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Effective Foreign Language Vocabulary Teaching Method for Iraqi Young Learners

Abstract

This research was an attempt to find an effective vocabulary-teaching method order for Iraqi young foreign language learners. An experiment was conducted during regular Iraqi class sessions for seven weeks, from April 13th to May 29th, 2019. In this experiment, two vocabulary-teaching method orders, explicit-first order and implicit-first order, were compared for effectiveness, using a within-group design. The participants of the groups were fourth graders at Al-Hadi Primary School in Babil Governorate, Iraq. Each group had almost thirty students. They had the same background when it came to learning English. Flashcards were used for the explicit vocabulary-teaching method, while stories were used for the implicit vocabulary teaching method. For the first three weeks, Group 1 was taught English vocabulary using the explicit method at the beginning of each session, followed by the implicit method. On the other hand, during each session, Group 2 was taught using the implicit method first, followed by the explicit method. Both groups had a one-week break in week four. After the break, the orders of vocabulary teaching methods were switched for each group for the next three weeks. The amount of words that the students could recall was measured by a multiple choice test at the end of each session. As a result of the experiment, slight differences were found between the two orders and two groups, but it is difficult to say which order is more effective than the other one because the difference was not remarkable. Rather, it is now assumed that the homeroom teacher's influence and the students' personalities, as well as environmental and affective factors, could be more critical to students' foreign language learning.

Keywords: Vocabulary, Implicit, Explicit, Personalities, Environmental.

Introduction

Language teachers usually try to use a balanced approach toward teaching vocabulary, using both explicit and implicit teaching methods; however, they also seem to have a preference for one vocabulary teaching approach over the other. Some teachers are good at having students guess word meanings from context, while others feel more comfortable with presenting word meanings directly with the form. The topic of "which way works better" has been reviewed by many researchers and teachers over the years, but there have been different opinions about which overall approach is preferred as the main vocabulary-teaching method.

In the past, language teaching methodology had vacillated between emphasizing language analysis and emphasizing language use until the middle of the 20th century.

However, in 1972, Hymes, an anthropological linguist, began to view language as a system for communication, and therefore focused on its sociolinguistic and pragmatic factors (Celce- Murcia, 2001). Schmitt (2000) says that this change helped shift people's focus from the accuracy, or correctness, of language to how appropriate the language was in a specific context. This view emphasized using language for meaningful communication, which is the main argument for proponents of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT).

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CLT has served to put communication priority on message and fluency instead of grammatical accuracy, and emphasized practice and language use experience over explicit learning. In addition, "language chunks" were focused on rather than vocabulary words, which are smaller units. This approach also assumes that implicit vocabulary learning can occur when learners are using language for communicative purposes. Decarrico (2001) explains that the communicative approach, in the 1970s and 1980s, had people focus on implicit learning. Additionally, Brown (2007) writes "As teachers more and more perceived their role as facilitators and guides, they became more reluctant to take the directive and sometimes intrusive steps to turn students' focus to lexical form." Therefore, little attention has been paid to explicit vocabulary teaching and learning due to the influence of the CLT approach.

Vocabulary instruction that ignores the explicit vocabulary teaching approach can cause learners to have difficulties in the retention, retrieval and generation of vocabulary that they have learned. Schmitt (2000) says "It has now been realized that mere exposure to language and practice with functional communication will not ensure the acquisition of an adequate vocabulary, so the current best practice includes both a principled selection of vocabulary, often according to frequency lists, and an instruction methodology that encourages meaningful engagement with words over a number of recyclings." Now, the need for explicit vocabulary-teaching is emerging again among researchers and teachers. Many researchers say that the importance of the explicit vocabulary-teaching approach has been overlooked by the CLT approach, but is now being highlighted again (Beck, McKeown, & Kucan, 2008; Folse, 2004; Nation & Gu, 2007).

Many researchers point out that combining explicit vocabulary teaching with incidental vocabulary learning is the best for language learners (Folse, 2004, Graves 2009, Nations 2001, Schmitt, 2000). Folse (2004) adds that learners need to both learn words from context through reading, as well as get information about words in an explicit way. Thus, most well-organized vocabulary teaching programs consist of a good mixture of explicit and incidental learning activities (Schmitt, 2000). Decarrico (2001) also emphasizes "a well-structured vocabulary program needs a balanced approach that includes explicit teaching together with activities providing appropriate contexts for incidental learning."

As already mentioned above, now it is thought that the balanced approach is ideal for language learners' vocabulary learning. In this research the researcher tried to determine whether using explicit vocabulary-teaching first

before implicit vocabulary teaching is required, or more effective, for young foreign language learners than using implicit vocabulary-teaching followed by explicit vocabulary-teaching. The explicit approach had been devalued for quite a period of time, when communication was the focus of language teaching. At that time, teachers seemed to refer only to the incidental approach as the smart way of teaching vocabulary. Here, an experiment was conducted to compare the effects of two different orders of vocabulary instruction methods - explicit method vs. implicit method- and tried to find out which one works better for young foreign language learners' vocabulary learning. In this experiment, the use of powerpoint slides was selected as a way of to facilitate explicit vocabulary instruction. The powerpoint slides were introduced as an alternative to the more traditional use of flashcards. Each powerpoint slide consisted of picture and words. In addition, storytelling was used as a tool for implicit vocabulary instruction.

This research experiment was conducted during seven-week English sessions in the spring term of 2019 at Al-Hadi Primary School, which is located in Babil Governorate, Iraq.

The researcher had two experimental groups in this experiment. Each group consisted of about thirty fourth-grade students. Most of them were Iraqi. In the experiment for Group 1, five new Iraqi words were taught first, using powerpoint slides, followed by storytelling. These stories were told in Arabic, but the new words were said in English instead of Arabic during the storytelling.

This procedure was followed for each session. On the other hand, Group 2 storytelling was given before the vocabulary instruction with powerpoint slides. At that time, since the five new words were said in English during the storytelling, before the words were taught by the teacher in an explicit way, students first had to struggle with guessing the meanings of the new foreign words. This treatment was done for the first three weeks, and then the students were released from the experiment for a one-week break. The break was designed to refresh the students after the first three-week experimental process. After the one-week break, the teaching methods were switched for the next three weeks. That is, for Group 1 storytelling was given first, and then new words were taught with powerpoint slides. In Group 2, vocabulary teaching with slides was taught first, and then storytelling followed.

Regardless of which method was used first, the students in each group took a multiple choice test at the end of each session to measure how many words they could retain. The test consisted of five questions. Students were asked to match the five English words that were taught in each session with the five possible meanings. The test

results of the two groups were analyzed using descriptive statistics. The hypothesis of the present research was that 'explicit-first vocabulary teaching' would be more effective than 'implicit-first vocabulary teaching' for young foreign language learners.

Literature Review

Explicit Vocabulary Teaching vs. Implicit Vocabulary Teaching

Brown (2007) points out that one of the hot topics during the last decade has been which method, between the explicit vocabulary-teaching method and the incidental vocabulary-teaching method, works better. Traditionally, the explicit vocabulary teaching method was the most commonly used way of vocabulary instruction. The explicit vocabulary-teaching method directs attention directly to the information to be learned. Unlike the explicit vocabulary teaching method, the implicit vocabulary teaching method assumes that vocabulary learning occurs successfully when learners are exposed to reading texts which include the new vocabulary. Folse (2004) says that the implicit vocabulary teaching method exposes language learners to language to the greatest possible extent.

Explicit vocabulary teaching

Under the influence of the CLT approach, language teachers overlooked the importance of explicit vocabulary teaching for many years and focused instead on implicit vocabulary teaching. However, both ways of vocabulary teaching are important to learners' vocabulary improvement, so explicit vocabulary teaching should not be devalued.

Schmitt (2000) says that learners can gain a sufficient vocabulary through the explicit method, while implicit learning from reading is also possible. Thus, it would appear that, as Folse (2004) believes, learners need to learn words not only from context, but they also need to get information about words in an explicit way. Schmitt (2000) argues that as students learn to read or as they learn something from the readings, explicit-vocabulary teaching must be used as a "prerequisite". Additionally, the explicit vocabulary teaching approach has shown good results in information retention. Schmitt (2000) indicates that a person who processes the data or information of a word more deeply can retain that word for later use more often. Folse (2006) says one study of vocabulary-teaching methods discovered that the explicit method produces better retention than the incidental vocabulary-teaching method.

Moreover, it would appear that, as Paynter, Bodrova, & Doty (2005) conjecture, students with limited vocabularies need more explicit vocabulary teaching in their language learning. Folse (2004) claims his examination of many research studies has shown that L2 readers' very limited vocabulary knowledge often prevents them from making full use of context clues. He adds that, compared to L1 readers, L2 readers' limited vocabulary knowledge makes them guess about word meanings much more often; however, this lack of vocabulary knowledge also severely limits L2 readers' abilities to make use of the remaining context as clues for guessing.

Thus, it would appear that, as Schmitt (2000) argues, the learning of basic words cannot be delayed until after learners encounter the words incidentally; instead, they should be taught as quickly as possible, because learners can easily learn basic words explicitly. He adds that beginners need to be taught words in an explicit way in order to have a sufficient vocabulary to deal with the unknown words in context. Schmitt (2000) says that the most frequent words need to be taught with the explicit vocabulary-teaching method because, necessarily, they should be ready in advance of language use.

Implicit Vocabulary Teaching

Like the explicit vocabulary teaching approach, implicit vocabulary-teaching is frequently chosen by language teachers, but the learning effect of implicit vocabulary teaching does not seem to be the same as that of explicit vocabulary-teaching. Most studies show that the amount of vocabulary learning from reading is really rather small, and it is only through numerous repeated exposures, from a great deal of reading, that any significant number of words is learned (Schmitt, 2000). Folse (2004) argues that his research shows that explicit vocabulary-instruction produced better results, in the aspect of effectiveness, than the implicit vocabulary-teaching method, such as guessing of meanings from context. He adds that the idea of teaching words in context is intuitively appealing. For these reasons, Schmitt (2000) says that a teacher's choice of vocabulary-teaching method should be carefully considered, using economic aspects like time and efficiency.

Storytelling: How Contexts Facilitate Vocabulary Learning

It is important for teachers to provide learners with meaningful learning experiences while teaching vocabulary. One way of improving learners' vocabulary acquisition and development is to teach vocabulary in several

contexts, such as through storytelling and group work for creating a story, as well as using activities outside the classroom to extend vocabulary (Peitz & Vena, 1996). Rupley, Logan, & Nichols (1998) say activities that connect experiences and concepts with words can foster vocabulary, improve comprehension, and keep students learning. Above all, Elley (1989) argues that telling stories to young language learners is essentially a significant source of vocabulary development.

For young learners, the relationship between storytelling and optimum language development shows a strong, positive correlation (Speaker, Taylor & Kamen, 2004).

Storytelling is an effective bridge on the road to literacy, and children involved in educational programs that utilize storytelling have shown many positive behaviors in relation to increased literacy (Speaker, Taylor & Kamen, 2004).

Speaker, Taylor & Kamen (2004) also point out that when children are exposed to various stories, they are able to develop their listening skills, vocabulary, and ability to organize narrative thought. These researchers go on to argue that the language skills of the five children involved in their pilot study which analyzed each child's language ability, both before and after the storytelling program, showed improvement after the four-week program was conducted, using the curriculum of Ministry of Education. They add that the preschool children showed enhancement in grammatical structure, vocabulary, length of utterance, and sentence formation with the use of storytelling. It would appear that, as Peitz & Vena (1996) argue, all of the research conducted to find the most effective way of vocabulary learning and teaching show that teaching vocabulary through storytelling has a very strong positive effect on students' vocabulary acquisition and comprehension.

Rupley, Logan, & Nichols (1998) say that vocabulary holds stories, ideas, and content together, and it promotes making comprehension accessible for children. Building vocabulary knowledge supports the learners' text comprehension, as well as their interactions with the storyteller and the text, and "gathers up the threads of concepts" about objects and information surrounding learners. For these reasons, vocabulary instruction is an integral component for teaching children how to read both narrative and informational texts. Rupley, Logan, & Nichols (1998) advocate a balanced approach to teaching vocabulary. That is, they say that both the explicit method and the implicit method facilitate vocabulary development. Vocabulary develops when young learners have abundant experiences with learning new words, and with examples that include these words, in rich contextual settings.

Clearly, for new learning to occur, the stories should include some unknown vocabulary beyond the learners' present vocabulary knowledge. Moreover, it is said that the unknown words should be surrounded by a helpful verbal or pictorial context, and learners should be exposed to the words several times (Elley, 1989). Peitz & Vena (1996) say that the use of pictorial context, with specific instruction for students to pay attention to words, fosters vocabulary learning. They add that contextual clues in sentences and paragraphs help learners develop understanding of unknown words. Thus, Peitz & Vena (1996) mention that explicit teaching is necessary for new vocabulary learning and repeated exposure to vocabulary in context is also important.

Method

Background

The purpose of this research was to find out which order of vocabulary teaching methods is more effective in young learners' foreign language learning. Two types of methods for teaching vocabulary were chosen for this experiment, the explicit-first vocabulary-teaching method and the implicit-first vocabulary-teaching method. Flashcards and stories were used as materials for each method. Multiple choice tests were used to see how many words students could retain at the end of each session.

Nist & Joseph (2008) say that flashcards have been effectively used to help students learn new words for a long time, and they are still some of the most effective teaching aids. Flashcards are commonly used by foreign language teachers to teach vocabulary, since it is believed that they are a simple, but useful, teaching material. They are also easy to carry and handle, and are often very colorful and visual, so they can easily attract learners' attention and help learners' memory. Therefore, flashcards have been popular with most language teachers, especially teachers for young learners. The flashcards used in this experiment did not have a traditional hard-paper form, but they were prepared in the form of powerpoint slides, including pictures or photos, as well as both Arabic and English words. The second method used in this experiment was storytelling. It is suggested that providing context with vocabulary learning can help learners' vocabulary retention.

This experiment focuses on which order is more effective for young learners to retain new words while learning a foreign language. 'Order' is related to whether vocabulary teaching with flashcards should be used before storytelling, or whether storytelling should be used before vocabulary teaching.

Participants

Two groups were used during this experiment. Each group had about thirty students. They were fourth grade students at Al-Hadi Primary School. Most of the students were Iraqis. The two groups of students had the same background when it came to learning English. These students have been learning about English culture and language since they were beginners to English language. However, their learning was focused more on culture than language, they were mostly illiterate in English. The experiment was conducted during their class' English sessions. Each group experienced both teaching methods in different orders, and students had a multiple choice test at the end of each session.

As Brown (2007) says that since children are extremely sensitive and they are affectively fragile, teachers need to help them to overcome affective barriers to learning. In this paper the researcher thought collecting data anonymously would make young learners more comfortable to answer questions on the test because they did not need to worry about their own test results. So, He did not identify participants through several experiments.

Process

The experiment was conducted for seven weeks from April 13th to May 29th, 2019. In this paper 'E (explicit method first)' indicates 'vocabulary teaching ahead of storytelling' method. For the 'E' condition, five words from a story were presented with flashcards for ten minutes at the beginning of each session. The five target words of each story were chosen by their standard of frequency in the story, with each word usually appearing more than eight times. All of the words were nouns. The target words offer included main characters and places in the story. The presentation included showing pictures of the target words, teaching English words that matched with the pictures, letting students say them aloud in English several times, and then discussing the pictures and letting students share their ideas and experiences concerning the pictures. For the next ten minutes of each session, the story was told in English by the experimenter. During the storytelling, five words were substituted with English words. For the last ten minutes of the session, students were tested on how many words they could recall.

'I (implicit method first)' indicates the 'storytelling ahead of vocabulary teaching' method. For the 'I' condition, a story was told in Arabic by the experimenter for the first ten minutes of each session. During the storytelling, five words were substituted with English words. After the story was told, the target words were

presented with flashcards for ten minutes. Then, for the last ten minutes, students were tested on how many words they could recall.

While Group 1 experienced the 'E' condition during the first three weeks, Group 2 experienced the 'I' condition. After a one-week break, which was designed to refresh the students after the first learning experience, each group experienced the opposite order. It was considered possible that group differences might exist as another variable, so the orders were switched in order to exclude this variable from having an influence on the results of the experiment, using a within-subjects design. Students' retention of the new words was measured by a multiple choice test. Only five target words for the session were tested on the multiple choice test. As a result, the experiment tested a total of thirty new English words (5 words X 6 weeks= 30 words).

Results

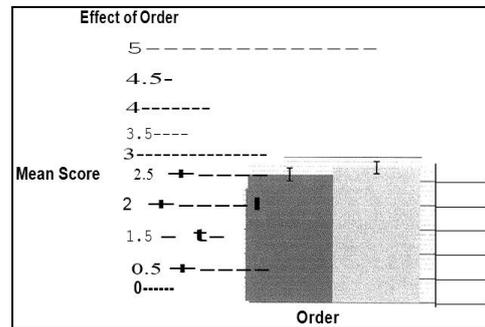


Figure 1.

Mean number correct by Order 'E' and 'I', Bars represent +/- one standard error

According to Figure 1, 'E', which means 'the explicit method first', has a lower mean score than 'I', 'the implicit method first'. The difference of mean scores between 'I' (M=2.78) and 'E' (M=2.63) is 0.15. Even though 'I' has a higher mean score than 'E', the difference does not seem to be large. The standard error bars on these graphs are overlapping, indicating that this difference is not reliable. Therefore, it cannot be said that 'I' is a more effective vocabulary teaching order for young foreign language learners than 'E'.

Effect of Order by Group

Table 1.

Mean Scores and Standard Errors of Order 'E' and 'I' by Group

	Order	
	E	I
Group 1	M=2.83 SE= 0.19	M=2.72 SE= 0.18
Group 2	M=2.47 SE= 0.19	M=2.85 SE= 0.18

(M: mean, SE: standard error)

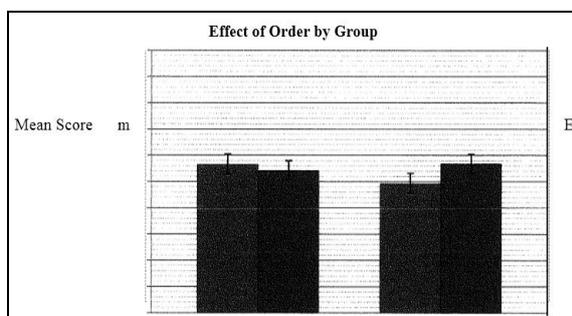


Figure 2.
Mean number correct by Order 'E' and 'I' by Group, Bars represent +/- one standard error

Figure 2 shows us that each group seemed to have a preference for order of vocabulary instruction. Group 1 has a higher mean score

with the order 'E' (M=2.83) while the mean score with 'I' is lower than that (M=2.72). The difference between the two scores is 0.11 and it does not show a big difference. On the other hand, Group 2 shows that there is a clearer difference (M=0.38) than Group 1 on the score between 'E' (M=2.47) and 'I' (M=2.85) even though the difference is still not large. It reflects that Group 2 demonstrated more vocabulary learning for the order 'I' than the order 'E'. Besides, the standard error bars on Group 2 are not overlapping and this suggests that this difference for Group 2 is reliable. It is supported that the order 'I' is more effective for Group 2 learners to learn foreign language vocabulary than the order 'E'.

Effect of Vocabulary by Order

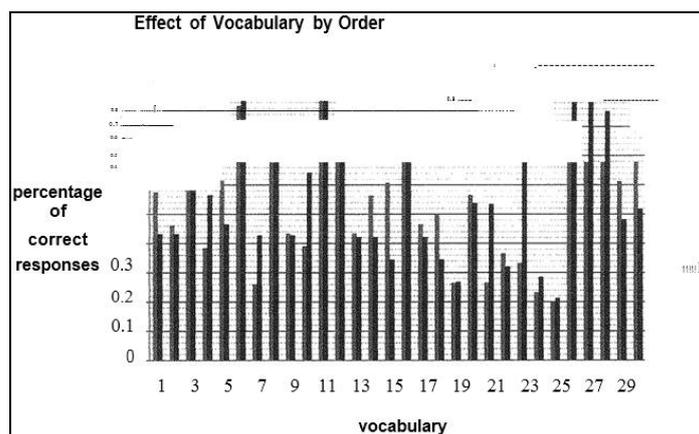


Figure 3.
Percentage of correct responses on 30 vocabulary items by Order

Figure (3) shows the percentage of correct responses for each word within each instructional order. Five words were taught during each week. The average percentage of correct answers is 0.54 with 'E', and 0.56 with 'I'. For vocabulary items 2, 3, 6, 8, 9, 11, 12, 13, 16, 17, 19, 20, 22, 24, 25 (see Appendix A), no difference, or very slight differences, between the orders 'E' and 'I' were found on the graph. On the other hand, for vocabulary items 1, 4, 5, 7, 10, 14, 15, 18, 21, 23, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30 remarkable differences between the two orders were found on the graph. All the participants marked the correct answer for vocabulary item 11. The largest difference between the order 'E' and the order 'I' was found on vocabulary item 23. For this vocabulary item the percentage with 'E' is 0.33, which is below the average, and the one with 'I' is 0.71, which is above the average. The vocabulary items that show a higher percentage with 'E' than the average percentage (p=0.54) are vocabulary items 6 (p=0.87) and 11 (p=1), and the lower percentage item with 'E' is

vocabulary item 25 (p=0.2). 'I' also shows remarkable results for these three items. Vocabulary items 6 (p=0.89), 11 (p=1), 26 (p=0.96), 27 (p=0.96), and 28 (p=0.85), with 'I', show a higher percentage than the average percentage (p=0.56), while vocabulary item 25 (p=0.21) shows a lower percentage.

Effect of Group

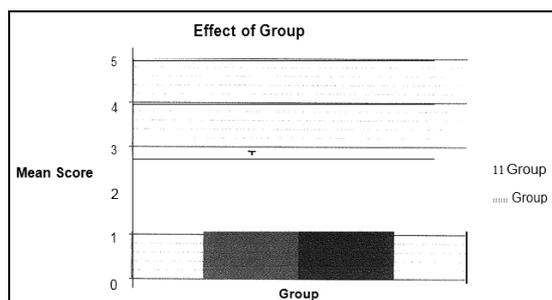


Figure 4.
Mean number correct by Group 1 and Group 2, Bars represent +/- one standard error

Figure 4 shows that there is a difference between the two groups. The mean scores are 2.77 for Group 1, and 2.65 for Group 2, with the difference between the two groups being 0.12. Although the difference is not remarkable, Group 1 displays a higher accomplishment level of learning new words and retaining them, whatever the order is. However, the standard error bars are overlapping, indicating that the measurement is not reliable. Therefore, it is difficult to say that Group 1 is definitely superior to Group 2 in learning new foreign words, even though Group 1 shows a higher mean score than Group 2.

Effect of Week by Group

Table 2.

Mean Scores and Standard Errors of 6 Weeks by Group

		Weeks						
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Group 1	M	2.46	2.7	3.39		2.31	2.07	3.78
	SE	0.34	0.3	0.33		0.31	0.26	0.26
Group 2	M	2.57	3.11	2.88		2.57	1.4	3.42
	SE	0.31	0.31	0.3		0.26	0.26	0.35

(M: mean, SE: standard error)

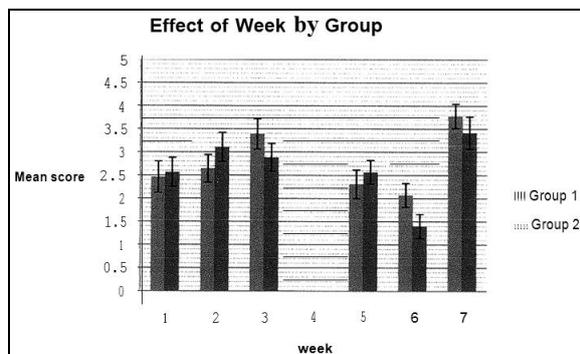


Figure 5.

Mean number correct by Weeks by Group, Bars represent +/- one standard error

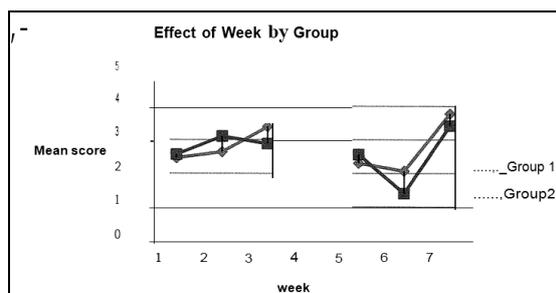


Figure 6.

Tendency lines of Means of 6 Weeks by Group

As can be seen in Figure 5, in week one, Group 2 has a higher mean score with the order 'I' (M= 2.57) than Group 1 with 'E' (M=2.46). While the difference between the groups is minor (M=0.11) in week one, the difference (M=0.47) between the groups in week two is more than four times greater than the difference shown in week one. The score of Group 2 from week one to week two jumps from 2.57 to 3.11, with the noticeable enhancement score of 0.54. In week three, the score of Group 2 somewhat decreases, but the score of Group 1 shows a remarkable improvement of 0.69. As shown in Figure 6, during the first three weeks, the mean scores tend to increase gradually.

After the one-week break, the teaching orders were switched. Therefore, it is natural that in week five the scores and the shape of the bar graphs for each group seems to be similar to those of week one. However, in week six, the scores show an overall decrease.

There seems to be several reasons for this decrease, which will be discussed in the next part. In week seven, which was the last week, the shape of the bar graphs seems to be similar to those of week three even though the scores of week seven are higher than the ones of week three. The graph of week seven show the highest scores. Factors that may have caused these high scores will also be discussed in the next chapter.

The standard error bars of Group 1 and Group 2 in Figure 5 are overlapping in weeks one, two, three, five, and seven. This suggests that the differences between the groups are not reliable for those weeks. As a result, it is not supported that in weeks one, two, and five that Group 2 did better in learning new foreign words, or that in weeks three and seven Group 1 did better, even though in weeks one, two, and five Group 2 shows higher scores than Group 1 on the bar graph, and in weeks three and seven Group 1 displays greater scores than Group 2. On the other hand, in week six, the standard error bars of Group 1 and Group 2 are not overlapping. This indicates that the difference between the groups is reliable in week six. Therefore, it can be said that Group 1 was better at learning and retaining foreign language vocabulary in week six.

Discussion

Schmitt (2000) maintains that learners can gain sufficient vocabulary through explicit vocabulary teaching and this makes further incidental learning of other vocabulary items from reading possible. Folse (2004) argues that learners need to learn words from context through reading, and they need to get information about words in an explicit way. In addition, Folse (2006) says one study of

vocabulary teaching methods discovered that the explicit vocabulary-teaching method produces better retention than the incidental vocabulary-teaching method. The research hypothesis was that 'E (explicit-first method)' would be more effective than 'I (implicit-first method)'. However, the results of this experiment did not suggest that the hypothesis was correct. In part 4 'I' had a higher mean score than 'E', but the difference was not reliable. Also, 'I' was more effective for Group 2, showing a reliable effect. However, it is difficult to conclude 'E' was more effective for Group 1. The differences between orders in each group were still slight, but in Group 2, it was seen that the difference was reliable through the non-overlapping standard error bars. Even though the difference between the two orders was not large, 'I' had a higher score than 'E'. I overlooked variation in learning style and ability. Actually, Group 2 was very excited while guessing the meanings of new words from the stories. However, when the order was changed from 'I' to 'E', it was found that their interests in learning new words decreased rapidly. We can see it from the difference between the results of week three and week five, when the scores dropped remarkably.

It was also confirmed that other factors, in addition to the teacher's teaching method, can cause students to have good or bad results. Brown (2007) says that since children are extremely sensitive and they are affectively fragile, teachers need to help them to overcome affective barriers while learning. It was found that both environmental factors and affective factors influenced the students' learning, and their improvement while learning. In week six we can see that the scores of the two groups were lower than the ones from other weeks. In fact, the score for Group 2 was abnormally low.

The difference between the scores for week six and week seven shows us that whether a story is humorous, or close to the students' interests, could matter. The story of week six told of a heavenly maiden who became a human being and went back to heaven with her three children while leaving her husband on earth. The story seemed to be quite serious and sad. Also, the concept of the story, and the target words, did not look familiar to the students. This could be one of the reasons that this week had the lowest scores of any session for either of the groups. On the other hand, the story in week seven had lots of humor in it, and the students were likely to feel that the story was silly. While the researcher was telling the story, he could often hear them laugh loudly. Also, the researcher could hear them guessing what would happen next, which was a sign to me that they were paying close attention to the story.

Different from other weeks, the researcher used realia and gestures in week seven, which

might have facilitated students' interactions with the story. Additionally, almost all of the target words were nouns, main characters, or places in the stories, but there was only one adverb in the target words, which appeared in the week 7 story. This adverb means 'softly, softly'. The researcher could not find a picture anywhere to describe the adverbial word, so he decided to show the word with gestures. He also had a problem finding pictures of a 'red fan' and a 'blue fan'. The researcher could easily find a picture of a fan, but a 'red fan' and a 'blue fan' are more complex words and they are a more specific indication because the noun 'fan' has descriptive words like 'red' and 'blue'. In order to solve this problem, that of finding specific pictures that described or indicated motion or things exactly, the researcher chose to substitute objects by using real gestures or realia. For example, I brought in two real fans, a red one and a blue one. Although these things were substitutes, they actually work better for students' retention of new words than pictures.

One more interesting thing was found between the two groups that deserves further study. The two groups had quite similar characteristics. They were the same age, the same grade, and attended the same school. They also had same background when it came to learning English; in that they had learned English culture since they were beginners to language. Concerning the language, they only knew how to greet each other in English. They were mixed boys and girls, and the ratio was almost half and half. Each group had about thirty Iraqi students. In addition, their teacher was the same, and their homeroom teachers were both women of similar age.

The only difference they had was their homeroom teachers' characteristics.

Interestingly, their characteristics were totally opposite. The homeroom teacher for Group 1 was very organized and strict. She was likely to put priority on cleanliness, organization, classroom rules and perfect timing. On the other hand, the homeroom teacher of Group 2 was easy-going and free. For her, creative activities, students' free ideas, carefulness, gentleness, and degree of care for each other seemed to be most important. As a result, their appearances, styles, and speaking styles typically reflected the characteristics of their teacher.

Above all, the students were likely to be a "reflective mirror" of their own teachers. Group 1 listened to the researcher carefully and followed the rules during the sessions as he commanded. Group 2 always looked happy, and they were busy producing their own ideas and opinions. Sometimes, the researcher felt more at ease and more comfortable, with Group 1, in that the researcher did not need to try to attract their attention because they were already ready to

listen to him. With Group 2, sometimes the researcher felt it was difficult to make them pay attention to him. However, sometimes the researcher felt it was difficult to make Group 1 students say their opinions out loud.

Sometimes, the researcher felt happier when he had more interaction with students, and when he saw them try to be more involved during the sessions.

The differences between the two groups were very typical, so the researcher could easily recognize them. Based on these differences, the researcher would say that they also had group differences in respect to classroom behavior, and each group had their own "preferences". Group 1 seemed to prefer organized activity in a session. They were also more likely to enjoy listening to the stories after learning the new words first. In the first week, after switching the teaching method to 'I', students showed their feelings of embarrassment to their teacher. They also seemed to feel more comfortable relying on the teacher's directions rather than learning from their own ideas. Group 2 was definitely the opposite. They were very excited while guessing meanings of unknown foreign words. In addition, they did not seem to have anxiety about saying incorrect answers. They really did not care whether their answers were correct or not: they just enjoyed guessing meanings using their creative ideas. Interestingly, they looked bored when the teaching method was switched to 'E' for the last three weeks. The researcher felt that their attention span actually became shorter when they were taught with the explicit method. When they listened to the stories after already being taught the foreign words, they did not try to say the meanings as excitedly as they did with the implicit method. 'E' interrupted their process of engagement.

For this experiment, the researcher was lucky to have two groups that had opposite characteristics. Even though the researcher was unable to support that his hypothesis was right, I have learned that learning can originate from the learners themselves. Whatever the methods order was, learners could learn something in the sessions using their own learning styles. That is, learners took the initiative in their own learning, and for their own motivation. They also had their own "mold" for learning, which was formed by interactions with their circumstances.

This is far from the concept of education that is inherent in the researcher's home country. A learner's receptive role was emphasized in Iraqi society. It means that learners were expected to be quiet and listen to their teacher with the result that they often came to prefer taking notes while the teacher is giving a lecture instead of actively participating in a session by sharing their own ideas. With this point of view, the researcher's finding about learners' roles in

their own education is very new to him, and might be a refreshing concept for Iraqi society to adopt.

Conclusion

As a result, the researcher came to the conclusion that foreign language vocabulary needs to be taught in an explicit ways instead of an implicit ways, like guessing meanings from context. Furthermore, he assumed that it was better to teach foreign language vocabulary first, in an explicit way, with the vocabulary needs having to be reinforced throughout the texts. With this in mind, the researcher planned the experiment to compare whether the 'explicit-first' order is more effective for young foreign language learners, or if the 'implicit-first' order is more effective.

As a result of this experiment, he found that his question of 'which order works better' does not matter, and that either one can work well with young foreign language learners.

Rather, the researcher discovered that other factors, like homeroom teacher's characteristics and classroom atmosphere, can affect foreign language learners' learning process and results much more.

Although the study hypothesis was not supported, the researcher has learned how to conduct an experiment, and how to analyze results, through this research. He also came to know that identifying the participants within the test results is important while analyzing the data, because it allows him to explore factors that can affect the results. Finally, the result of such a study could be very helpful for learners, as well as foreign language teachers. It will enable learners to save time and effort when searching for an effective way to learn foreign language vocabulary.

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