad University, Khorramshahr, Iran
Email: miss.baralaei@gmail.com