

In His Sublime Name

**The 13th International TELLSI Conference: New Trends and Criticisms
in English Language Teaching and Literature**

THE PROCEEDINGS OF THE CONFERENCE

Editor-in-Chief: Mahmood Reza Moradian, Ph.D.

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*In memory of Late Dr. Mansoor Fahim,
who taught us, as a real mentor, both applied linguistics and morality.*



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Conference Chair Message

Dear guests, ladies, and gentlemen, may I take this opportunity to welcome you all and extend a further word of welcome to every one of you here at Lorestan University. It is with great pleasure that I appreciate your participation in **The 13th International TELLSI Conference**. I am honored to say that during the past five years, Lorestan University has had the opportunity to hold two regional conferences and one national conference on issues in English language teaching and literature. Now, it is a privilege and an honor for us to host **The 13th International TELLSI Conference** under the major theme of **New Trends and Criticisms in English Language Teaching and Literature** in Khorramabad, Lorestan Province, Iran. We hope we can provide a platform for you to discuss the latest developments, trends, and criticisms in English language teaching and literature with a scholarly sense of cooperation, construction and co-construction, and professionalism.

The conference secretariat received around nine hundred abstracts, all with good quality. However, due to the limitations of a two-day conference, we have just been able to select about a third of the submissions including five keynote speeches, nine featured speeches, 197 papers for oral presentation, and 111 for posters, and a total of 308 abstracts for publication,. Hereby, I appreciate all the contributions you made on your side.

A very large number of people have contributed to this TELLSI conference. So, I take the opportunity to gratefully acknowledge all those who have been supportive of our work. First and most substantively, I thank all of you, dear presenters and participants, for your submissions and contributions especially keynote and featured speakers for giving us their precious time and for sharing with us their hand-on experience and academic wealth. I am particularly grateful to my dear colleagues from across the country who were kind enough to review the proposals and comment on them from particular perspectives. Also, I am grateful to Dr. Aziz, chancellor of Lorestan University, Dr. Feizian, research and IT deputy, and Dr. Jafari, the financial deputy of Lorestan University for their financial support and guidance. My special thanks go to TELLSI president, Dr. Marandi and his colleagues in the TELLSI Society, who trusted us to be host to the most prestigious conference on English studies in Iran.

I should thank the administrative team of the conference for all their support and energy and the secretariat of the TELLSI Association, Ms. Akram Hemati, who let the TELLSI members hear our call for papers. Least but not least, I give my whole-hearted thanks to my family for their emotional support and patience. Thank you all and I wish you all a fruitful experience at the conference and a memorable stay in Khorramabad.

Mahmood Reza Moradian, Ph.D.

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The Impact of Using the Thesaurus Part of Microsoft Word Software on EFL Learners' Vocabulary Knowledge

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Abstract

This paper aims to investigate the impact of using Thesaurus part of Microsoft Word software on EFL learners' vocabulary knowledge. To achieve this aim, fifty female senior high school students were selected, using convenience random sampling, as participants of the study and through simple randomization they were divided into two groups namely experimental and control. Then, 90 words chosen from "Essential Words for TOEFL" book, as treatment materials, were taught to experimental and control groups through using CALL and traditional approach, respectively. Collecting data using standardized pre and posttests and analyzing them, the present researchers found a significant difference between the two groups in terms of vocabulary knowledge. This difference was in favor of the experimental group due to the application of Thesaurus part of Microsoft Word software. This study offers some important implications for syllabus designers, language instructors and learners to make more advancement in vocabulary acquisition process through employing vocabulary teaching and learning softwares.

Keywords: CALL; Thesaurus; Microsoft Word Software; Vocabulary

Introduction

Communication which is an indispensable part of human life can be defined simply as transferring information from one place to another. In other words, Communication is a meaningful activity which is performed to exchange information and message between two sides including living things or artificial devices using different means. There are different means and mediums for communication. Language is one of them. It is the bridge between sender or speaker and receiver or listener. The better one knows a language, the better he knows how to communicate (Kelly, 1991 as cited in Hasannejad, et al, 2015). Since a language like many other things consists of different parts or elements like grammar, pronunciation, vocabulary, etc. For improving one's language it needs to improve each of these individual parts. One important part of this collection (language collection) is vocabulary. Vocabulary is one of the most important parts of every language. Accordingly, it should be dealt with thoroughly and it demands a lot of time and effort on the part of the language learner.

Since vocabulary is of great importance in second or foreign language learning, the question of how teachers can improve students' word knowledge should be dealt with and

answered comprehensively. In the past, vocabulary was ignored and did not get sufficient consideration; but nowadays, vocabulary teaching and learning are of great importance among language instructors and researchers. In other words, vocabulary teaching and learning is one of the main features in the process of teaching and learning a second or foreign language. Since a word with various meanings that it contains consists the center of the language. It should be dealt with thoroughly and completely to reach the objective of vocabulary acquisition and hence language acquisition.

For teaching and learning vocabulary, many different methods and techniques including traditional method i.e., memorizing a long list of bilingual isolated words, to the application of CALL have been used from a long time in the past to the present. Developmental process of language teaching shows that there has been an increasingly improvement in teaching methods until the present time which is the time of CALL integration in language acquisition. Since CALL is a broad category and has different branches and tools including flash cards, soft wares, internet, corpora and concordances; each of which is used in a different setting and with different learners. One of these sub-categories or tools is Thesaurus software which has been used in this study to improve EFL learners' vocabulary knowledge. It is authentic and scientific software and can be used for different purposes and with different levels of proficiency. For example, it can enhance students' vocabulary knowledge through easy access to synonyms and antonyms and great exposure to many semantically similar words and consequently increase their motivation in learning.

Literature review

Vocabulary plays a major role in language learning. But, in the past 50 years of English language teaching, it has been considered of little or no importance (Carter & McCarthy, 1988; Seal, 1991; Zimmerman, 1997a; O'dell, 1997 as cited in Hsu, 2006).

Accordingly, a brief history of vocabulary teaching and learning is as follows: In grammar translation method, vocabulary received limited attention and bilingual lists of isolated words, were common (Brown, 1994; Zimmerman, 1997a; Richards & Rogers, 2001 as cited in Hsu, 2006). In another approach which was reform movement, phonetics and transcription were given a more important role than vocabulary (Zimmerman, 1997 as cited in Espinosa, 2003). The next method which was direct method dealt only with simple and familiar vocabulary. (Schmitt, 2000 as cited in Hsu, 2006). However, for the first time, in reading or situational language teaching method, vocabulary was given priority, and thus syllabus designers developed a rational basis for selecting appropriate vocabulary content for language courses (Richards & Rodgers, 1986 as cited in Hsu, 2006). Unlike reading or situational language teaching method, audio-lingual method gave new words secondary importance among the sub-skills of language learning (Larsen-Freeman, 1986 as cited in Hsu, 2006). Moreover, vocabulary in communicative approach has been given little explicit attention and

it was of secondary importance among language teachers and syllabus designers. (Zimmerman, 1997a as cited in Hsu, 2006).

However, considerable attention, again, was paid to vocabulary in vocabulary control movement and the natural approach. In natural approach, comprehensible and meaningful input was emphasized; vocabulary, as a bearer of meaning, was highly valued (Coady, 1993 as cited in Hsu, 2006). In the 1980s, there had been a revolution in the outlook toward language which had made many to change their views toward language in general and vocabulary in particular (Zimmerman, 1997 as cited in Espinosa, 2003).

However, the current trend of second or foreign language vocabulary instruction emphasizes contextualized vocabulary teaching and learning (Nattinger, 1988; Brown, 1994; Aebbersold & Field, 1997; Nation, 2008). Technology and computer help us to speed up our vocabulary learning in a more natural way. Furthermore, computer technologies can be used for improving learning in different ways. Because computer is of different features that can be used to enhance vocabulary knowledge; one of these features is multimedia. By multimedia we mean those systems which are based on computers. These systems usually use a combination of various types of content including text, audio, video, graphics, etc. All multimedia-based activities are of interactive and computerized nature.

Some EFL or ESL software programs have already been assessed by some researchers to see whether they are appropriate for improving vocabulary and thus reading comprehension (AlKahtani, 1999; Busch, 2003; McGlenn and Parrish, 2002 as cited in Constantinescu, 2007). These studies which have been conducted mostly for investigating teaching and learning vocabulary through using these softwares have been reviewed in this study. For example, Dewanand Sripetpun (2013) in a study in Thailand investigated the effect of a Computer Assisted Vocabulary Learning (CAVL) package on vocabulary acquisition and retention of nursing students and their learning attitudes. The findings of the study indicated that after learning new words by CAVL package, the students' knowledge of the learned vocabulary increased significantly.

Similarly, Abu Bakar and Nosratirad's study (2013) showed that 1) SIM3 (a computer game) was beneficial in sustaining language learning, especially in providing space to learn independently; 2) SIM3 was an appropriate tool for self-study and created an independent learning; 3) SIM3 provided the learners with a stress-free learning environment; 4) It enabled the learners to achieve successful vocabulary learning independently. In another experimental research study by Pahlavanpoorfard and Soori (2014) investigated the impact of using computer software on vocabulary learning of Iranian EFL university students at Lorestan Islamic Azad University. They found that computer group had a better performance than that of the traditional group, and the students in computer group learned more vocabulary than the students in traditional method group.

More recently, in order to examine the effect of PowerPoint presentations on grammar and vocabulary learning of 54 Iranian pre-university EFL learners, Akhlaghi and Zareian (2015) carried out a study in which the performances of two groups of learners namely experimental and control groups were compared. The experimental group was taught by using PowerPoint presentations while the other group was taught using a traditional method of instruction in classroom setting. Moreover, a survey was done through interviews to examine the learners' attitudes toward PowerPoint software application. At the end, the findings of the study indicated that PowerPoint presentations enhanced the learners' grammar and vocabulary knowledge. It was also found that the learners had a positive attitude towards the use of PowerPoint presentation.

Methodology

Participants

In this study, the participants were 50 female senior high school students in Hefdah Shahrivar high school in Khansar, Esfahan, Iran. Their age range was 17-18 years old. As the type of the study demanded, they were randomly (simple randomization) assigned to two groups of experimental and control. The school was equipped with sufficient computers to do the study so that each student in the experimental group had a computer at her hand. The students recruited in this study were familiar enough with Microsoft Word software because they all had computers at home and had been using it for different purposes. Since teaching vocabulary was going to be contextualized, some sample sentences containing new words in bold forms were made for them. The extracted new words were based on "Essential Words for TOEFL" book and they have already been prepared for both groups, for control group in printed forms and for experimental group in software forms saved on their computers.

Instrument

Instruments used in this study were 1) an OPT for intermediate level which is a standard language proficiency test. This test is usually utilized to homogenize the participants and hence the reliability of the results. It contained about 60 items relating to grammar, vocabulary, reading and writing skills, 2) appropriate pre and post-tests which were developed by the researcher and were used in this study. In addition, the validity and reliability of these tests have been considered and calculated through test-retest reliability method, 3) a vocabulary learning software named "Thesaurus" which was used to teach the experimental group. This software contains the synonyms and antonyms of almost every word and 4) a book titled "Essential Words for TOEFL" which was used to teach the control group. This book has provided the reader with different examples, short readings and exercises to help the reader learn and internalize the words deeply. It seems necessary to mention that the

independent variable in this study was Thesaurus software in Microsoft word and the dependent variable was the learners' vocabulary achievement.

Procedure

Fifty five senior high school female students as EFL learners were chosen to participate in this study conducted in Hefdah Shahahrivar high school in Khansar, Isfahan, Iran. To make sure of their homogeneity, the students were given an OPT, a standard test of language proficiency. The results were analyzed and the mean and standard deviation were calculated. Then, the heterogeneous scores were excluded. Thus, the number of the participants reduced to 50. They were randomly assigned to two groups: experimental and control. Next, as treatment materials, 90 new words were extracted from Essential Words for TOEFL book then the students were exposed to the new chosen words and they all declared that none of the words were familiar to them. After that they were contextualized in some sample sentences to be taught each group by a specific method. Prior to the treatment, a written test based on the vocabulary book (Essential Words for TOEFL) was developed by the researcher. The reliability of the test was checked through test- retest method. In this method, the researcher piloted the test on a different group of 40 students on two different times. And the calculated correlation coefficient between two sets of scores which was about .87 confirmed the reliability of the test. Having checked the reliability of the test, the researcher asked the students in both groups to sit for the test. This test was fulfilled to verify that the final improvement in the students' vocabulary knowledge was only due to the treatment. After the pretest, the students in the experimental group was taught the new words using Thesaurus for 16 sessions, three sessions per week on different days of a week, each session six words were taught and it lasted 15 minutes. At the beginning of each session, the pronunciations of the new words were practiced and then the contextualized new words i.e., sample sentences containing new words were taught to the students. The students were given a chance to see the meaning of new words by selecting and highlighting them and then clicking on Thesaurus software tab to have a list of words having the same meaning as the target word. By studying the words in the provided list of Thesaurus, the students could get the meaning of the target word and by comparing the familiar words to unfamiliar ones they were able to learn some other new words and hence increase their vocabulary knowledge size.

However, the students in the control group were taught the same contextualized words, the same number of words, the same number of sessions and the same time each session. But in this group after practicing the pronunciation of new words, the meanings of new words have been offered through guessing strategy on the part of students and mostly by the teacher through giving synonyms and examples in English. At the end of the treatment, both groups sat for a post-test. The post test was the same pretest used before the treatment but with a

different sequence of items to avoid the test effect. At the end of the test, the raw scores of the students were used as the data for analyzing.

Results

Here the results of the study have been offered and discussed in technical terms.

4.1. Demographics

As summarized in the table below, the participants, in this study, were all female students, aged between 17 and 18, and they were studying at the high school third grade.

Table 4.1 Summary of the Sample's Demographics

Gender	Age	Education
Female	17-18 years	High School, 3 rd grade

Hypotheses Results

First, To be sure that all the participants were almost in an equal level of vocabulary knowledge or to examine if there is a significant difference between the both groups' initial vocabulary knowledge assessed through the pre-test,an independent sample t- test was used. As shown in the following table, no significant difference can be seen between the groups' pre-test scores, indicating the equal level of their vocabulary knowledge before the treatment.

Table 4. 2 Groups' Comparison of Pre-test Scores

t-value	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean		Std. Deviation		Mean Difference
			Control Group	Experimental Group	Control Group	Experimental Group	
0.29	48	0.77	5.96	5.76	2.64	2.15	0.2

Having been sure of the equality of the participants' background vocabulary knowledge, the researcher applied an independent sample t- test to see whether there is a significant difference between the performance of both groups and as shown in the below table, there is a significant difference between the participants' post-test scores ($P < 0.001$). The results have shown that the experimental group has on average scored higher than the control group. In other words, the experimental group outperformed greatly the control one in the posttest.

Table 4. 3 Groups' Comparison of Posttest Scores

t-value	df	Mean	Std. Deviation
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		Sig. (2-tailed)	Control Group	Experimental Group	Control Group	Experimental Group	Mean Difference
-5.35	48.00	0.0000	11.84	15.4	2.15	2.53	-3.56

To confirm the above-mentioned results, the following figure has been drawn and as can be seen in this figure the experimental group did better than the control one in the posttest. Therefore, based on these findings, it can be concluded that Thesaurus was very effective in vocabulary teaching and learning.

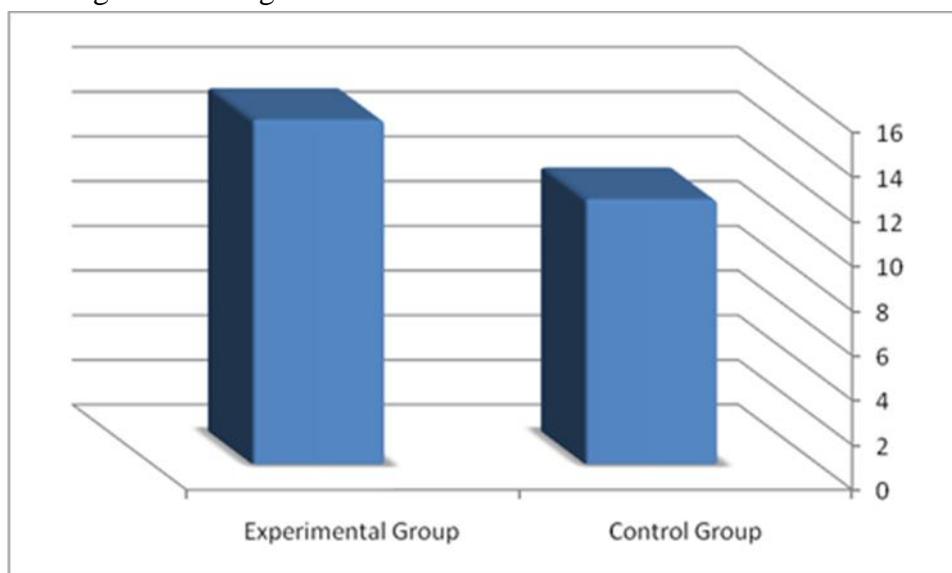


Figure 4.1 Mean Comparison of the Groups' Posttest Scores

Discussion

A quick look at the students' pretest scores indicates that there is no statistically considerable difference between the mean scores of the participants in experimental and control groups. This result indicates that the participants had the same background concerning the vocabulary knowledge before participating in the experiment i.e., both groups were equivalent in background knowledge. The total mean score of the experimental group on the post test was much more than the control group. This means that there was a great improvement in the performance of the experimental group and this improvement can be attributed to the new technique i.e., Thesaurus software application in teaching vocabulary enhanced the students' vocabulary knowledge greatly.

There are different possible reasons for outperforming the experimental group over the control one. One possible reason for this surpassing and outperforming is that Thesaurus software enables each individual to cover and study a large number of words very quickly.

Another possible reason for the considerable differences in the above-mentioned findings is that Thesaurus software makes it possible for the learner to learn other new words which have exactly or nearly the same meaning as the target word(s). Still other reason for the greater improvement in vocabulary knowledge of the experimental group over another group is that Thesaurus software provides the learner(s) with the words with exactly the same function as the target word and this possibility provides more ease, enthusiasm and satisfaction to the learner and hence speed up vocabulary learning, motivate learners and promote greater opportunities for self-learning. Other features of Thesaurus software which directly or indirectly helps the learner improve and expand his vocabulary knowledge are its user friendliness, accessibility, authenticity and its nearly grammatical nature.

From a long time in the past to the present, a large number of studies regarding the use of CALL for pedagogical purposes such as grammar acquisition, vocabulary expansion and retention, writing and reading skill improvement have been conducted. Therefore, it is necessary to make a comparison between the previous studies and the current one to first set the pace for the study and then help reject or accept the use of CALL especially Thesaurus software for language learning in general and vocabulary learning in particular. Therefore, some of the similar studies conducted recently have been reviewed and the results of these studies in comparison to the current one have been offered below.

As a comparison, the results of the current study differ from the study which was conducted by Aryadoust and Lashkary (2009). They investigated the effectiveness of teaching aids on Iranian learners' vocabulary achievement. They did not find any considerable difference between posttest scores of the group, who learned the words with some teaching aids such as flash cards and the group, who learned the words without benefitting from those teaching aids. In simple words, both groups performed almost equally well in their vocabulary acquisition. However, in the current study Thesaurus group who benefitted from Thesaurus software as a teaching aid, performed significantly better in the vocabulary posttest in comparison with the group who did not benefit from Thesaurus. It is necessary to mention that the efficacy of the teaching aids and the type of tests used in these studies are among the factors that made this difference in the results of the current study and the one conducted by Aryadoust and Lashkary (2009).

To discuss further, the results of the current study are also not compatible with the results of Bagheri, Roohani and Nejad Ansari's study (2012) in which they compared two methods of teaching vocabulary, CALL-based and Non-CALL based. The researchers who applied these two methods to teach vocabulary to elementary learners, at the end of the study, came to the conclusion that there was not a significant difference between the CALL-users and non-CALL users' vocabulary scores in both short-term and long-term learning. However, the current study indicated that CALL users outperformed non CALL users. Unlike Bagheri et al's study in which Phonics software was used with elementary EFL learners, in the current

study Thesaurus software was used with intermediate EFL learners. Meanwhile, a CALL-based method was used in Bagheri et al's study (2012) to teach the concrete words. In the present study Thesaurus-based method was used to teach mostly abstract words. Thus, these are some of the reasons for inconsistency of results in these two studies.

Moreover, regarding the incorporation of computers in L2 vocabulary learning, the results of this study are in agreement with the results of Ghabanchi and Anbarestani's study (2008) in which CALL-users used computerized facilities to find and practice the meanings of new words, but non-CALL users followed traditional approaches such as using desktop dictionaries to find the meanings of new words and memorizing a bilingual list of new words. They found that CALL produced better results in contextualized vocabulary learning in comparison to ordinary desktop dictionary method.

Similarly, the findings of the present study are also supported by Wang, Teng and Chen (2015) who investigated the effect of iPad, a word power application, on learners' vocabulary knowledge and they found that those who used this software had greater improvement in their vocabulary knowledge over those who did not use it. Similarly, Ahmadian, Amerian and Goodarzi (2015) conducting a study, compared two groups of learners. One of them was offered contextualized vocabulary learning on paper and the other experienced vocabulary learning using PowerPoint software. At the end, the software-used group performed considerably better than the other group and this improvement was due to the use of software because all the subjects had the same background knowledge based on the proficiency test scores. In summary, this study with a great number of others confirms CALL application and its subcategories in language acquisition in general and vocabulary acquisition in particular.

Conclusion

The researcher who was going to answer the question of "Does using Thesaurus software have any impact on vocabulary knowledge of Iranian intermediate EFL learners?" It can be concluded that those who have learned the vocabulary by Thesaurus had better values of mean in the posttest in comparison with those who have learned the words through traditional vocabulary teaching. In other words, the users of Thesaurus achieved better results in vocabulary learning than the users of traditional book-based vocabulary teaching method. It should be mentioned that a great feature of Thesaurus yielding this conclusion is that in using Thesaurus program, learners have more exposure to many different words with the same meaning and they are able to see and read them in a very short period of time; and hence, they consciously or unconsciously make a comparison between them and by considering the point that all of these words have the same meaning, they learnun familiar words through familiar ones. In other words, it can be said that familiar words are some hints for learning and internalizing new or unfamiliar ones. To conclude, Thesaurus had significant effect on improving intermediate EFL learners' vocabulary knowledge.

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