



RESEARCH PAPER**The Effect of Four Skills Integrated Strategy on Learners' Vocabulary Development**

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ABSTRACT

This research paper explores the impact of four language skills integration on learning of vocabulary using quasi non-random pre and posttests experiment. Vocabulary development is considered to be crucial for improving the proficiency in any target language. The significance of vocabulary is conspicuous in improving all four skills: reading, writing, listening and speaking. The paper examines the impact of these four language skills if integrated on developing vocabulary. The participants were selected from a university. They were being taught English at the undergraduate level. One group was termed as treatment group as it was taught vocabulary through four language skills integration strategy whereas another cluster was named control group and was taught through traditional approach. The results present four skills integration strategy superior to the traditional approach as the treatment group received better scores and outperformed the control group. It is recommended to authors and teachers to use four skills integration strategy for better results to develop their students' vocabulary. Moreover, it is also suggested that qualitative research should be conducted to understand the underlying processes that contribute to the success of this strategy.

KEYWORDS Four Skills Integration, Quasi Experiment, Vocabulary Development

Introduction

Vocabulary development is thought to be crucial for the proficiency in the target language. But a careful examination of available syllabi for English course shows that not much importance is given to it or it is assumed that it will be improved in the process of learning English. Students often struggle in reading and listening comprehension due to poor vocabulary. The paper assumes that one of the strategies to develop learners' vocabulary can be integrating all four skills. To examine this assumption a quasi-experimental study was designed using pre and posttests for two groups. The cluster taught by four skills integration was termed as treatment group and the one which was taught vocabulary in a traditional way was named as control groups. Quite often stress is put by the researchers on developing skills but not much has been done to study whether these four skills can be used to develop sub skills like vocabulary and grammar. If these skills improve learners' vocabulary when used strategically that would pave a way to another approach which will benefit students in two ways. First of all they will improve the sub-skill being targeted, and as it is being done through all four skills, they will hone all four skills and will do well in professional exams.

Literature Review

According to Schmitt (2000) acquiring second language requires lexical knowledge so it has conspicuous importance. Nation (2001) takes it further and associate vocabulary knowledge and practice. He asserts that developing vocabulary plays a significant role in honing of four skills. Teaching vocabulary is a fundamental characteristic gaining proficiency in a language as languages are built on words. Alqahtani (2015). One of the ways to develop learners' vocabulary is drilling. Thorbury (2002) views it a way to make the learner aware of how words sound. The literature in vocabulary building is full of techniques and methods but broadly they can be divided into two: Explicit and implicit teaching of vocabulary. Explicit teaching has been driven from traditional approaches to teaching a second language like Grammar translation whereas implicit teaching has its roots in communicative and post communicative teaching approaches. Traditional approach involves looking up the word in the dictionary and learning the meaning then making sentences whereas implicit teaching involves providing clues and making the context available. Dubin (1993) points that as a way of handling unfamiliar vocabulary through context is widely used by the specialists.

Though literature in vocabulary teaching is rich and seems to be divided into two main approaches explicit and implicit teaching of vocabulary, the role of four skills integration has been investigated much to develop vocabulary. Developing four language skills is not a novice idea in fact it is quite popular and nowadays almost all professional exams assesses these skills. The new approaches like content based instructions and task based teaching advocate integration of four skills which means that reading, writing, listening and speaking should be combined to develop language proficiency. Real and expressive communication is possible if four skills are integrated. (Oxford, David C. Lee, M. Ann Snow, Robin C. Scarcella, 1994). Widdowson (1978) to comprehend and produce language exposure is required to both receptive and productive skills as disconnected 'units' would develop ones language.

Vocabulary learning cannot be done in isolation it requires context and practice. There is a need to investigate the ways or methods through which learners learn and practice new words with the holistic understanding of words.

Hypotheses

1. There will be no significant difference between pretests scores of vocabulary of the treatment and control groups.
2. There will be no significant difference between pre and post test scores of vocabulary of the treatment group.
3. There will be no significant difference between posttests scores of vocabulary of the treatment and control groups.

Material and Methods

Pretest-posttest non-randomized control-group design is widely used in research pertaining to language learning. Zyzik (2011) studied the impact of knowledge of lexis and procedural sequencing on learning of Spanish idioms employing pretest-posttest non randomized control-group design. This study uses quantitative data from pre and posttests of two groups. One group was termed as the treatment group which was taught vocabulary through four skills integration strategy and the other group was termed as control which is taught by a traditional vocabulary teaching methods. Then their pre and

posttests mean scores were compared to find out the effectiveness of four language skills integration strategy. To select the participants from four intact classes, an IELTS test was administered and two intact sections were selected which have homogenous English Language Proficiency bands. The pilot study of pre and posttests also carried on a group which did not participate in the study and had scored the same IELTS bands as scored by the sections chosen for the study. The consistence of scores of pre and posttests was checked which showed good reliability.

Population

The study is carried out in a university and the participants were studying English at the undergraduate level in the computer science department. The university is located in defense which a posh area but students from varied social and economic background study here.

Sampling

Convenience sampling has been used for this study which is one of the non-probability sampling. Dörnyei considers it as most widely used type of sample in L2. This type of sampling usually involves students of researchers' own institutions. (Dörnyei, 2007).

Participants

Two sections comprised of students of first semester were selected. Each section had 50 students which included both genders, males and females. The total sample involved 100 participants. Their language proficiency ranged from pre intermediate to advanced level. This means each section included students with overall pre intermediate, intermediate and advanced level language proficiency. The data of ten students were discarded as they were not regular.

Research Instruments

Pre-test

A pre-test was constructed for assessing students' knowledge of the targeted words. The pre-test was comprised of two questions. Both questions were about making sentences but in the first question they had to make sentences words whereas in the second question of the idiomatic expressions.

Validity and reliability of Pre-test

The test was prepared by consulting ten experienced university teachers. The vocabulary was selected from the books published by well-known publishers.

Post test

The test was prepared by consulting ten experienced university teachers The Posttest was comprised of two questions. Both questions were about making sentences but in the first question they had to make sentences words whereas in the second question of the idiomatic expressions. The pre and posttest had the same target words but the posttest was delayed to avoid false results.

Table 1
Syllabus or outlines

S.no	Vocabulary
1	Twenty eight Idiomatic expressions.
2	Thirty nine target Words

Materials or Resource Used

Books and resources for vocabulary development

1. English for Everyone English Idioms by Thomas Booth DK Penguin Random House. (reading, writing and listening tasks, only treatment group)
2. 4000 Essential English Words 5 Paul Nation, 2009 (reading and listening tasks, only treatment group)

Procedure

After selecting two sections the lesson plans and contents for teaching were drawn. After discussing with the senior and expert teachers it was decided to allocate four weeks to teach tenses. The lesson plans for four weeks given (Appendix C, D). The treatment group was taught vocabulary through all four skills as the target in mind. Whereas the control group was taught through the traditional method.

Table 2
Difference between Four skills integration and Traditional Method

Characteristics of Traditional approach	Characteristics of Four Skills Integration Strategy
1. Focus on vocabulary and No integration or minimal integration of Reading, Speaking and Listening. Limited to natural integration of other skills. (Like teacher and students' interaction, information on the board.	1. Uses integration of all four skills (RSLW) order to teach the target words.
2. Focus on explicit teaching mostly	2. Integration of four skills is done through a common theme for vocabulary teaching.
3. Teacher centric mostly	3. Focus on implicit teaching mostly.
4. No use of audio and video	4. Student centric mostly.
5. No speaking tasks included	5. Use of audio and video
6. No listening tasks included	6. Speaking tasks included
7. No reading tasks included	7. Reading tasks included
8. Grammar is taught explicitly	8. Listening tasks included
	9. Grammar (tenses) is taught implicitly mostly.

Controls

Following controls were put in use to minimize the effects of other factors

- The same teacher taught both clusters.
- Both clusters had the same topics
- The objectives for both cohorts were the same
- Teaching timings were the same but days were different.

- Students' and teacher compatibility for both groups was also matched through a discussion with them by a senior faculty member.
- Students were not told that they were participating in a research although after post-test it was revealed.
- Both groups were chosen based on the result of a language proficiency test which showed fair homogeneity.
- The control group was taught in a traditional way with no integration of four skills. That means reading, writing, listening and speaking were not integrated. However, integration of reading and writing minimally employed which was traditionally used in intact classes.
- Same time and sessions were allotted to both groups.
- Exercises and material related to tenses was kept same only approach was different.
- Students' and teacher compatibility for both groups was also matched through a discussion with students by a senior faculty member.
- Teacher observed (during the class) and chatted with students to identify and control any extraneous variable.

Results and Discussion

Table 3
Comparison of Pretest Scores of vocabulary of the Treatment and Control Groups.

Dependent Variable	group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Vocabulary	Pre-Control	45	3.444	1.235	.18410
	Pre Treatment	45	3.068	.87332	.13166

The mean scores of pretest of the control group for vocabulary is N=45; 3.44. The mean score of pretest of the treatment group is N=45; 3.068.

Table 4
Comparison of vocabulary pre-test scores of treatment and control group using independent sample t test.

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean dif	Std. Error dif	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
SCOR	Equal variances assumed	8.066	.006	1.656	87	.101	.37626	.22720	-.07531	.82784
ES	Equal variances not assumed			1.662	79.291	.100	.37626	.22634	-.07422	.82675

Decision Rule: Reject H_0 , if $p \leq \alpha$. If significance (p value of Levene's test is less than or equal to α (usually .05) then reject the null hypothesis.

Table 4 portrays that $p = .101 > .05$. This indicates that there is no difference in pretest of vocabulary of Treatment and Control groups. The t-test reveals a statistically insignificant difference between the mean scores of pretests of Grammar of the Treatment and Control group. The mean score of pretest of control group is (3.44) and mean scores of pretest of Treatment group is (3.068).

Table 5
Relationship of pre and posttest of vocabulary of the treatment group.

Dependent Variable	group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Vocabulary	Pre Treatment	45	3.044	.87790	.131087
	Post Treatment	45	7.533	1.7913	.26705

The mean scores of pretest of treatment group for English Language Proficiency is (3.044) and the means score of posttest of treatment group is (7.533). This infers that there is a significant difference in vocabulary development of treatment group before and after the treatment.

It is concluded that integration of four skills is a better strategy to enhance vocabulary of the students as compare with traditional teaching method.

Table 6
Comparison of pre-test and posttest scores of grammar of treatment group using independent sample t test.

Treatment Group: Pre and Post Essay Writing	Paired Difference				t	df	Sig(2-tailed)	
	Mean	Std. Dev	Std. Error mean	95% interval of the difference				
				Lower				upper
Pair 1 Pretest Treatment Group (Vocabulary) Posttest Treatment Group (Vocabulary)	-4.48889	2.25250	.33578	-5.16561	-3.81216	-13.368	44 .000	

Decision Rule: Reject H_0 , if $p \leq \alpha$. If significance (p value of Levene's test is less than or equal to α (usually .05) then reject the null hypothesis.

Table 6 portrays that $p = .000 < .05$. This indicates that there is significant difference in pretest and posttest of vocabulary of Treatment group. The t-test reveals a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of pre and posttest of vocabulary of Treatment group. The mean score of pretest of the treatment group is (3.068) and mean scores of post-test of Treatment group is (7.53). The difference in means is 4.48.

Table 7
Relationship of posttest of Grammar of the treatment and Control group

Dependent Variable	group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Vocabulary	Post Control	45	4.711	1.324	.19752
	Post Treatment	45	7.533	1.791	.26705

The mean scores of posttests of control group for vocabulary is (4.711) and the mean score of the treatment group for vocabulary is (7.533). It is concluded that integration of four skills is a better strategy to develop learners' vocabulary as compare to the traditional teaching approach.

Table 8
Comparison of posttest scores of vocabulary of treatment and control group using independent sample t test

		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Dif	Std. Error Diff	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
SCOR	Equal variances assumed	5.469	.022	-8.497	88	.000	-2.82222	.33215	-3.48231	-2.16214
ES	Equal variances not assumed			-8.497	81.052	.000	-2.82222	.33215	-3.48310	-2.16135

Decision Rule: Reject H_0 , if $p \leq \alpha$. If significance (p value of Levene's test is less than or equal to α (usually .05) then reject the null hypothesis.

Table 8 portrays that $p = .000 < .05$. This indicates that there is significant difference in posttest of vocabulary of Treatment and Control group. The t-test reveals a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of posttest of vocabulary of Treatment and Control group. The mean score of posttest of the Control group is (4.71) and mean scores of post-test of Treatment group is (7.53). The difference in means is 2.82.

Findings

No difference between pretests of the treatment and control groups was found which means they had same level of vocabulary. The difference between pre and posttest of the treatment was significant which means four skills integrated strategy to teach vocabulary was effective. Moreover, the posttests scores of the treatment and control groups were significantly different. The four skills strategy intervention worked better as the treatment group scored better than the control group.

Conclusion

The treatment group outperformed the control group. Both group had the same ability in the pretest but in the posttest, after having taught through four skills integration strategy, the treatment group scored better than the control group. Therefore, it can be concluded that four skills integration strategy relatively works better than the traditional teaching method. The underlying reasons for the efficacy of the four skills integration strategy can be researched through qualitative research.

Recommendations

It is recommended to Text books authors and teachers that they produce material for vocabulary development integrating all four skills. In other words giving students a chance to read, write, speak and listen the same content or target words helps them learn better.

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