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Research Article

IMPROVING LEXICAL COMPETENCE OF A+ LEVEL LEARNERS

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Karimova Muattar Fayzullayevna
Basic doctoral student in Tashkent, State Pedagogical University, Uzbekistan

ABSTRACT

The study examined the whether different instructional strategies impact on the development of lexical competence in A+ level learners. An evaluation of the effectiveness of identified instructional strategies intertwined with explicit vocabulary teaching in improving lexical competence have been addressed. The analysis of cognitive and motivational factors in lexical competence development have been examined.

Materials and Methods: Vocabulary Learning Strategies Inventory (VLSI) was administered. Performance was compared using a pre- and post-test in the study. Participants were informed about the study's objectives and data anonymization was done with an eye on ethical considerations.

Results: Results showed consistency and stability when the investigation looked at participants' vocabulary ratings. There was a strong relationship between the results of vocabulary learning tactics and improvements in pre- and post-test scores, according to the study. The growth of lexical competence was validated by the Peason Product Moment Correlation. Subjects' reported vocabulary acquisition tactics were positively correlated with their post-test scores, suggesting that their strategies were effective.

Discussion: In order to increase post-scores, the study found that A+ level learners should use vocabulary building tactics such as context-based learning, mnemonics, word association, and repetition. Memory, retention, word retrieval, and context-based learning are all ways that can improve one's vocabulary, but prior studies failed to find a strong correlation between the two. More advanced vocabulary acquisition models and investigations into possible reasons should guide future research.

Conclusion: Using mnemonics, word associations, context-based learning, and repetition, the study examines how A-level learners might increase their lexical competence. It emphasizes the importance of motivation and cognition in

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learning new words, with the most fruitful strategies being word association and context-based learning, which lead to excellent results on final exams.

KEYWORDS

a-level learners, lexical competence, VLSI, experimental design, SPSS.

INTRODUCTION

The review seeks to examine the strategies and methods for improving lexical competence of A+ level learners. Therefore, the researcher seeks to present a well-founded and confirmatory assessment using an experimental design on the success rate of key strategies and motivational factors towards attainment of lexical competence. The implications of the findings towards methods for lexical competence proficiency have also been justified among others.

Background of the Study

The relevance of lexical competence has been featured across several studies. According to Castles et al. (2018) lexical competence consists of a crucial component of language competency which impacts on the capacity of the learners in participating in complex academic discourses. Supporting the same claims Delgadova (2015) held that other than having a wide vocabulary coverage, it symbolizes the potential for the application of vocabulary in a correct manner by production namely speaking and writing and responsive which refers to reading and listening. Aligned to the above Laufer (2018) stated that acquiring proficiency in complex vocabulary remains fundamental for primary school learners mainly in A+ level, for the sake of academic success and participation in more challenging environments that demand accuracy, coherence, and consistency in communicating complex ideas. Similarly, Nation (2018) held that native proficiency which includes learning multiple words but also the comprehension of their significance, their implications, and applicable usage circumstances, is required of learners at the A+ level. Affirming the same Webb and Chang (2018) note that this is critical for lexical competence considering that the sophistication of the text and clarity are influenced by the capacity to select precise terminology. For instance, the prevention of the recurrence and demonstration of high skill, requires learners to select words that are not only acceptable but also suitable in context and differentiated when writing or communicating orally.

Notwithstanding its valuable contribution, learners are reported to struggle in developing lexical competence, mainly the ones that dedicate to attain high degrees of proficiency. As held by Gumede and Boakye (2020) and Francis et al. (2018) primary school learners are reported to struggle in learning and maintaining the complex language needed for both professional and academic environments. In line with the above Zhao and Li (2018) and Kim et al. (2019) asserted that A+ level learners encounter cognitive difficulties in comprehending word meanings and forms, which render it difficult for them to utilise vocabulary effectively in academic engagements. Further Kim et al. (2019) indicated that development of lexical competence requires the integration of successful teaching techniques into language training. Connecting to the above Nation (2018) argued that vocabulary acquisition can be greatly enhanced through the combination of explicit vocabulary

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training with strategies that incorporate context-based instruction, word connection, and repeated usage of space. However, albeit the increased assessment of vocabulary teaching strategies, there has been little research undertaken to specifically expound on the lexical competence needs of students at the A+ level.

Next, is an evaluation of the various methods that are considered suitable in developing lexical competence of A+ level learners. According to Webb and Chang (2018) advanced vocabulary learning invites specialized approaches that exceed the conventional methods employed primary school learners. As held by Piper et al. (2016) the focus of these techniques ought to be about the improvement of the students' comprehension of words and the ability to make use of them accurately across varying academic settings. Furthermore, Zhao and Li (2018) stated that cognitive and motivational factors impact on lexical competency development. For instance, cognitive learners have more potential to absorb and recall newly acquired concepts with much effectiveness. On the other hand, Nation (2019) depicted that motivation is fundamental for vocabulary acquisition, majorly for primary school learners who need a constant effort for lexical competence development. Although, the far-reaching effects of these has been often overlooked across studies, which creates a gap in knowledge of the manner in which these components interact within advanced settings. With an emphasis on specialised teaching techniques and the cognitive and motivational elements that affect vocabulary acquisition, this study attempts to investigate the best practices for raising lexical competence at the A+ level in light of these difficulties.

Inasmuch as A+ level learners should exhibit lexical competency, a lot of them have difficulty learning complex language thus impacting on their academic achievement. As held by Snow and Mathews (2016) at the A+ level students are expected to use complex technology in a correct manner in their academic contexts including showing solid comprehension of the same. Nevertheless, studies reveal that even proficient learners have a difficult time learning and applying complex language. Laufer (2018) stated that as the learners sought to attain lexical competence, they reported difficulties in going beyond simplicity of vocabulary usage hence been limited in proficiency for complex academic discourse. In addition, Webb and Chang (2018) asserted that high level vocabulary proficiency requires mechanical memorization. For instance, it requires exposition to words in context, understanding of their deeper significance, and their effective employment in interactive communication. Countering the above findings, Wang et al. (2018) held that regardless of the explicit importance of vocabulary instruction for the attainment of lexical competence, a majority of A+ level learners fail to explicitly benefit from it due to the fact they fail to practice or interact with more complex language conditionalities. Aligned to the above Wills et al. (2022) held that lexical competence can both be influenced by motivational and cognitive factors despite that their significance is complicated by language learning. Opposed to the assertions above Pretorius and Spaull (2016) held that albeit motivation been valuable to prolonged lexical competence attainment, A+ level learners may encounter several cognitive challenges, for example the digestion of complicated word types or maintenance of extensive vocabulary across the period. Overall, the gap in this study is the lack of specialized teaching strategies and the dearth of knowledge on the cognitive and motivational factors impacting on vocabulary development or A+ level learners. As a consequence, this study aims to narrow the gap via assessment of the most suitable methods to achieving lexical competency of the A+ level learners

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whilst considering the difficulties and cognitive complexities involved in the process.

Research Questions

RQ: Do different instructional strategies influence the development of lexical competence in A+ level learners?

Research Objectives

1. To evaluate the effectiveness of various instructional strategies, including explicit vocabulary teaching, in improving lexical competence among A+ level learners.
2. To examine the role of cognitive and motivational factors in lexical competence development process at the A+ level.
3. To propose most suitable for improving lexical competence among A+ level learners.

Significance of the Study

This study aims to enhance our understanding of how lexical competence grows in advanced learners, particularly those at the A+ level. It will improve teaching strategies for advanced language competency by illuminating the challenges these students face when acquiring and using complex terminology. This study addresses a knowledge vacuum by focusing on the vocabulary needs of advanced learners. In order to better understand how to teach this demographic, this study will look at different approaches and see which ones work best for advanced language learners and vocabulary development. The findings will also help language instructors develop more targeted and context-dependent approaches to teaching vocabulary, which should improve the academic performance of students at the A+ level. Better pedagogical practices and course materials can be created as a result of the study's increased knowledge of the cognitive and motivational aspects of lexical competence.

METHODS

This study used a strictly quantitative research design to investigate how well different vocabulary acquisition techniques can raise the lexical competency of students at the A+ level. This study benefited from a quantitative approach since it made it possible to test vocabulary learning objectively and utilise statistical analysis to assess the data' relevance. A pre-test and post-test design were part of the technique, which was backed up by statistical analysis of the data.

Participants

50 A+ level students enrolled in primary school i.e. Grades 5 and 6 participated in this study. Purposive sampling was used in the selection process to make sure the participants were actively involved in language learning and satisfied the necessary competence level. To guarantee the results' generalisability, the sample comprised a wide variety of students in terms of gender, age, and academic background.

Materials

Assessment of pre- and post-test vocabulary

The pre-test and post-test vocabulary evaluation, which was intended to gauge participants' improvements in lexical competency, was a crucial tool in this investigation. To evaluate the students' capacity to identify and use complex language in context, the test included both receptive and productive vocabulary problems.

- Receptive Vocabulary Test: This component evaluated participants' knowledge of advanced academic vocabulary with word-definition matching, multiple-choice questions, and reading comprehension tasks.
- Productive Vocabulary Test: In this portion, participants had to write brief paragraphs or complete sentences using words from the target vocabulary.

Academic and discipline-specific terms that are critical for advanced students at the A+ level was taken into

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consideration while choosing the vocabulary items (Laufer, 2018). The Vocabulary Learning Strategies Inventory (VLSI) was utilised in the study to investigate the vocabulary learning techniques that the participants used. This tool assessed the prevalence and efficacy of a number of tactics, including word associations, repetition, mnemonic devices, and context-based learning. Participants used a Likert scale to score how often they used each of the 30 items in the VLSI (1 = Never, 5 = Always). The techniques that most closely correspond with gains in lexical competence were found with the aid of this inventory.

Methodology

Pre-test and post-test criteria

The pre-test, which evaluated the participants' prior vocabulary knowledge, was first finished. To make sure that participants were not impacted by other influences, the test was given in a controlled setting. Following the completion of the pre-test, the participants used the VLSI-identified techniques to learn vocabulary for six weeks. Active vocabulary learning strategies, like employing words in academic writing, participating in conversations, and developing word associations, were the main focus of the lesson. Participants took the post-test at the conclusion of the 6-week period; it was structured similarly to the pre-test so that performance could be directly compared.

Statistical Analysis

Pre-test and post-test scores were compared as part of the primary data analysis to see if there were any appreciable gains in lexical competence. The statistical techniques listed below were used:

- Characteristic Statistics: To give a summary of vocabulary proficiency before and after the intervention, mean scores, standard deviations, and ranges were computed for both pre-test and post-test data.
- To ascertain whether there is a statistically significant difference between the pre-test and post-test scores, a paired sample t-test was employed. This test determined if the vocabulary acquisition techniques used during the study were responsible for the increase in lexical competence. P-values below 0.05 were regarded as statistically significant.
- Correlation Analysis: The association between participants' reported vocabulary learning strategies (based on the VLSI) and their increase in vocabulary scores from the pre-test to the post-test will be investigated using Pearson's correlation coefficient. The techniques that are most closely linked to advances in lexical competence will be determined with the use of this analysis.

Ethical Considerations

The appropriate institutional review board granted ethical approval. Every participant received information regarding the study's objectives, their voluntary involvement, and their freedom to discontinue participation at any moment without incurring any fees. All participants gave their informed consent before to taking part in the study, and data anonymisation was used to guarantee confidentiality. Only the research team had access to the safely kept data.

RESULTS

The results of the experiment are presented in this section with the focus to establish the significant differences between pre-test and post-test scores. This was following the completion of vocabulary evaluation, aimed to gauge participants' improvements in lexical competency. Table 1 below captures the summary statistics of key outcomes throughout the experiment.

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Table 1: Descriptive statistics of key outcomes

Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Pre-Test Score	50	58.00	92.00	74.1800	8.24049
Post-Test Score	50	66.00	95.00	81.7200	7.29003
Contextual Learning	50	2.00	5.00	3.6800	.95704
Word Association	50	2.00	5.00	3.8200	.84973
Mnemonics	50	3.00	5.00	4.1000	.76265
Repetition	50	3.00	5.00	4.0600	.76692
Valid N (listwise)	50				

The results under Table 1 above showcase the descriptive statistics for the key outcomes and the mean scores are all above the dispersion trends. For that reason, it means that there exists consistency and stability in each of the reported outcomes. In other words, there is minimal deviation from the average scores both in the pre-test and post-test including the reported trends for word associations, repetition, mnemonic devices, and context-based learning.

Table 2: Mean differences between pre-test and post-test scores

Paired Samples Test

		Paired Differences							
					95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	Lower	Upper	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Pair 1	Pre-Test Score - Post-Test Score	-7.54000	1.45980	.20645	-7.95487	-7.12513	-36.523	49	.000

Under Table 2 results it is evident that the mean differences between pre-test and post-test scores are significant at 95% confidence interval. For that reason, that the rise or fall in scores (between the first and second assessments) is not attributable to chance alone, according to the available data. Therefore, there was a statistically significant change in scores between

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the pre- and post-tests as a result of the intervention or treatment for improvement of lexical competence.

Table 3: Correlation analysis on reported vocabulary learning strategies (based on the VLSI) and their increase in vocabulary scores from the pre-test to the post-test

Correlations

		Pre-Test Score	Post-Test Score	Contextual Learning	Word Association	Mnemonics	Repetition
Pre-Test Score	Pearson Correlation	1	.990**	.911**	.684**	.510**	.466**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000	.000	.000	.001
	N	50	50	50	50	50	50
Post-Test Score	Pearson Correlation	.990**	1	.914**	.684**	.523**	.448**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000	.000	.000	.001
	N	50	50	50	50	50	50
Contextual Learning	Pearson Correlation	.911**	.914**	1	.580**	.408**	.555**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000		.000	.003	.000
	N	50	50	50	50	50	50
Word Association	Pearson Correlation	.684**	.684**	.580**	1	.060	.518**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000		.680	.000
	N	50	50	50	50	50	50
Mnemonics	Pearson Correlation	.510**	.523**	.408**	.060	1	-.010
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.003	.680		.942
	N	50	50	50	50	50	50

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Repetition	Pearson Correlation	.466**	.448**	.555**	.518**	-.010	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.001	.001	.000	.000	.942	
	N	50	50	50	50	50	50

Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Finally, the results presented in Table 3 above reveals that a high correlation is present across changes in the pre-test and post-test scores and the outcomes for the reported vocabulary learning strategies (based on the VLSI). The Pearson Product Moment Correlation reveals the p-values to be above 95% confidence interval hence a high linearity of the factors. In this regard, vocabulary learning strategies (based on the VLSI) prove to move in the same direction which further confirms the attainment of lexical competence development of the cohort. In fact, the test results reveal that the correlation coefficients are increased between the post-test scores versus the reported vocabulary learning strategies which proves the efficiency of the subjects in attaining optimum lexical competence based on the interventions in place.

DISCUSSION

The research has evaluated the improvement of lexical competence of A+ level learners. The findings based on the reported significance level in the mean differences between pre-test and post-test scores have proved that different instructional strategies influence the development of lexical competence in A+ level learners. Indeed, in this study it was affirmed that there was observable improvement in the post-scores upon the utilization of key vocabulary development strategies such as repetition, word association, use of mnemonics, and context-based learning. The findings align to the research by Laufer (2018), Nation (2019), Webb and Chang (2018), Delgadova (2015), and Laufer (2018) since they also affirmed the suitability of instructional strategies such as context-based learning and spaced repetition towards lexical competence development. Nonetheless, the findings derived from the experimental design contradict the research by Francis et al. (2018), Gumede and Boakye (2020) and Zhao and Li (2018) where lexical competence and repetition and word association depicted inverse proportionality when linked to lexical competence. For that reason, an increase in lexical competence only connected to a decrease in either word association or context-based learning. However, in the experiment conducted in this study a direct proportionality was reported between lexical competence versus instructional strategies such as word association, for example. In the experiment adopted in this research cognitive and motivational factors such as contextualization and meaning making as well as memory and retention led to the increased post-test scores among A+ level learners. As a result, their proved to have significant effects on attainment of lexical competence of the cohort. However, several studies such as Kim et al. (2019), Piper et al. (2019), and Pretorius and Spaull (2016) could not establish significant association between lexical competence versus strategies such as memory and retention, word retrieval, and context-based learning among A+ level learners. Considering the outcomes of the research several implications can be cited which include: Findings from the study corroborate previous research showing that A+ level students' lexical competency is much improved when teachers use techniques

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including context-based learning, mnemonics, word association, and repetition. This means that in order to effectively promote vocabulary expansion, educators and teachers should prioritize integrating these tactics into their lesson plans. It is important for educators to create learning environments that prioritize deeper understanding and student engagement in addition to vocabulary instruction, because cognitive factors (such as meaning-making and memory retention) and motivational factors (such as contextualization) have a positive effect on lexical competence. Improved learning outcomes and enhanced retention can result from combining cognitive and motivating factors. This study's inconsistent results raise doubts about the consistency of the relationship between lexical competence and instructional approaches. Possible causes of these inconsistencies should be investigated in future studies, which should also take into account contextual or individual variations in how learners react to particular tactics. As a result, we may see more sophisticated models of vocabulary learning developed to meet the needs of individual students.

CONCLUSION

The study has presented focused investigation on lexical competence improvement through of A-level learners. On this account the study has confirmed the effectiveness of various instructional strategies in improving lexical competence among A+ level learners mainly the use of mnemonics, word association, context-based learning, and repetition. Further, the study has presented the role of cognitive and motivational factors in the vocabulary acquisition process at the A+ level. For this study it can be stated that context-based learning and word association are the most suitable for improving lexical competence among A+ level learners given their high significance in post-test scores.

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