Comparing Intentional Vocabulary Learning Strategies of Rote-Copying versus Read-Plus

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this within-group experimental study was to compare the effectiveness of treatment on vocabulary acquisition and retention using two explicit vocabulary learning strategies (VLS) of Rote-Copying (RC) and Read-Plus (RP). Thirty five Form 1 Malaysian secondary school learners with poor English proficiency participated in both treatments for two weeks with each treatment carried out once in each week. A post-test was administered a week after the treatments. Participants read adapted texts and underwent different treatments. The RC required participants to copy L2 words, sentence in context and their translated L1 equivalent twice; while three vocabulary enhancement activities were used in RP. Nation's 1000 Level Vocabulary Test was used in this study. Results indicate that there was no significant difference between RC and RP in vocabulary learning. Both treatments led to significant vocabulary learning, however, participants showed better vocabulary gain in the post-test after undergoing the RP treatment. Interview findings indicate that participants preferred the more cognitively-challenging RP treatment. In contrast, the RC was deemed boring and ineffective. Nevertheless, RC was useful for low proficient ESL learners. In sum, intentional VLS seemed to be the key to vocabulary learning.

Keywords: intentional vocabulary learning; vocabulary learning strategies (VLS); Rote-Copying; Read-Plus; low proficiency ESL learners

INTRODUCTION

Words are the basic building blocks of a language. Knowing the lexical item in the target language is a requirement as it reflects one's proficiency and competence in the target language. Upon knowing a sufficient number of words in the target language, learners will be able to chain these words together to construct meaning for communication in the target language. According to Nation (2001), to deal with spoken texts, 6000 to 7000 families of words needed to be known and an 8000 to 9000 word family are needed to deal with written texts. Therefore, knowing vocabulary is essential to understand the simplest written texts. There are two main approaches to vocabulary learning –either they are learnt implicitly, incidentally or they are taught explicitly, intentionally (Dakun 2000). Language teachers should know how to incorporate these implicit and explicit vocabulary learning strategies (VLS) into their lessons to teach learners novel words. To learn new words, Nation (2001) claims that explicit learning activities which focus on the target words are pivotal for successful L2 vocabulary acquisition.

For the past few years, the comparison between incidental and intentional VLS has been widely researched and a majority has found intentional vocabulary learning to triumph over incidental VLS (Barcroft 2009, Min 2008, Sonbul & Schmitt 2010, Mostafa Mirzaii 2012). Research has been done to investigate the use of various VLS by local Malaysian

tertiary students who have achieved a certain level of proficiency in the English language (Shima Kameli, Ghazali Mostapha & Roselan Baki 2012). Yet, emphasis has not been put on lower secondary school learners with low English language proficiency. It is therefore necessary to investigate intentional VLS among Malaysian lower secondary school learners with low English language proficiency.

This study sets out to aid L2 teachers to examine the effectiveness of two VLS to teach vocabulary to the low proficiency learners. The present study focused on intentional VLS since researchers (Barcroft 2009, Hummel 2010) have found that intentional VLS were more effective than incidental VLS. Barcroft (2009) mentioned that direct instructions to learn target words and other explicit methods of learning new words enhance vocabulary learning during reading. This research attempts to compare two intentional vocabulary learning strategies of rote copying with the target L1 words provided (Rote-Copying) and doing a series of vocabulary exercise after reading a passage (Read-Plus).

The former method sees the use of rote copying in learning vocabulary with the L1 translation provided. Research on intentional vocabulary learning strategies was carried out by Hummel (2010) to compare the three conditions of L1 to L2 translation, L2 to L1 translation and a rote-copying task. Though translation is not favourable under the pervasive influence of the direct method and behaviourism, claiming that L2 learners will be influenced by L1, the role of active translation might contribute to vocabulary learning (Hummel 2010). Findings from this research show that having learners copy the provided sentences and translation of the new vocabulary was the most effective way to acquire new words instead of actively translating the words from L2 to L1 and vice versa. This exposure to rote-copying seems to contribute to more effective L2 vocabulary retention. Explanations given for the beneficial effect of copying was that rote-copy draws learners' attention to the structure of the word (Thomas & Dieter 1987). Hence, this research employed the successful Rote-Copying method to compare with the Read-Plus strategy which will be explained below.

The second strategy used in this present research was based on the findings of Sonbul and Schmitt (2010) who compared incidental learning from reading only condition (Read-Only) with a combination of incidental learning gained from reading followed by word-related activity (Read-Plus). Results show that the latter treatment was more superior to the Read-Only or incidental learning condition in terms of vocabulary learning. In other words, for the Read-Plus condition, learners would encounter the words incidentally while reading a text in the target language. Then, a follow up activity was given to explicitly draw learners' attention to the vocabulary found in the text by doing a series of vocabulary exercise. Therefore, the successful Read-Plus treatment was employed in this study to be compared to the Rote-Copying condition by Hummel (2010).

The focus of the study, therefore, was to compare learners' performance on vocabulary learning using the Rote-Copying and Read-Plus methods. The Rote-Copying method required learners to mechanically copy novel vocabulary items with its translation and sentences as a post-reading activity. On the other hand, through the Read-Plus method, learners will attempt vocabulary exercises after reading a passage.

The research questions of this study are as follows:

a) How do learners perform in vocabulary learning using the Rote-Copying method and the Read-Plus method?
b) What are learners' perception towards the use of the Rote-Copying method and the Read-Plus method on vocabulary learning?

LITERATURE REVIEW

THE MEANING OF KNOWING VOCABULARY

Vocabulary can be separated into two main categories of knowledge: the quantity of words one knows or vocabulary breadth and the quality of how well one knows those words or vocabulary depth (Nation 1990). Knowing an item means more than knowing its meaning per se from the perspectives of concept, referents and associations; it requires learners to know its form in terms of spelling, pronunciation and word parts as well as its use in terms of its functions, collocations and constraints (Nation 2001). According to Batty (2012), some researchers claim that the depth of vocabulary knowledge lies in the semantic networks in which learners link a word with other necessary information to truly understand and use them. Learners are encouraged to map out the words learnt and engage in semantic network building, for example, creating intentional links between the target word and other words the learner knows, including morphological similarity, syntactic similarity and, of particular relevance to the present study, collocational similarity (Henriksen 1999). One of the VLS that learners can adopt is to link new words to their L1, as their L1 serves as a threshold as well as a scaffold for vocabulary learning. From there, learners can gain more L2 words and over time become full L2 users who rely minimally on their L1.

IMPLICIT VS EXPLICIT VOCABULARY LEARNING

There are two main approaches to vocabulary learning –either they are learnt implicitly and incidentally or they are taught explicitly and intentionally (Dakun 2000). According to Vienna (2003), the definitions of implicit and explicit learning originate in the field of psychology which generally focus on the absence or presence of conscious operations as a crucial distinguishing factor. This is in line with Ellis' (1994 p.3) definition of implicit learning as "acquisition of knowledge about the underlying structure of a complex stimulus environment by a process which takes place naturally, simply and without conscious operation", while explicit learning is said to be characterised by "more conscious operation where the individual makes and tests hypotheses in a search for structure". For instance, focusing on the learning of vocabulary, Ellis (1994) advocates that acquiring phonetic features of a word are implicit due to exposure and input. Likewise, the articulation of the words is also implicitly learnt as it comes with practice. On the contrary, meanings of words are developed explicitly as the conscious effort comes from the learners to remember the meanings using various strategies. A certain level of cognitive processing and metacognitive learning strategies are used to make the form-meaning connections.

INCIDENTAL VS INTENTIONAL VOCABULARY LEARNING

In vocabulary acquisition, a distinction is made to correspond to the implicit and explicit debate: that of incidental versus intentional vocabulary acquisition. Incidental vocabulary acquisition is generally defined as the "learning of vocabulary as the by-product of any activity not explicitly geared to vocabulary learning" and is contrasted with intentional vocabulary learning, defined as "any activity geared at committing lexical information to memory" (Hulstijn 2001, p.267). The main distinction between these two VLS stems from the learner's intention of learning the lexical items. The current research focusses on the how two different methods of intentional vocabulary learning strategies (i.e. Rote-Copying and Read-Plus) affect vocabulary learning in which learners are notified to learn the presented words that they will be tested on later.

METHODOLOGY

Thirty five Form 1 learners from a national type secondary school in Pahang participated in the research. The participating school was ranked Band 6 in the Malaysia School Band Ranking System. Schools ranked Bands 1 or 2 are Good Schools, those ranked Bands 3, 4 or 5 are Average Schools while those ranked Bands 6 or 7 are Under-Performing Schools (Ministry of Education 2012). The participants in this study had already learnt English in the school setting for at least six years prior to the classroom-based experiment. The Form 1 learners were selected because they were weak L2 learners who had only scored a C or had failed in their UPSR (Primary School Assessment Paper) English Language paper prior to entering secondary school. Thirty two participants were from national primary schools while the remaining 3 were from Chinese national type primary schools.

A pre-test (Nation's 1000 Level Vocabulary Test, Version 1) with thirty nine questions (taken from http: //www.lextutor.ca/tests/levels/recognition/1k/test_1.html.) was administered to determine participants' existing knowledge of the 1000 word level. Though pretesting of target vocabulary can draw attention to the target words, one to two weeks gap between the pre-test and treatment generally can mitigate this effect (File & Adams 2010). During the period of the research project, the teacher was given a list of target words to avoid using in class. The list of target words was selected based on the vocabulary tested in the Nation's 1000 Level Vocabulary Test. Sixteen vocabulary items which were most likely to be unknown to the participants were selected to be included in the study as the target words.

After fourteen days, the first experimental treatment of Rote-Copying was carried out. For the exposure of the target words, the participants were given another reading text to read with the target words emphasised in boldface. The reading text was adapted from a Form 1 textbook (Tan, Foo, Lim, Ong, & Tan 2002) .The teacher then deliberately explained the target words in the Malay language or used the Mandarin equivalent. The rationale for including both languages in the study was because thirty two of the thirty five participants had the Malay Language as their L1 while the remaining 3 had Mandarin as their L1. After reading, the participants were provided with L2 (English) sentences containing the target words and the translation equivalent (Malay language or Mandarin). The sentences are sourced from the passage which they had read. The participants' task was to copy each sentence twice. The sample target vocabulary was rote copied as follows:

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often = selalu
Copy Definition: _____
Today, computers often help us in many ways.
Copy sentence: _____
'Hari ini, komputer selalu membantu kita dalam banyak bidang.'
Copy sentence: _____
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In the subsequent weeks, the experimental treatment of Read-Plus was carried out. Participants were given a reading text (Tan, Foo, Lim, Ong & Tan 2002) containing the target words highlighted in boldface. The rationale for having the target words in boldface was to make them salient and to control for noticing effect on vocabulary acquisition and retention (Min 2008). The reading text was adapted from the Form 1 textbook under the theme of Compassion and Mental Cleanliness with the topic *My Most Memorable Experience*. This particular text was chosen because it is in the syllabus and it is relevant to learners. Participants first read the text on their own. Then, the teacher explained the target words highlighted in boldface in the learners' L1 (both in Malay language and in Mandarin). After

the learners had understood the meaning of the text and the target words explained, they were given a *vocabulary enhancement exercise* which consisted of three sections. The series of vocabulary enhancement exercises developed by Min (2008) was aimed at assessing learners' receptive and productive knowledge of the target vocabulary. In the study, the vocabulary task for Read-Plus was adapted from Min's exercise in which the target words used in the reading text were tested. The first section required learners to match the target words with their definitions. An example is given below:

A. Look at the list of words from the reading. Match each one with a definition on the right. *A. Padankan kosa kata berikut dengan maksud yang betul.*	
1. _____ mountain	a. people who live together
2. _____ remain still	b. a piece of information or fact c. stay quiet
3. _____ carry	d. theatre; a piece of writing performed in a theatre or on television, consisting of speeches and conversations between several characters.
4. _____ sure	
5. _____ play	e. a very high hill
6. _____ details	f. confident that you know something or that something is true or correct
7. _____ society	g. to take something somewhere in your hands or arms
8. _____ young	h. not old; not having lived for a very time

The second section was to complete sentences with the target words learnt. The exercise used was as follows:

B. Now complete the sentence below using the vocabulary from the above column. Be sure to use the correct form of each word. *B. Lengkapkan ayat berikut dengan kosa kata di atas. Pastikan perkataan yang digunakan adalah tepat.*
1. You're too _____ to learn to drive.
2. My mother loves watching _____ on the television.
3. "Are you _____ that the cat is dead?" asked Abu.
4. Malaysia is a country which has a multiracial _____.
5. The strong man helped me to _____ the heavy box.
6. Please call Mr. Ali for more _____ on the drawing competition.
7. The trees in the _____ are being cut down.
8. Ali is very active. You can never see him _____ in the classroom.

Finally, the last section of the Read-Plus vocabulary test was to have participants provide the target words with the L1 translation provided, as shown below:

C. Translate the Malay words into the English vocabulary from the reading.
C. Terjemahkan kosa kata Bahasa Melayu berikut ke Bahasa Inggeris.

1. _____ masyarakat
2. _____ mengangkat
3. _____ gunung
4. _____ duduk diam
5. _____ drama
6. _____ pasti
7. _____ muda
8. _____ butiran

Each target word appeared thrice in the vocabulary activity. This meant that learners encountered the target words three times in addition to encountering them in the reading text earlier on. The instructor also checked answers with learners to ensure the completion of the vocabulary exercise. Learners who had incorrect answers needed to do the necessary correction thereafter.

After a week, a post-test, which was similar to the pre-test, was administered. After the post-test, twelve participants were randomly selected to be interviewed to find out their perceptions towards both vocabulary learning strategies. The questions asked at the interview were as follows:

1. How has the Rote-Copying method helped you to remember words? Why?
2. How did the exercises help you to remember the words?
3. Which VLS would you prefer— Rote-Copying or Read-Plus? Why?

The focus of the interview was to find out what participants perceived of each treatment and the possible problems that they had faced. In addition, the findings from the interview were used to supplement the statistical findings obtained from the experiments.

FINDINGS

PRETEST

Table 1 shows the analysis of the pre-test for both VLS of Rote-Copying and Read-Plus. The mean score for the Rote-Copying VLS is 4.49 out of 8 while the Read-Plus treatment recorded a mean score of 4.40 out of 8. The mean score for the correct target words answered in Rote-Copying was higher by 0.09 than the mean scoring for Read-Plus. This shows that participants' knowledge of the target words was at the same level with only slight differences prior to the experiments.

TABLE 1. Results of Pre-test Scores of the Rote-Copying and Read-Plus VLS

VLS/Treatments	N	Mean	SD	t	Df	p
Rote-Copying	35	4.49	1.63	-.269	34	.789
Read-Plus	35	4.40	1.50			

A paired sample t-test was run to compare the pre-test mean scores of Rote-Copying and Read-Plus treatments. The *t*-value for the Rote-Copying and Read-Plus vocabulary knowledge scores among the participants was -0.269. The difference between the pre-test scores of both VLS was tested at the significance level of 0.05, indicating no significant

difference between the two VLS in the pre-test. In other words, before the treatments were carried out, it can be assumed that learners had no differences in the level of vocabulary knowledge.

RESULTS OF POSTTEST SCORES BETWEEN THE ROTE-COPYING AND READ-PLUS VLS

Table 2 depicts the results of post-test scores after both VLS were administered using Nation's 1000 word level test.

TABLE 2. Results of Post-test Scores of the Rote-Copying and Read-Plus VLS

VLS/Treatments	N	Mean	SD	t	Df	p
Rote-Copying	35	5.29	1.64	-.642	34	.525
Read-Plus	35	5.46	1.44			

As can be seen in Table 2, the mean score of learners after undergoing the Rote-Copying treatment was 5.29 while that of Read-Plus was 5.46. The mean difference between the score of vocabulary knowledge after both Rote-Copying and the Read-Plus treatments was 0.17. Even though the mean difference between both treatments was considered as minor improvement in the post-tests, the difference was still higher than the difference of the pre-test value of 0.09.

Another paired sample t-test was run to compare the post-test mean scores of Rote-Copying and Read-Plus treatments. The t-value for the post-test scores between the Rote-Copying and Read-Plus treatment was 0.642. The level of significance difference was at 0.05. The post-test results were also subjected to the t-test analysis. Similarly, the results showed that there was no significant difference between the Rote-Copying and Read-Plus treatment as the p-value was 0.525 which was more than 0.05 ($p > 0.05$). This implies that the Rote-Copying treatment did not outperform the Read-Plus treatment in the post-test and vice versa.

COMPARISON OF PRETEST AND POSTTEST MEAN SCORES OF THE ROTE-COPYING AND READ-PLUS VLS

Table 3 indicates the comparison of pre-test and post-test in terms of mean score within the respective VLS treatments.

TABLE 3. Comparison of Pre-test and Post-test Mean Scores of the Rote-Copying and Read-Plus VLS

Treatments	Pre-test		Post-test		Gains	Paired Sample t-test (Pre-test vs Post-test)
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
Rote-Copying	4.49	1.63	5.29	1.64	0.80	0.029
Read-Plus	4.40	1.50	5.46	1.44	1.06	0.002

Learners who have undergone the Rote-Copying treatment obtained a mean score of 4.49 out of 8 in the pre-test while that of the post-test was 5.29 out of 8. The Rote-Copying treatment recorded an increase in the post-test with a difference of 0.08 of the mean score. On the other hand, the mean score of the Read-Plus treatment in the pre-test was 4.40 while that of the post-test was 5.46 out of 8. The difference of mean scores in both tests under the Read-Plus treatment was 1.06. Comparing the margin of improvement between both groups, the data showed that vocabulary learning using the Read-Plus VLS treatment yielded more positive improvement than learning vocabulary using the Rote-Copying VLS.

As far as the analysis of the findings was concerned, the improvement in vocabulary learning using both explicit VLS of Rote-Copying and Read-Plus was noticed. Another paired sample t-test was run to compare the pre-test and post-test for each treatment. For the Rote-Copying treatment, results show that-statistically, there is a significant difference between the pre-test and the post-test mean scores of 4.49 and 5.29 respectively. This is because the p-value of 0.029 was below 0.05 ($p < 0.05$), indicating a significant difference between the Rote-Copying pre-test and post-test. In other words, Rote-Copying did lead to noticeable vocabulary learning and it did not happen by chance that learners scored the test.

Similarly, the Read-Plus treatment also brought about statistically significant vocabulary learning gain from the paired sample t-test. The p-value obtained was 0.002 which was lesser than the 0.05 ($p < 0.05$). Hence, there was a significant difference in vocabulary gain between the Read-Plus pre-test and post-test. This reflects the effectiveness of the Read-Plus treatment towards vocabulary learning. Thus, it can be concluded that a series of vocabulary exercises after encountering novel words had positive effects on vocabulary learning.

PARTICIPANTS' PERCEPTION TOWARDS VOCABULARY LEARNING THROUGH THE EXPLICIT VLS OF ROTE-COPYING AND READ-PLUS

Interviews were conducted on twelve participants to collect data on learners' perception of each intentional VLS and to find out which one was preferred. The findings are presented in Table 4.

TABLE 4. Participants' Preferred VLS/Treatment

VLS/Treatment	Number of Preference (n=12)
Rote-Copying	5 (41.67%)
Read-Plus	7 (58.33%)

As demonstrated in Table 4, 7 out of 12 participants or 58.33% preferred Read-Plus, as compared to the Rote-Copying treatment with only 5 out of 12 participants preferring it. Most learners found Read-Plus more interesting and fun as one interviewee expressed "Doing vocabulary exercise like matching the words' meanings and filling in the blanks with new words are more fun and engaging." Comparatively, the Rote-Copying exercise was dull and mechanical. Interviewees mentioned that they were bored during the copying task. Some also found that it was tiring to write the same sentence repetitively.

Interestingly, most participants only noticed that the L1 meanings of the target words were provided in the Read-Plus treatment. "The Malay meanings are given in the Read-Plus exercise." Though the researcher pointed out that the L1 translated meanings were also provided in the Rote-Copying exercise, learners tended to relate better to the provision of the L1 meanings (i.e. Malay language and Mandarin) in the Read-Plus vocabulary activities. This could be due to the fact that the Read-Plus vocabulary task was more appealing as compared to the Rote-Copying exercise.

In terms of motivation, another student mentioned that she was more motivated to attempt the Read-Plus vocabulary activities because she could have discussions with her classmates. "I can talk to my friends and we can find out the answers together." In contrast, 3 out of 12 participants mentioned that the Rote-Copying exercise was boring as they could not interact with their friends but had to diligently copy the sentences quietly twice in the worksheet. Therefore, it could be concluded that low proficient learners appreciate interaction with their peers and that they would be more motivated to finish the vocabulary exercise when they work in groups. Another possible explanation for this could be because when they discussed the exercise, learners had the opportunity to articulate their thoughts, pronounce the

novel words and negotiate for meanings in the process of completing the exercise. This could further enhance their memory of the new words learnt.

In addition, 5 out of 12 learners reported that the Read-Plus vocabulary exercise was more comprehensible as compared to the Rote-Copying exercise. One participant said, "It is easier for me to understand the target words in the Read-Plus vocabulary exercise." In comparison, for the Rote-Copying method, 3 interviewees indicated that they did not understand the sentences copied, let alone remember them, even though the teacher had explained the meanings of the target words in the passage beforehand. There seemed to be a mental block when learners were required to copy the target words along with their L1 meaning and sample sentence. An interviewee indicated that when he was copying the words and sentences, he was focusing on completing the task by mechanically copying and had not made an attempt to remember the target words. Hence, he said that the Rote-Copying method did not help him to remember words. This shows that learners prefer to learn vocabulary in a more challenging way, which required them to think before answering and not by merely copying them.

Nevertheless, the Rote-Copying VLS was preferred by 5 out of 12 interviewees. Investigation with these five participants revealed that this method was helpful for vocabulary learning because learners could read and copy the new words with their samples concurrently. They could also memorise better when the same word was copied repeatedly. It is also noteworthy that 2 out of the 5 participants who preferred Rote-Copying were Chinese learners. These Chinese participants attended a Chinese vernacular primary school and were trained to learn using the mechanical way. Hence, this could be another explanation why they favoured the copying exercise.

DISCUSSION

DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE ROTE-COPYING AND THE READ-PLUS TREATMENT ON VOCABULARY LEARNING

The findings obtained from the paired sample t-test showed that there were no differences between the Rote-Copying method and the Read-Plus treatment on vocabulary learning. The improvement in both groups was inconclusive since the scores did not detect any significant differences between both treatments, even though differences in mean scores existed (see Table 2 and 3). This means that the p-values of both treatments in their post-test were more than the significant level of 0.05, thus both treatments did not show significant difference in vocabulary learning after the administration of both VLS. Nonetheless, the researcher could make the conclusion that both intentional VLS led to noticeable vocabulary improvement based on another paired sample t-test conducted (See Table 3).

It is also noteworthy that the mean score differences between the post-tests of Rote-Copying and Read-Plus treatment was greater for the latter VLS. In other words, the Read-Plus treatment had more positive effect in vocabulary acquisition as compared to the Rote-Copying method. The disparity of the margin of improvement recorded between these two treatments was 0.26 out of 8 or 3.25%. This means that the difference of performance between these two treatments was small with the Read-Plus method scoring slightly higher than the Rote-Copying VLS in the post-test. From the results of the study, it can be concluded that the Read-Plus condition contributed to more vocabulary learning than the Rote-Copying treatment in terms of mean score difference found in the post-test.

This finding supports the results from prior research (Sonbul & Schmitt 2010, Min 2008) in which reading plus focused vocabulary exercises are more effective and efficient in enhancing target vocabulary acquisition and retention. Likewise, the effectiveness of Rote-

Copying in this study is also similar to the results found in a study done by Hummel (2010). At least one study actually found Rote-Copying to facilitate short-term vocabulary recall, which is parallel to the present study. In sum, the findings in this research prove that direct instruction clearly adds value to the learning process and leads to greater learning as suggested by Sonbul and Schmitt (2010). Explicit vocabulary learning is not a waste of time and effort.

Another study done by Peters (2012) also supports the results of the present study in which Peters' findings indicate that vocabulary-oriented treatment yielded greater vocabulary learning gain than the message-oriented treatment. Hence, assigning a vocabulary task after each lesson has a positive effect on vocabulary retention.

Since both VLS of Read-Plus and Rote-Copying strategies were equally effective in promoting vocabulary learning, learners should be given the freedom to select a VLS that they prefer. Learners should learn the way that is more comfortable and appealing to them. They should not be forced to learn in ways that are uninviting if the goal is to promote autonomous long-term learning strategy. This is also important to keep learners motivated when learning the lexis of a foreign language.

LEARNERS' PERCEPTION TOWARDS THE USE OF THE ROTE-COPYING METHOD AND THE READ-PLUS METHOD ON VOCABULARY LEARNING

Learners' perception towards the use of both intentional VLS was obtained through interviews with 12 participants. They identified the advantages and disadvantages of each VLS. The interview findings further validated the statistical results elaborated earlier. 7 out of 12 participants preferred the Read-Plus treatment while only 5 preferred the Rote-Copying VLS. Most of the interviewees expressed that the Read-Plus treatment helped them to understand the target words with ease. They found this treatment to be challenging, interesting and fun. One possible explanation could be that the Read-Plus method required a deeper level of data processing to enrich L2 learners' word knowledge. Hulstijn and Laufer (2001) suggest that retention of words is parallel to the amount of task-induced involvement. The more learners are involved in the task by thinking about the words and manipulating them, the more likely the words will be transferred into their long-term memory. As participants had more opportunity to interact with their peers in the vocabulary exercise, they were more involved in the completion of the vocabulary task. On top of that, participants preferred to have interaction with their peers while learning. As a result, they were motivated to complete the Read-Plus exercise.

Moreover, Min (2008) explained that completing a variety of vocabulary exercises taps different levels of processing capabilities such as recognition, interpretation and production which might have engaged learners in varying levels of explicit cognitive processing. Participants had more opportunities to consciously undergo a more extensive course of mental processing when acquiring these target words. However, one participant felt that the Read-Plus exercises had too many questions to be answered which distracted the learners' attention to learn new words. They could be confused by the many questions posed. This could be true for the extremely low proficient learners as they could only learn a small number of words at a time. They could be overwhelmed by the number of questions asked in the Read-Plus treatment. However, the researcher believes that the number of questions in the Read-Plus exercise is appropriate and would not pose a problem for learners with slightly better language proficiency.

As for the Rote-Copying method to learn vocabulary, a majority disliked this VLS as it was not fun and challenging. Participants indicated that they could barely remember the words learnt through the Rote-Copying strategy. An explanation for this could be because the

Rote-Copying task demanded lower level of processing and a lower index of task involvement. The act of copying resembles that of rote memorisation. As Richards, Platt and Platt (1992) pointed out it is a process of committing information into our memory through sheer repetition. Because of this, participants learnt without developing a deep understanding of the target words before copying. When learners did not gain full understanding of the target words, they found the copying to be meaningless. Consequently, they felt bored.

In addition, in the Rote-Copying condition, though the teacher had already explained and translated the words encountered in the reading passage into the L1, learners were not exposed to the use of the target words in other contexts. Hence, this could be another reason why some participants said that they could not remember the meaning of words from the Rote-Copying treatment. To remedy this situation, the learners should be given sample sentences from other passages. In this way learners will be exposed to a variety of contexts in which the target words are applied.

The practice of rote learning techniques is learning by repetition, based on the premise that one will be able to recall more quickly the meaning of the material the more it is repeated (Khoii & Sharififar 2013). Since the Rote-Copying method has the elements of rote learning, it means that learners would be able to recall meaning of words if they are copied and rehearsed repeatedly. The reason why this method is not very effective as compared to the Read-Plus could be due to the limited number of repetitions. Should learners repeat the target words more than twice, they could acquire the words more easily. Perhaps, if learners were to read the target words and their sample sentences aloud, this would aid vocabulary retention.

Conversely, a participant admitted that the Rote-Copying exercise was useful for her as she could read and write at the same time which was helpful for vocabulary retention. While learners were copying and focusing on the orthography, meaning and form of the words, participants were also making an effort to inscribe the orthography of target words, their meaning and how they are used into their working memory. Also, as they copied, they could pronounce the words and read along which could result in participants eventually remembering them. This is parallel to the findings of Mizumoto and Takeuchi (2009) as they found that the writing rehearsal technique in the VLS is useful to learn vocabulary as learners repeatedly copy the target words and their spellings until they are remembered.

In sum, a majority of the participants perceived that the Read-Plus condition is more effective in learning novel words as compared to the Rote-Copying method. Read-Plus requires a deeper level of cognitive processing, leading to vocabulary acquisition. However, Rote-Copying is deemed to have lower task involvement index which learners find boring and unchallenging.

CONCLUSION

The findings have shown that both intentional VLS of Read-Plus and Rote-Copying treatments lead to vocabulary gain and recall. The quantitative results (i.e. the pre-test and post-test) collected from the experiments have shown that there was no significant difference in vocabulary learning gained between the examined vocabulary learning strategies. The results have to some extent suggested that both treatments have positive effects in vocabulary gains.

The results of this investigation have some implications for English teachers who are in search of effective strategies for improving learners' vocabulary knowledge in the shortest time possible. Teachers can device or adopt a series of vocabulary exercise to assist learners to acquire the new words either before or after teaching instruction. These VLS are especially useful as pre-reading activity so that learners are acquainted with the key words before

encountering them in the reading passage. In addition, both VLS can be carried out after each language lesson to reinforce the target words learnt during any instructional time. The systematic administration of explicit vocabulary exercise given could greatly improve learners' word recognition ability and they could slowly assimilate them into their own language system, leading them to gradually producing the words in writing or speaking. Moreover, the provision of word meanings in their L1 is also worth the effort as learners can directly relate the target words to their existing knowledge. This strategy is especially useful for low proficiency language learners.

The current investigation was limited mainly by time constraints. The duration of four weeks was not sufficient for observation of the real effectiveness of both VLS. Secondly, the small population size of thirty-five may not be representative of the majority of the low proficient learners. A larger sample would provide more accurate and reliable findings to enable a solid conclusion to be made with regards to which VLS is a better method to adopt. Besides, the within-subject experimental design had to some extent affected the results of the study. The carryover effects might have taken place in which the earlier treatment given could have impacted performance in the subsequent activity.

Further work needs to be done to establish whether other intentional VLS are effective in enhancing vocabulary learning among the low proficient learners. A similar study with a bigger sample would be useful to provide substantial findings to investigate which intentional VLS would be more effective. In addition, it would also be interesting to find out how the intentional VLS have impacted on the production of the target language instead of only getting to know the semantic aspect of the words. This research can also be expanded to find out the effectiveness of Rote-Copying and Read-Plus treatments on the productive word knowledge.

In conclusion, this study has shown that intentional vocabulary learning strategy or the vocabulary teaching technique of Rote-Copying and Read-Plus contribute to vocabulary learning, especially to the low proficient learners. Regarding learners' preference, Read-Plus was a more favourable strategy since the exercise provided more variety and allowed peer interaction among learners. Both strategies are valuable at any beginner level language classrooms either to introduce new lexical items before encountering them or as enrichment exercise to highlight words learnt after a lesson.

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