

تأثیر مطالعه ادبیات انگلیسی بر توسعه دانش واژگان انگلیسی زبان آموزان ایرانی با استفاده از آموزش فاصله‌دار: مطالعه‌ی مروری

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Effects of Studying English Literature on English Lexical Development of Iranian EFL Learners Using Spaced Instruction: A Review Study

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Abstract

There is a great deal of variation in vocabulary learning techniques in English as a foreign language studies. This review investigated the effects of studying English literature using spaced instruction on learning L2 vocabulary. The scope of this paper is to concentrate on teaching literature vocabulary to Iranian EFL learners. This review study aimed to examine the effects of studying English literature vocabulary using spaced or massed instruction by searching in Google Scholar, Scopus, Elsevier and ISI databases. The findings indicated the positive effect of spaced instruction over the massed one in teaching English literature vocabulary to Iranian EFL learners.

Key words: Spaced Teaching, Massed Teaching, English Literature Vocabulary

Introduction

Our primary means of communication is language. It is the way by which we communicate our ideas and thoughts to other people. There are thousands of languages in the world. Every country has their own national language in addition to a variety of local languages spoken and understood by their people in different regions; some languages are spoken by millions of people and others by only a few thousand. English has become an international language, it can be understood that more people are using it every day. English language is spoken, read and understood in most parts of the world.

As such, it is a useful and even necessary language to know. Learning English is important and people all over the world decide to study it as a second language to achieve different goals like getting to know new people and customers and connecting to other people from different countries, as well as having knowledge exchanged in English. Many counties include English as a second language in their school syllabus and children start learning English at a young age. English is the language of science, aviation, computers, diplomacy and tourism. Knowing English increases your chances of getting a good job in a multinational company.

1. Importance of Vocabulary Learning

The learning of vocabulary is an important part in foreign language learning. The meanings of new words are very frequently emphasized, whether in books or in verbal communication. Vocabulary is considered as central in language teaching and is of paramount importance to a language learner. Vocabulary is a basic of one learns a foreign language. Few research indicate that teaching vocabulary can be considered as problematic, as some teachers are not really sure about the best practice in the teaching and sometimes not really aware how to start forming an instructional emphasis on the vocabulary learning (Berne & Blachowicz, 2008).

Vocabulary acquisition plays an important role in mastering a language. A learner with insufficient vocabulary size will not perform well in every aspect of language itself. Fadilah and Mufidah (2021) pointed out that many college students still encountered difficulties in reading their English textbooks. The main reason for those college students who cannot read comprehensively is their limited

vocabulary size. In order to facilitate the learning process for learners, a deep understanding of vocabulary teaching is rudimentary. In addition, some issues pertinent to the improvement in learners' vocabulary size are also mentioned. Issues such as how to teach, and how often to repeat, is also submitted and discussed.

A foreign language's lexicon is one of its major features. Learning foreign vocabulary occurs slowly. Schmitt and Carter (2000) emphasizes that lexical knowledge is central to communicative competence and to the acquisition of a second language. Nation (2001) then describes the correlation between vocabulary knowledge and language practice as complementary: The skill of vocabulary enables language use and conversely. Language use leads to an increase in vocabulary knowledge. Sometimes to learn a new word, a learner needs many encounters. So more the learners have exposed to the new vocabulary, the more that lexicon is probable to be learned (Bilican & Yesilbursa, 2015).

In classroom, the achieving students possess the most sufficient vocabulary. Researchers such as Laufer and Nation (1997); Nation (2001; 2005); Atifnigar et al. (2020); Read (2000; 2004); Gu (2003); Askhatova (2020); Susanto (2016); and Nation (2001) and others have realized that the acquisition of vocabulary is essential for successful foreign language use and plays an important role in the formation of complete spoken and written texts. Learning vocabulary items plays a vital role in all language skills (e.g. listening, speaking, reading, and writing) (Nation, 2001). Alqahtani (2015), furthermore, argued that the acquisition of an adequate vocabulary is essential for successful foreign language use because without an extensive vocabulary, a language learner will be unable to use the structures and functions we may have learned for comprehensible communication. Some research has shown that second language readers rely heavily on vocabulary knowledge and the lack of that knowledge is the main and the largest obstacle for readers to overcome (e.g., Nation, 2001; Alqahtani, 2015).

From the above explanation, it can be concluded; language teachers and applied linguists now generally recognize the importance of vocabulary learning and are exploring ways of promoting it more effectively. Some of these researches take the form of investigation of strategies learners use specifically to review the new vocabulary, or the techniques that teachers can use to instruct the vocabulary to the learners, as focus of attention. One of these useful techniques is spacing or distributed instruction (Kang, 2016).

2. Importance of Studying English Literature for EFL Learners

One of the wonderful parts of any language is its literary and poetic language, which not only touches the soul of the reader and listener, but also can be used in learning a new language with its amazing effect. Traditionally, the role of English literature in English language education programs has been neglected due to the importance given only to functional language. Today, literature in second language classrooms in many modern and first-world countries is very important to students' linguistic knowledge and is a valuable source of motivation for learners. Usually, students who study English only with an emphasis on reading and writing skills sometimes fail to see the impact of studying English literature (Alhusban, 2016).

Violetta-Irene stated that literature and language are closely related and this is a fact none can deny (2015). Karuna (2016) already emphasized the role of literature as “an ally of language”. This technique is by no means novel, since literature has been a widely used teaching tool in different language teaching methods. However, here the perspective changes giving more relevance to the literary text as a work of art. First of all, let us go over the changing role of literature in the tradition of second language teaching to end with an account of its current situation within the communicative approach. In the grammar translation method, literature was the central component.

For the structural approaches to language teaching, literature was discredited as a tool, because it represented the old tradition. The functional-notional method ignored literature, because in this method the importance lies on communication and they present authentic language samples (Nuswantara et al, 2014). Literature was not considered either to have a communicative function or to be authentic example of language use. Nonetheless, in the last decade or so the interest in literature as one of the most valuable language teaching resources available has revived remarkably.

In recent years, the role of literature as a basic component and source of authentic texts of the language curriculum rather than an ultimate aim of English instruction has been gaining momentum. Among language educators, there has been a hot debate as to how, when, where, and why literature should be incorporated in ESL / EFL curriculum (Hişmanoğlu, 2005). Thus, the place of literature as a tool rather than an end in teaching English as a second or foreign language will be uncovered.

Hişmanoğlu mentions that teachers are the main pillars to reach students through English language literature. Teachers should make students interested in literature. By studying literary texts,

students can gain information about different aspects of English culture by using allusions (Hişmanoğlu, 2005). They can also learn the context and meaning of famous quotes and sayings. In another study by Guo it is stated that by studying literature, students can improve not only language such as vocabulary, but also language that can be used for specific purposes. English literature makes students learn about their creativity and imagination, interaction with the text and different literary roles (Guo, 2012).

Thus, reading literary texts helps students to develop their language skills, as literature exposes students to complex themes and fresh, unexpected uses of language” (Lazar, 1993). The study of literature in the language classroom provides learners with the lexical knowledge which is increasingly necessary in the contemporary globalized world. As educators, we can employ the study of literature to help learners for developing their lexical knowledge in the complex and globalized world long after graduation.

However, English is not only knowing words, grammar principles and sentence structure; rather, knowledge of literature of that language in the country in question is also an important part of it. The linguist Robert Lado defines the goal of learning a foreign language as “the ability to use it, understanding its meanings and connotations in terms of the target language and literature, and the ability to understand the speech and writing of natives of the target language in terms of their great works in literature” (Lado, 1964). Therefore, the learning English inevitably involves the literature of target language.

In another study, Wang (2011), discussed that studying literature, phrases, idioms and unique literary devices are known to be difficult to understand and reading a story or poetry requires knowing the meaning of a large number of words. He argues EFL teachers must help learners to realize that literature can help them develop their lexical knowledge. Therefore, it is of great importance to take literary knowledge as one of the contents in the whole process of English teaching so as to help EFL learners to have a good command of necessary literary knowledge and to develop their English lexicon.

But how can this approach be adopted in teaching and learning practice? What is the best way to instruct songs and poetry in the language classroom? How can spaced instruction help language learners, and what are the ethical implications of bringing literature to the language class? These were just a few critical questions that the researchers have tried to answer.

3. Spacing Effect

It is a dream for a teacher in making sure the students get ample information. Within a short period, we try to transmit knowledge in bulk. Have we ever thought that with this massive amount of data that our students need to cope with, can they remember all the pieces and how long does the stored information last? Hence, in this paper, we will unleash the concept of human memory and how it is related to language learning. The term “spaced learning” will be the central role of this paper due to the prevailing significance it has for both memory and learning. Spaced learning is a technique in which requires a sufficient number of repetitions, memorization of gained knowledge (Ebbinghaus, 1885). Spaced learning as defined here is the preparation of allocating and revisiting information provided in separate time periods to facilitate the storage of the required information in the long-term memory (Murre & Cheesa, 2023). In discussing spaced learning, we cannot simply miss its opposite which is ‘massed learning’. Massed learning is used to portray the preparation of learning information intensively for just one tiny phase without any multiple revisions.

The spacing effect (distributed practice effect; lag effect) refers to a memory advantage that occurs when people learn material on several separate occasions, instead of a single massed study episode. Numerous studies have demonstrated spacing benefits for long-term retention of verbal information, including vocabulary learning (e.g. Bloom & Shuell, 1981), memorizing facts (e.g. DeRemer & D’Agostino, 1974) and word list learning (e.g. Zechmeister & Shaughnessy, 1980). Spacing effect benefits in verbal learning are ubiquitous and well documented (Cepeda et al., 2006) in an adult population.

There is a common explanation for the spacing effect that indicates that, counter-intuitively, spacing can actually enhance learning when the interval between presentations is long enough for forgetting to take place. Throughout history, this initial instance has repeatedly been forgotten for improved encoding of subsequent instances (Bjork , 2014, 2015; Smolen et al. , 2016).

Garcia (2014) has illustrated in his reviewed paper that the benefits of spaced learning are numerous. The first advantage is that it has a direct influence on brain activity, enhancing memory performance while decreasing neural repetition subdual. Second, it improves the capacity to recall information by activating episodic memory, resulting in higher item recognition and longer information retention in memory. Third, rehearsal facilitates the opportunity for rehearsal in strengthening the nodes

or traces which in turn favor the retrieval of information. Lastly, repetition promotes and enhances the ability to acquire knowledge if the students are given adequate spaced practices and feedbacks.

Lotfolahi and Salehi (2017), in their article studied different schedules of spacing in young EFL learners. They taught young EFL learners English–Farsi word pairs using different spacing schedules (massed vs. spaced). In the massed condition, learners studied five-word pairs in session one and five-other word pairs one week later. In the spaced condition, the learners studied 10-word pairs in session one and restudied them one week later. To amplify the benefits of spacing, they combined tests (with corrective feedback) into different schedules of spacing. In other words, EFL learners were instructed to test each other on their knowledge of the vocabulary and to give each other feedback. One week and five weeks later learners' recall was assessed. The results showed that spaced practice produced better long-term retention than massed practice. To summarize, this study used spacing and retrieval practice techniques (with corrective feedback) to offer a pedagogically powerful approach for learning vocabulary.

In another study Namaziandost et al. (2019), investigated the effect of spaced and massed distribution instruction on vocabulary learning. To fulfil this objective, 68 Iranian pre-intermediate EFL learners (14–16 years) participated in 16 sessions. The participants were randomly divided into two experimental groups; spaced distribution group (n = 34) and massed distribution group (n = 34). The massed distribution group had one intensive session on learning the target vocabulary; the spaced distribution group had three sessions at irregular time intervals. Using a before and after design, students were retested after 8 weeks. To collect data, a vocabulary test was performed as the pretest and posttest. The results of the paired samples t test and One-way ANCOVA indicated that the spaced distribution group significantly outperformed the massed distribution group on the posttest (effect size .75). The results propose that EFL practitioners can synthesize spacing as a beneficial teaching technique into the curricula and educational materials to promote vocabulary learning.

Hamouda (2021) studied on the effectiveness of massed and spaced practice in authentic EFL classroom settings at tertiary level. In this study 66 Saudi EFL learners were selected among 86 students based on the results of Oxford Quick Placement Test. The selected participants were then non-randomly divided into two equal experimental groups - spaced group and massed group. Both groups were taught the meaning of 50 new words in a massed learning condition and in a spaced learning condition. The massed group had one intensive session on learning the target vocabulary and the spaced distribution

group had three sessions at irregular time intervals. Two vocabulary tests (pre-test and post-test), were conducted, obtained results revealed that there was a significant difference between the post-tests of spaced and massed groups. The findings indicated that the spaced group significantly outperformed the massed group ($p < .05$) on the post-test.

Conclusion

The key role of vocabulary in language acquisition is acknowledged by many L2 researchers. Studying Literature vocabulary and lexical development in general, needs repetition. There are different types of repetition which are categorized as spacing methods. Two of the most prevalent modes of spacing are spaced and massed instructions or repetitions. Types of spacing should help EFL learners to learn, remember and use the instructed lexicon in exams and real-life situations. To develop their English lexicon, students should be provided with an effective, more natural, and more applicable method of instruction that enables them to remember learned vocabulary and use them in context.

Considering the literary texts and teaching the literary devices to students and learners, it is now possible to state that applying spaced instruction and studying English literature affects the development of vocabulary among Iranian EFL learners. The learning style that is right for the students depend on the universities and institutes' policies, as we work toward our language learning goal.

تأثیرات مطالعه ادبیات انگلیسی و آموزش فاصله‌دار و متمرکز بر توسعه‌ی دانش واژگان انگلیسی: مقاله مروری

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چکیده

تنوع زیادی در تکنیک‌های یادگیری واژگان در زبان انگلیسی به عنوان یک زبان خارجی وجود دارد. این مطالعه‌ی مروری به بررسی تأثیرات مطالعه ادبیات انگلیسی و آموزش فاصله‌دار بر یادگیری واژگان زبان انگلیسی پرداخت. هدف این مقاله تمرکز بر آموزش واژگان ادبیات به زبان آموزان ایرانی زبان انگلیسی است. این مطالعه مروری با هدف بررسی تأثیرات مطالعه ادبیات انگلیسی و آموزش‌های فاصله دار با جستجو در پایگاه های Google Scholar، Scopus، Elsevier و ISI انجام شد. یافته‌ها حاکی از تأثیر مثبت آموزش فاصله‌دار نسبت به آموزش انبوه در یادگیری واژگان ادبیات انگلیسی به زبان‌آموزان ایرانی بود.

واژگان کلیدی: آموزش فاصله دار، آموزش متمرکز، مطالعه ادبیات انگلیسی

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