



Investigating the Impact of Strategies Used in Contextualization and Structures Toward Teaching English Words for EFL University Students

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ARTICLE INFO

Keywords: Contextualization, Strategies, Structures, Words, EFL University Students

Received : 05, September

Revised : 20, September

Accepted: 05, October

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ABSTRACT

The aim of the study was to find out the impact of strategies used in contextualization and structures toward teaching English words for Libyan EFL university students. The used a pretest and a posttest. The participants in this study were 65 students from a university in Sebha learning English as a foreign language (EFL) with their 2 English language teachers. The students were divided into two groups. The result showed that contextualization was effective for high performers (HPs) regarding contextual speaking and writing. Strategies used in structures effective for average performers (APs) and low performers (LPs). The average performers (APs) and low performers (LPs) taught by the structural strategies had better performance due to analyzing words morphologically, and the students' participation and collaboration with each other.

INTRODUCTION

Applying vocabulary in various contexts is significant when using language in conveying messages and receiving them. Students can cultivate their vocabulary through such use. Bauer and Nation (1993) state that words are crucial for learning and using the language. Words are of two types, active and passive. The active words are the ones which students recognize, remember and use them to produce the language. The passive words are the ones which are found in a context and can be understandable for learners. However, the learners may not be able to use them for language production. Not mastering using vocabulary can make learners unable to communicate (Nation, 2022; Alhodairy & Saleh, 2023). Thus, different teaching and learning strategies are being sought and then developed to make words easy to learn. As a result, teachers and students at the university level could find it helpful and useful when teaching and learning vocabulary through of contextual strategies and structural strategies.

The problem

Many EFL learners tend to memorize words which make them rely on understanding one meaning. Such an issue rises from not using words in various contexts as well as through communication. As a result, learners find it difficult to learn words since they are not used in communication.

Research questions

- 1) Are contextual strategies more effective than structural strategies toward teaching English vocabulary?
- 2) To what extent can the use of different contexts of vocabulary assist EFL learners to comprehend the correct meaning of words?

Objectives of the research

The study aimed:

- 1) to compare between contextual strategies and structural strategies regarding their effectiveness when they are used in teaching vocabulary
- 2) to compare the performance of the high performers (HPs), the average performers (APs) and low performers (LPs)

Research Hypotheses

- 1) The learners taught through contextualization and structures are not meant to be significantly different.
- 2) The high performers (HPs), the average performers (APs) and low performers (LPs) taught by contextual strategies and structural strategies are not meant to be significantly different.

THEORETICAL REVIEW

According to Brown, Stoeckel, McLean, and Stewart (2022), learning vocabulary through context can maintain student's time, where there is no much need to use dictionaries repeatedly. Using a context enables the student to think what a new vocabulary means (Ur, 2022). Context consists of two

categories: Directive (Pedagogical) and Automatic (Natural). The pedagogical context refers to writing sentences to teach learners what a new vocabulary means. The automatic one deals with writing for communicating ideas; as for learners to comprehend a new vocabulary means, they should be aware of the information presented in the words exist or part of them do. Using context assists learners to understand the meanings of uneasy vocabulary through explaining sentences to them. This could enable learners learn synonyms, antonyms, hyponyms, definitions. Context also assists learners to use vocabulary in the appropriate context, and makes them autonomous learners, where they can work on solving problems independently. Homographs are not easy to learn. For instance, 'watch me how I set the watch', watch can function as a noun and as a verb. Not using the context makes the sentence causes difficulty for learners to what the vocabulary means. Hence, contextualization is very essential for making learners understand the different meanings of one word and words.

Structural strategies focus on breaking a word into morphological segments (i.e., a prefix, a root and a suffix to explain and clarify what a vocabulary means). These strategies are very beneficial for learners to cultivate their vocabulary. For example, prefixes, suffixes, and roots assist learners be aware and distinguish the meanings of words without analyze the meanings of the word. All what they do is to analyze the word to guess what it means. When a learner knows what the root of the word means, s/he can their vocabulary sequentially. Thus, knowing the root will facilitate the learners to differentiate parts of speech and developing words takes its place. Learners can remember the words they make easily, particularly if drills are provided to them. For instance, perhaps learners are asked to form nouns from verbs. Such drills could enhance the learners to develop their vocabulary.

EFL learners can enhance and develop vocabulary learning through their own reflection of the vocabulary and how they are used in various contexts. They can select what sort of words they should learn and the way they should be learned. Learners also should experience the different forms of vocabulary and try to use them every day. This could facilitate learners build vocabulary as quickly as possible due to much use and exposure to words. Little exposure and use cannot help in cultivating words. Therefore, much use and exposure assists in understanding words and knowing how to use them in the appropriate context. This may assist learners master new words lexically. Thus, they should take their chances to review what they have learned and connect it to what they have learned before. However, when learners are too much exposed to vocabulary verbally and in writing, they may not be able to use them. Finally, engaging learners in participation is also essential. They should actively involve in learning new words by relating what they have learned to what they have learned before. This could make them reflect their uses of words in different contexts.

According to Dang and Li (2022), vocabulary learning traditionally practiced through definitions. In this process, students could undersand the meanings of words by using dictionaries or giving them exercises. This process

is time-saving and easy for both, teacher and students. Nonetheless, it may be ineffective for cultivating learners' vocabulary. Learning vocabulary through definitions (use of dictionaries) may not be beneficial to illustrate the meanings of words. According to G6rger, De Simone, Schulte-K6rner, and Moll (2021), dictionaries are not effective enough to learn the meanings of vocabulary. They do not assist learners how to use words in various contexts. They merely assist in knowing the meaning not the use. According to Levesque, Breadmore, and Deacon (2021), teaching word through definitions is a process of describing the meaning of the word but not how it is used. For example, learners are provided with a number of words and use dictionaries to look up their meanings. However, using the words in different context is absent.

According to Wu and Juffs (2022), learners should be aware of the learnt words through speaking using them in various contexts, where accuracy, pronunciation and spelling should be correctly emphasized. There are particular categories that could assist in teaching words and learning them (Nation, 2022; Alhodairy & Saleh, 2023). They can be associated to a topic, a task, sameness or similarity in meaning, pair of words, words of different degrees, families, discourse, idioms or a variety of verbs, spelling challenges, phonological patterns (Alhodairy & Saleh, 2023). According to Levesque, Breadmore, and Deacon (2021), there are some factors which could be beneficial in cultivating vocabulary, (a) the degree of exposure to learning vocabulary, (b) practicing the use of the vocabulary and (c) encouraging a positive and collaborative process for teaching and learning words.

METHODOLOGY

Design of the study

Two tests (i.e., before implementing the strategies and after implementing them) were designed and given to the students. The students were divided into groups. Contextualization was used for teaching Group A and structures were used for teaching Group B. The students' performances regarding the strategies used in teaching were compared through posttest.

Participants

The participants were 65 university students learning English as a foreign language (EFL). The population was similar since the students had the same curriculum, assessment criteria and facilities. Purposive sampling technique was used because of the deans of the colleges allowed to conduct the study. The study also comprised 2 English language teachers.

The same teachers who taught the students were asked to teach the two groups. They were informed about how to apply the two strategies.

In order to discover the difference of the strategies the performance of the two groups, the students were categorized high, low and average performers. Any student obtained 60 marks or above was considered as a high performer, the one who obtained 45 to 59 was considered as an average performer and the one who obtained less than 45 was considered as a low performer.

Instruments of the study

A pretest, posttest and retention test were used. The purpose of the pretest was to determine how the groups are equivalent, the purpose of the posttest was to compare between the strategies. The tests included questions with items such as fill in gaps, multiple choice, true false, and matching.

Data collection

The students' scores were obtained from the pretest, the posttest and the retention test. The test was 1:30 minutes, and the full score was out of 100. SPSS program was used to analyze the scores of each group.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Data analysis

The below tables show the analysis of the data:

Table 1 shows the pretest scores of the experimental group and the control group and shows the comparison between significance of difference (SD), the mean (M).

Group	Performer's Level	No.	M	SD	SEM	t test		
						t	df	p. value
Experimental Group	Whole group	30	49.3	14.14	4.31			
Control Group	Whole group	30	49.94	14.10	4.30	.456	56	.1000
Experimental Group	High Performers	7	65.69	6.70	3.11	.071	12	.1048
Control Group	High Performers	10	48.31	1.0	.830			
Experimental Group	Average Performers	8	33.42	2.45	1.39			
Control Group	Average Performers	8	32.0	1.57	1.11	.329	16	.643
Experimental Group	Low Performers							
Control Group	Low Performers							

The mean of Group A was 49.3 and that of Group B was 49.94, the mean of the high performers (HPs) of Group A and Group B were 65.7 and 65.69, the average performers (APs) were 48.31 and 48.64, and the low performers (LPs) were 33.42 and 32.0. The standard deviations of the group A and group B were

14.14 and 14.10, HPs of Group A and Group B were 5.58 and 6.70, APs of Group A and Group B were 1.0 and 1.40 and LPs were 2.45 and 1.57. The standard errors of the means of Group A and Group B were 2.29 and 2.28, HPs of Group A and Group B were 2.47 and 3.11, APs of Group A and Group B were .830 and .885, and of the LPs of Group A and Group B were 1.39 and 1.11. The difference between the mean scores of the two groups in the pretest was insignificant. The degree of freedom of the two groups as a whole was 56, HPs of the groups was 12, APs of the groups was 20 and the LPs of the groups was 16. The p values which were .332, .643, .1000 and .1048 did not indicate any significance. Hence, it was discovered that there was no significant difference between the mean scores of the two groups, high performers, average performers and the low performers of the groups. It was established that the significant difference was not found between the performance of Group A and Group B in the pretest.

Table 2 shows the posttest scores of the experimental group and the control group and shows the comparison between significance of difference (SD), the mean (M).

Group	Achiever's Level	N	M	SD	SEM	t test		
						t	df	p. value
Experimental Group	Whole group	30	58.77	10.69	3.65	5.504	76	.004
Control Group	Whole group	30	68.84	17.49	4.94			
Experimental Group	High Performers	8	81.7	4.44	993.	6.60	12	.003
Control Group	High Performers	10	59.18	7.13	3.49			
Experimental Group	Average Performers	12	41.10	6.70	3.50	9.19	24	.000
Control Group	Average Performers	10	75.18	7.81	3.69			
Experimental Group	Low Performers	12	59.8	6.39	3.40	10.79	20	.000
Control Group	Low Performers							

The mean of Group A was 58.77 and that of Group B was 68.84, the mean of the high performers of Group A and Group B were 81.7 and 71.7, the average performers were 59.18 and 75.18, and the low performers were 41.10 and 59.8. The standard deviations of Group A and Group B were 10.69 and 17.49, HPs of Group A and Group B were 4.44 and 6.78, APs of Group A and Group B were 7.13 and 7.81 and LAs were 4.68 and 4.37. The standard errors of the means of

Group A and Group B were 3.65 and 4.94, HPs of the group A and group B were .993 and 3.96, APs of Group A and Group B were 3.49 and 3.69, and of the LPs Group A and Group B were 3.50 and 3.40. The mean, SD and SEM of both the groups were different. The degree of freedom of the Group A and Group B was 76, HPs of the groups was 12, APs of the groups was 24 and the LAs of the groups was 20. The p values were .004, .003, .000 and .000 which was significant. Hence, it was discovered that there was a significant difference between the mean scores of group A and group B, high performers, average performers and the low performers of the experimental group and the control group. The null hypothesis on the posttest demonstrates that there is no significant difference between the performance of the students taught through context and structures was denied. These results also supported by the study conducted by Alhodairy and Saleh (2023) that the teaching through context motivated learning because it explains the meanings of the difficult words. The results were also supported by the studies conducted by Ur (2022). It was concluded that the high performers learn more through the contextualization. He found that the high performing students performed better. However, using structures was found more effective for average and low performers. The results also supported the studies conducted by Brown, Stoeckel, McLean, and Stewart (2022). They found that the structures encouraged learning because they focus on dividing the word into segments.

Table 3 shows the retention test scores of the experimental group and the control group and shows the comparison between significance of difference (SD), the mean (M).

Group	Achiever's Level	N	M	SD	SEM	t test		
						t	df	p. value
Experimental Group	Whole group	30	55.76	11.61	1.90			
Control Group	Whole group	30	63.82	11.52	2.61	2.90	53	.003
Experimental Group	High performers	8	67.33	4.79	1.96	4.55	9	.002
Control Group	High performers	10	52.33	5.1	1.47			
Experimental Group	Average performers	12	36.3	4.44	1.4			
Control Group	Average performers	10	67.08	6.52	1.88	6.16	22	.000
Experimental Group	Low performers	12	52.9	3.81	1.2	8.95	18	.000
Control Group	Low performers							

	Low performers							
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The mean of Group A was 55.76 and that of Group B was 63.82, the mean of the high performers of Group A and Group B were 77.3 and 67.33, the average performers were 52.33 and 67.08, and the low performers (LPs) were 36.3 and 52.9. The standard deviations of Group A and Group B were 11.61 and 11.52, HPs of Group A and Group B were 2.90 and 4.55, APs of Group A and Group B were 5.1 and 6.52 and LPs were 4.44 and 3.81. The standard errors of the means of Group A and Group B were 2.95 and 1.61, HPs of Group A and Group B were 1.62 and 1.92, APs of Group A and Group B were 1.47 and 1.88, and of the LPs of Group A and Group B were 1.4 and 1.2. Both of the groups were different when comparing the mean, SD and SEM. The degree of freedom of Group A and Group B was 53, HPs of the groups was 10, APs of the groups was 22 and the LPs of the groups was 18. The p values were .003, .002, .000 and .000 which was significant. Hence, it was discovered that there was a significant difference between the mean scores of Group A and Group B, High performers, average performers and the low performers of Group A and Group B. The null hypothesis on the retention test reveals that there is no significant difference between the performance of the students taught through context and structures.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

There is a significant difference in the performances of the learners who were taught through context and structures strategies. The high performers who were taught through context performed better as compared to the performance of the high performers who were exposed to structures. The high performers who were exposed to context did better because they were able to understand the meanings of the words.

The average and low performers who were exposed to structures performed better in the posttest as compared to the low performers who were taught through context. The low performers were able to divide the word into segments but lacked competence in understand the meanings of the words from the context.

The students who were taught through context showed more ability in speaking and writing because word explanation. They were able to recognize the words and use them.

The recommendations of the study are as the following:

- 1) Teachers should be trained how to use contextual and structural strategies to teaching vocabulary. Using different contexts for the vocabulary and the morphological analyses of them should emphasized.
- 2) English language teachers should be encouraged to attend workshops for designing learning activities. They should also encourage their students to speak as to analyze the spoken words.
- 3) There is a need to conduct further research regarding this study highlighting on learner's behavior, proficiency level and gender differences.

FURTHER STUDY

It would be more encouraging that this study would be implemented on a large number of participants and to see if contextualization and structures strategies play a major role in learning vocabulary.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

I would like to thank all the students and the teachers who contributed in this research.

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