Effect of Title Selection Technique as a Post-Reading Task on Intermediate Language Learners' Vocabulary Achievement

Abdolhasan Maatoghiannejad

Department of English, Abadan Branch,Islamic Azad University, Abadan, Iran

Abstract

The present research examined the effect of title selection tasks as post reading activities on learners' vocabulary achievement. A quasi-experimental design was adopted with a pre, intervention and a posttest. Participants were selected via a placement test and randomly assigned into two equal groups. After administering the pretest of vocabulary, the participants attended treatment sessions. The experimental group received reading passages without titles while they guessed the title for the passages without title. But the control group was taught conventionally and read the passages with titles and did the exercises. After the intervention sessions, both groups took the posttest of vocabulary and data were collected to compare the groups' means in the pre and posttest. Results indicated that the experimental group significantly outperformed the control one. Implications of the study suggest that English as a foreign language (EFL) teachers may use post reading activities like title selection to boost vocabulary learning since the learners try to focus on the passage main idea and guess the exact title for the passages.

***Corresponding Author**: Abdolhasan Maatoghianmejad

Address: Department of English, Abadan Branch, Islamic Azad University, Abadan, Iran.

Tel: (+98) 9169360942**E-mail:***hasah@gmail.com*

Introduction

Learning vocabulary can be one of the important activities in the second language (L2) learning. Vocabulary achievement may be enhanced if learners read the passages and understand the meaning of the words within the texts (Nation, 2006). Richards and Renandya (2002) state that reading receives more attention in English as a second or foreign (ESL/EFL)

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language learners. The learners need to read for gaining important information and vocabulary about the passages to get a robust comprehension. They also need to gain the knowledge of vocabulary since this ability affects all the learning processes of other skills of language including listening, speaking and writing. Therefore, teachers may find new techniques to boost learners' vocabulary domain. One of the post-reading tasks could be guessing the titles for the passages that are given to the class and their titles are removed. The learners should read the passage and comprehend it. Then they guess the appropriate or close title for that passage. The removed title may be given as among several choices or it can be guessed by the class with the help of teachers. This post reading activity could be beneficial for learning vocabulary since the learners have to read the text line by line and focus on the new words to get the gist of the reading passages. The learners can work collaboratively in pairs or small group and they can be guided by the teachers to be directed in the right direction of guessing the exact or close title.

Vocabulary learning is a priority in the EFL contexts since it can improve Iranian EFL learners' reading comprehension and other language skills. Iranian learners may focus on the grammar rather than vocabulary achievement. This may affect the appropriate vocabulary domain which is needed in running other language courses. Moreover, learners need to acquire vocabulary in the texts and contextualized environment because this kind of learning affect their recall and retention of vocabulary. In sum, EFL teachers may use post reading activities like title selection in their reading classes to boost learners' vocabulary and reading comprehension as two integrated activities in the classroom.

Keihaniyan (2014) investigated the role of post-reading items on vocabulary learning to provide L2 learners with useful techniques for learning vocabulary intensive reading courses. Results indicated that learners in the experimental group outperformed the control group in recalling the words they learned and could use the words in other language skills. Moreover, the results revealed that vocabulary learning in the post reading activities can boost learners' vocabulary domain and eventually their reading comprehension.

Thanabalan (2013) examined other post reading materials like mass media as language learning tools in the school, college or universities. It was assumed that mass media can provide the learners with exposure which rarely investigated in the community college environment. The exposure of mass media could be used as post-reading activities among community college students. Findings depicted mass media usage among lecturers and students make an effect and played as a learning tool.

Reading comprehension cannot be separated from vocabulary learning. Reading skill may be taught by teachers in three steps or tasks including pre-reading, reading, post-treading (Richards &Renandya, 2002). The teachers may provide the learners with some background knowledge on the subject of the passage in the pre-task period. This stage is important since the teachers can receive feedback on the learners' knowledge concerned d with the content of the passage. When the learners are familiar with the passage content and subject, they read the

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passage in the second stage that is called task (or Reading). In this task, teachers check learners' understanding, vocabulary level, misunderstandings, etc. Finally, in the third task (or post-reading), the learners do the exercises, have discussion, and receive teachers' feedback on their mistakes or problems. Before describing how vocabulary can be acquired implicitly and explicitly, it is relevant to mention that the importance of vocabulary for reading has been shown in regards to the amplitude of vocabulary necessary for comprehension. In other words, how much vocabulary is necessary for comprehension? Nation (2006) estimated 98% as the ideal coverage. Reading skill needs a large amounts of vocabulary acquisition. The author argues that any type of word-focused instruction, regardless of its nature is effective. According to the author, word-focused instruction directs learners to attend to the "word itself, whether in a larger communicative context, or in artificial minimal context, or in isolation" (Laufer, 2017b).

Literature Review Literature Review

Vocabulary Acquisition

Learning vocabulary help the learners better to comprehend a text, and the more the learner reads, the more vocabulary s/he will learn (Atay & Kurt, 2006; Grabe, 2009; Stahl & Nagy, 2006; Tumolo, 2007). The acquisition of vocabulary through reading has long been studied, both by the implicit learning and the explicit learning perspectives (Laufer, 2017 a,b). Moreover, this understanding makes learners interact the relationships between the written words and activating the knowledge outside the text/message in their mind. This can boost learners' proficient reading to understand words rapidly. Richards and Schmidt (2002) note that reading comprehension can be developed via expansion of the vocabulary exercises in the classroom. They emphasize three types of comprehensible input that learning vocabulary can access as the purposes of reading comprehension. They include: (a) literal comprehension that enables learners' to understand the contextual words in the texts, (b) inferential comprehension that enables learners to discover indirect information stated in a passage, (c) critical comprehension which enables learners to compare and contrast the message in the text and evaluate the gist of knowledge, and (d) appreciative comprehension that enables learners to get a the responses from a passage and do the tasks of the reading comprehension.

Vocabulary can help reading activities when the teachers put it in their activities of pre-reading, during-reading, and post-reading phases. Pre-reading tasks let students brainstorm and speculate about what they have known about a given content and can guess what they are going to read in later stages (Brassell&Rasinski, 2008). Ajideh (2006) believe that some pre-reading activities can have questions that can direct students toward related answers from the text. Pre-reading tasks prepare learners for linguistic structures in a text and gather their attention to cultural or conceptual matters. During-reading phase, learners receive the main passage and read between the lines to get the whole story. Teachers guide students to be more active in reading and encourage them to monitor their comprehension (Alessi& Dwyer, 2008). Post-reading phase deals with strategies that are applied after reading a text to review what have been learned and understood withing reading. These activities are reviewing assignments or

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meaningful tasks that help learners arrive at concepts and opinions of the passage (Wolfe, 2015).

Learning vocabulary is considered as the essence of reading comprehension since it accounts for the processes of affective understanding of meaning from a written passage. Reading literacy require that the students are able to achieve self-modify, self-manage and self-monitoring to select information from the text and develop their critical reflection on the text. Thus, learners are required to receive extensive ranges of reading tasks that include effective reading exposure (Alfallaj, 2011). In addition, they need effective reading comprehension techniques to enhance the extent of their comprehension of the subjects and develop their understanding while reading the passages. Teachers are required to implement adequate reading strategies to improve learners' comprehension and facilitate their critical thinking in understanding complicated texts. In sum, reading comprehension need cognitive, linguistic and metacognitive abilities and teachers should be familiar with these three factors to boost learners' reading comprehension (Abdelhalim, 2017; Alenizi, 2019; Ismail &Tawalbeh, 2015).

Reading Tasks
Three stages of reading comprehension are full of vocabulary practices as the class is run through pre, whilst, and post-reading stages. Students should be aware of learning vocabulary as a part of their knowledge that enables them to get new information from the texts. This should be done in such a way that they would know more or feel differently from before. The three phases should be done in a sequence of them in the intensive reading classes. There is a connection between these phases that lead to the relationships between old and new information in learning processes. In all phases, they may show their ideas and thoughts of the subject matter concerned with the characters in the texts. They also may talk about their own experiences and background knowledge in the same field. They also need to discuss subjects, happenings, events, and predictions about the content of the passages. Post reading activities include doing the exercises, discussing the appropriacy of the answers, making the conclusions, etc.

In a post-reading phase, learners' critical thinking could be very important since the they need to think, discuss, and reformulate what they have learners and create new ideas concerned with the subject of the reading passages. All these activities are done with the help of a range of vocabulary learning processes. In addition, comprehending the text is important since the learners are supposed to use all the vocabulary domain they possess. This encourages students to reflect upon the text content and to use the familiar text as basis for specific discussion in the class with peers, teachers and other students outside the class. This allows the learners to respond to the text complexities creatively and to focus on the information they achieved in the texts. As a result, the learners need to go beyond simply reading as a metacognitive activity and get creative information within the passages. Thus, critical comprehension is the goal of post reading activities which are sensitive and help learners working on new information and use the learned vocabularies practically in the exercises and discussions concerned with the content of the passages. In short, from post-reading activities, the students are developing

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themselves to achieve automaticity, meaningful learning, autonomy, willingness to communicate, inter-language, and communicative competence lead to student's autonomy. Willingness to communicate, which involve student's willingness to take risks and being self-confident, is gained because they are supposed to be well-prepared to do the post-activities. Therefore, students are taught both linguistic and strategic competencies enabling them to communicate with the texts as active readers. In this case, the students are developing their automaticity, willingness to communicate, and communicative competence.

In conclusion, the present study examined the role of title selection technique as a post reading activity to benefit Iranian EFL learners' vocabulary. Lack of vocabulary domain among Iranian learners has rarely been investigated in the literature of the study. Therefore, this study has examined the effect choosing title activities as a post-reading task in learning vocabulary in Iranian EFL context, the current study is expected to provide valuable information that helps its readers decide to either support or dismiss the claim that choosing title activities as a post-reading task in learning vocabularyin Iranian EFL context.Two research questions are addressed as follows:

RQ 1. To what extent does title selection technique as a post-reading task affect learning vocabulary among intermediate language learners?

RQ 2. Does title selection technique as a post-reading task make any difference between the experimental and control groups?

Methodology

Participants

Research sample comprised of 90 learners who were invited to fill in the research consent letters. Then they took aa sample of Oxford Placement Test (OPT)and 40 learners at the intermediate level were selected. They were studying English as a foreign language at English Institutes in Abadan, Iran. The participants aged from 19 to 36 studying the Top Notch 2 A and B (Solsow&Ascher, 2007). Then they were randomly divided into experimental and control groups, each included 20 learners. The experimental group included received passages without titles and had to guess the title of the passages in the post-reading tasks. And the control group who followed traditional classes of vocabulary learning and reading tasks. They read the passages and did the exercises at the end of the class.

Instrumentations and Materials

The present study used the following tests after the validation processes in a pilot study among a group of ten learners other than the research sample to estimate the reliability of each test. The content validity of each test was confirmed by two experts of teaching EFL. The research instruments are as follows:

1. OPT was used to determine the learners' level of proficiency and to homogenize the research sample. This test included two parts and 60 items with one point available for each correct response. The reliability of the test was estimated in the sources calculated through KR-21 formula as (r=.89).

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2. Pre and Post-test: A vocabularypre and posttest were designed based on the materials of the study. They were taken by the participants as the pre and posttest. Two groups took 40-multiple choice item test before and after the intervention. The reliability of both tests was reported as (r=.94 and r=.82) for pre and posttest respectively.

3. Materials of the study included the reading sections of two textbooks of Top Notch 2 A and B developed by Solsow&Ascher, 2007).

Procedure

Ninety students of institutes in Abadan were selected and they were randomly divided in experimental and control groups after participating in an OPT for selecting students with the same homogeneity. Then they divided into two equal groups randomly. The experimental group received instruction of reading passages without title activities as a post-reading task and the control group received regular passages and exercises as a post-reading task. Both groups took a pretest at the beginning of the research period and their scores in the vocabulary pretest were recorded to see the vocabulary knowledge of both groups before the treatment session. The pretest included 20 multiple choice items designed based on the reading passages of the learners' textbook. Then the learners participated in the treatment sessions and each week they had two sessions and covered two reading passages. The treatment sessions lasted for eight weeks, 16 sessions and students worked on read 16 units of Top Notch 2 A and B. In the classes, they read the passages and do the exercises. The experimental groups were asked to suggest a title for the passages and then thy discussed their reasons and justifications for the given title. Reading each passage took 16-20 minutes. The minimum and maximum text lengths were between 10 to 15 lines. During instruction a treatment task is designed to elicit the title of the passage and covered vocabularies in the texts.

In the control group, the learners did the tradition reading comprehension treatment to master of learning vocabulary through reading the passages and answers the questions. During treatment, the control group engages in reading texts had the same material, time, and content comparing to the experimental group. They engaged in reading activities as post-reading tasks. The texts were read by the participants and the learners of were required to read the texts during the class time and to complete questions. The only difference between the groups was the title selection that the experimental group did at end of the class hour. They chose titles from a list of possibilities or they guess the titles. Then the teachers guided them to select the best one. The best or exact title could show that the students understood the overall theme of the text. The titles depicted that the students think about the overall meaning.

Finally, the groups took a post-test of vocabulary which was a modified pretest and some items were changed in terms of format to avoid learners reminding the pretest items. Data of the pre-test and posttest were collected and analyzed through independent and paired samples t-test. In doing so, SPSS, version 17 was used to analyze the data to examine whether there was any significant difference between the groups' means in the pre and posttest. The aim of data analysis was to see whether post-reading task of title selection was useful for students to learn new vocabularies.

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Results

The means of the groups were analyzed and the results of the pre-test and post-test were displayed in the tables. One-sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov (KS) test was used to determine the normality of data as it is presented in Table 1.

Table 1.

One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test

		Experiment al-Pre	Experiment al-Post	Control-Pre	Control-Post
N		20	20	20	20
Normal Parameters[a,b]	Mean	24.0000	32.2000	22.1000	24.4750
	Std. Deviation	6.17081	5.90584	5.50502	4.66080
Most Extreme	Absolute	.167	.113	.135	.126
Differences	Positive	.167	.113	.135	.113
	Negative	-.085	-.107	-.085	-.126
Kolmogorov-Smirnov Z		.747	.507	.604	.563
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)		.632	.960	.859	.910

As it is shown in Table 1, test distribution is normal. Thus, data analysis can be estimated via parametric statistics like independent and paired samples t-test.

Table 2.

Descriptive Statistics (Pre-test)

Groups	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Experimental	20	24.00	5.17	1.84
Control	20	22.10	4.50	0.96

Table 2 displays descriptive statistics of both groups' means in the pre and posttest. It means that both groups similar to some extent and they are homogeneous at the beginning of the research. Inferential statistics of the pretest means is displayed in Table 3.

Table 3.

Independent Samples T-Test (Pre-test)

	Levene's Test				Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Diffe rence	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
	F	Sig.	t	d					
Equal variances assumed	.39	.95	.387	38	.529	.70	1.49	-1.84	5.64

Table 3 displays independent samples t-test for the pre-test means of the two groups. The difference between groups is not significant (t=.387, p=.529>0.05). In other words, both groups performed. The results of the descriptive analysis of the posttest are displayed in the following table.

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Table 4.

Descriptive Statistics (Post-test)

Groups	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Experimental	20	32.20	5.84	1.12
Control	20	24.47	4.80	1.25

The above table depicts that the experimental group's mean score is greater that the control group's mean score. Inferential statistics of independent samples t-test was done on the post-test means of the groups in the following table.

Table 5.

Independent Samples t-Test (post-test)

	Levene's Test		t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
	F	Sig.							
Equal variances assumed	3.00	.248	9.124	38	.000	8.27	1.68	.31	7.13

As it is shown in Table 5, the difference between the groups' means is significant ($t=9.124$, $p=001<0.05$). In other words, the experimental group outperformed the control one in the posttest.

Table 6.

Descriptive Statistics (control vs. experimental pre-test)

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	Experimental Pre-test	24.00	20	2.17	1.84
	Experimental-Post	32.20	20	5.84	1.59
Pair 2	Control Pre-test	22.10	20	2.02	1.96
	Control Post-test	20.47	20	3.80	1.19

Table 6 indicates the means and standard deviations for the two groups in pre-test and post–test. Paired samples t-test was used to measure the pre and posttest of each group in the following Table.

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Table 7

Paired Samples t-Test (Experimental & Control groups)

		Paired Differences							
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	Lower	Upper	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Pair 1	Exp. Pre & Post-	8.20	2.13	0.47	2.11	-5.05	6.99	19	.000
Pair 2	Control Pre & Post	2.37	4.51	0.20	1.32	4.73	.371	19	.674

In the above Table, paired samples t-test reveals a significant difference between the experimental groups' means in the pre and posttest (t=.6.99, p=.001<0.05). However, the difference between the post-test and pre-test of the control group is not significant (t=.371, p=.674>0.05).

Discussion

Results of the study revealed that the use of title selection technique could affect vocabulary learning of the participants in the posttest concerned the research questions of the study. The first research question addresses the effect of title selection technique on the EFL learners' vocabulary learning. Findings of the study indicated that the experimental group performed significantly in the posttest comparing to the control group. Paired sample t-test showed the difference between both pre and posttest are significant in the experimental group while this was not seen in the control group. It should be concluded that title selection activities made the learners aware of reading comprehension to guess the appropriate title for the passages that were without titles. In addition, their vocabulary domain would be enhanced if the learners were able to understand the words and comprehend the text. Leaning vocabulary could be the basic and complementary ability enhancing reading comprehension. This is supported by Chastain (1988) notes that learners read the passages for a variety of purposes to get the main idea. When readers read for general comprehension and gain vocabulary competence, they are able to relate their comprehension to the title of the passage. If they cannot get the gist of reading and the meanings of the words in the text, they cannot guess the title and should read the text again to arrive at a possible title.

Post-reading tasks of title selection actually depend on a stable set of processes and skills that underlie all reading comprehension activities. This agrees with Celce-Murcia (2001) who states students can use post-reading tasks to help themselves in gaining these purposes in learning vocabulary. They also, much like any instruction, need to take into account institutional expectations in addition to students' goals, language abilities, and L1 and L2 reading experiences.

The second research question addresses the difference between experimental and control groups' vocabulary performance concerned with using post-reading tasks. These tasks were used in both groups with a difference. In the experimental groups, the learners had to guess the

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exact or close titles for the passages affecting learning vocabulary among intermediate language learners. The results of comparing the two classes showed that there was a significant difference between them in terms of EFL learners' vocabulary learning. As a result, the learners who chose title activities as a post-reading tasks were better than the participants who did the textbook exercises as post-reading tasks. This is consistent with the findings reported by Abdelhalim (2017) and Nation (2006) who emphasize the role of vocabulary learning in reading comprehension. In addition, they propose that the large amount of vocabulary is needed for reading comprehension and reading engagement. This can be seen in the results of the study that learners' engagement is an effective instructional strategy. In sum, the analysis of the second research question which attempted to find out the difference between free title activities and guided title activities as the post-reading task on learners' vocabulary learning in control group revealed a significant difference.

The learners of this study stated that they learned the vocabularies more easily through watching the word in a context than trying to memorize a long list of unrelated words. One learner mentioned that "*learning long lists of words is boring and difficult for me, but in this class, I learned new words in context easily without any stress*". This may be on the ground of the context. If you focus on learning words in the contexts you are most likely to find them and recognize them when you encountered them or need to use them again. Results of the study are matched with Richards and Schmidt (2002) who believes reading means understanding the text via perceiving written word in the text in order to understand the contents of the passages. This understanding is called reading comprehension.

Conclusion

In EFL contexts, most learners, especially at the intermediate level, face challenges of gaining vocabulary knowledge to distinguish key points in reading texts and comprehend the gist of passages. The role of teachers is to provide the learners with exercises and engage learners in gaining vocabulary knowledge. This knowledge could be the basis for reading comprehension of the text. Post reading activities are very important in this process since the learners have read the text and have to focus on the vocabulary meaning to find the suitable title for the passage. Title selection can be a technique to engage the learners in the text and they have to read the text carefully and find an appropriate title matched with the subject of the passage. However, some learners may face difficulties in comprehending the passage and in finding a suitable title for the passage. In this case, learners can collaboratively help each other to find the title. Teachers may guide the class to arrive at a compromise concerning a good title for the passage.

The learners can identify the topic and main ideas in the discussion as the other post reading activity reading the passages. This enables the learners to realize information and allows them to summarize new words in the context. In addition, EFL learners can identify the topic and main ideas of a reading text and develop an effective strategy of comprehending a reading passage. Thus, choosing title activities as a post-reading task has a significant effect on students' performance on learning vocabulary since findings of the study have revealed this

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technique is beneficial for comprehending texts. It also helps teachers examine how students' thoughts are working to obtain the main idea of the texts.

Implications of the study suggest that teachers may use choosing title activities as a post-reading task to improve students' learning vocabulary and reading comprehension. The objective of selecting title activities may help learners interact with text meaningfully and participate in class discussion in a cooperative manner. Moreover, learners may learn how to be independent readers and gain meaning from the text and make and find the main idea of the passage. EFL teachers may focus on the learning vocabulary in the texts and passages to make vocabulary learning more contextualized. This may boost learners recall and retention and raise their motivation for guessing the gist of the study. In doing so, the pedagogical implications of the study suggest that EFL teachers need to consider the effects of post-reading tasks like title selection technique on improving Iranian intermediate EFL learners' vocabulary since it motivates learners to focus on less-attended task types like Q/A activities, cloze passages, multiple-choice items, etc.Therefore, it is hoped that teachers, syllabus designers, textbook writers and the like take the advantages of such a work.

Moreover, it can improve the learners' self-confidence to use new vocabulary items in their writing activities. Also, the findings of this research are useful for language teachers because they would lead to more effective teaching methodologies and better criteria for the selection of the materials for EFL vocabulary teaching instruction.

Limitations of the study can be the small size of the research sample which is due to the available research sample after the placement test. This happened when the focus was put on the intermediate learners to have homogenous groups. The other limitation was the understanding of title selection after reading activities since the learners were unfamiliar with the processes. It took one session to introduce this technique in the experimental group but the control group did not have any problem since they followed a traditional class of learning vocabulary and reading comprehension. Future studies may deal with a large sample size in various levels of language proficiency. The future research could be comparative among groups of learners regarding levels of educational proficiency, gender, and methods of teaching an effective way of improving young EFL learners' vocabulary knowledge.

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