

Exploring the Distinction Between Incidental and Intentional Vocabulary Learning Amongst Undergraduate Students

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ABSTRACT:

This paper aims at exploring some aspects of distinction between incidental and intentional vocabulary learning amongst undergraduate students. The experimental descriptive method is applied via a pre-test ,a post-test and a mediating practical experiment to collect data on the nature of vocabulary achievement. The sample is composed of one hundred and eighty students studying English in second and fourth year at the faculty of education in university of Kassala. The data gained from the two tests is computationally processed with SPSS to see whether there is any significant change in the performance of students. The results show observable progress in the difference between the incidental learners and the intentional ones. The study recommends the focus on the distinctive nature of incidental learning rather than reckoning to the traditions of intentional learning.

Key words: aspects = features , distinctive = marked , reckon = rely

المستخلص:

ترمي هذه الورقة إلى استكشاف بعض ملامح التمييز بين التعلم التلقائي والمتعمد للمفردات وسط الطلاب تحت التخرج. تم تطبيق المنهج التجريبي الوصفي باستخدام اختبارين: قبلي وبعدي توسطتهما تجربة عملية في التدريس وذلك لجمع بيانات حول طبيعة تحصيل المفردات من عينة تحتوي على مائة وثمانون طالب يدرسون اللغة الانجليزية بكل من السنة الثانية والرابعة بكلية التربية في جامعة كسلا تم تحليل البيانات المتحصل عليها من الاختبارين بالحاسوب لمعرفة التغيير في أداء الطلاب من حيث التحصيل. أظهرت النتائج تقدم ملحوظ في الفرق بين طلاب التعلم التلقائي والتعلم المتعمد للمفردات لذلك أوصت الورقة بالتركيز على عكس الطبيعة المميزة للتعلم التلقائي الإدراكي بدلاً من الركون إلى تقاليد التعلم المتعمد وحده.

INTRODUCTION:

The study of foreign vocabulary by undergraduate students of English has a long pedagogical history. It captures the interest of scholars including grammarians , linguists, psycholinguists ,teachers and various specialists in other domains. The most outstanding figures in this area consists of the learning approaches , namely , the intentional or explicit one with a wide spread and considerable survival. Then appears the tendency to adopt the incidental or implicit approach, but with less emphasis. This is why this study sets out

to explore the distinctive nature of the two approaches to guide the complementary process of vocabulary learning. That is ,if students take part in what they actually experience in the learning situation , they will develop competence and a sense of word power that is less likely to be well achieved by intentional learning alone.

Aim and Scope

This paper intends to account for some aspects of distinction in vocabulary learning when incidental and intentional approaches are in question among

undergraduate the students. It is restricted to students of English in second and fourth year at the faculty of education in university of kassala ,Sudan- 2015-2016. This work investigates the influence of clear approach distinction on vocabulary achievement in the context of being used as a means of vocabulary learning.

Literature Review

Aspects of distinction between incidental and intentional vocabulary learning are not easy to explore in a restrict way , particularly when the teacher adopts an electric approach. For example, incidental techniques for teaching , but intentional ones for assessment or their combination in both presenting and evaluating learning. Therefore , the following viewpoints are introduced as guide lines that may explain the nature of the two approaches to vocabulary learning in precise fashion.

Rational Interpretation

Vocabulary learning is considered as a rational process as it can be described as making friendships with word. We sift people and faces in the same way, just a look, a movement , a chance remark, a tone of voice or something in the setting influences our perception of words.(Morgan and Rinvolueri, 1986 : 5) .

The way we interpret words in isolation and in combination is that we fill in the gaps of what has been said with what has either been made available elsewhere or with information derived from previous experience.(Hoey , 1991: 170) .

Implicit or explicit learning

Implicit learning is incidental , it does not involve selective attention to features of input that feed into the learning process. It involves unconscious induction resulting in the establishment

of abstract rules and representations(Schmidt 1995 :177).

Explicit learning does involve selective attention to rules and conscious induction of the abstract rules with such rules having potential influence upon performance(Skehan 1998 : 54).

Word Impression

If we give the meaning of a new word, we weaken the impression which the word makes on the mind. The learners curiosity is dissipated , the tension is relaxed before his interest even beings to be stretched (Billows 1964: 28)

Learners need to let their minds workout the message hidden behind the content words in a cognitive process. Certain degrees of curiosity and tension are raised by the impression that new words might create in their minds(Wallace1982 :30)

Learners enjoy the game of trying to understand what unfamiliar words mean. We spoil the game if we give the solution to a puzzle before it has been really worked out. (Wells .1984:37) .

Exploiting the situation

Learners should be given the chance to explore the learning situation, live in it ,not merely understanding it. Every moment, every process, every wish, every need must be introduced by words, accompanied by words, commented in words, followed by words and restated by words (Billows 1964: 3).

Learners must interact with a word multiple time rather than completing just one type of learning task multiple times. Each in different ways of retrieving a word, each link strengthens connections and increase learners success. (Atkins and Baddely 1998: 73)

Inferring vocabulary meaning from context is essential strategy for developing reading comprehension and

promoting lexical acquisition as well as enriching known words to the used in learning the new ones (Nation, 2001:67).

Knowledge construction

The construction approach can facilitate language learning by giving students choice and provide language that is interesting and meaningful since learning involves word meaning and internalizing their structures. (Krashen 1982:43)

Construction offers a potentially powerful way of rethink education practice as it provides guiding principles and new direction since learning is an active process of knowledge construction (Wood, 1990:18).

Construction of knowledge leads to authentic learner authorship and ownership. The knowledge becomes part of the learner, and the learner emerges empowered. Courses should therefore support a learner centered, task-based curriculum which will encourage knowledge construction. (Wood 1995: 20)

Afast pace may come at the expense of reflection and experimentation and that efficiency is a double-edged sword. Effective learning entails the internalization of knowledge and applying it in a variety of situation. Effective learning is not necessarily efficient, and the process of construction requires time (Greening ,1998:116)

According to these new points one can deduce same aspects of learning distinctions in terms of rational and derivational processes that require unconscious induction of rules devoting lexical achievement. These arguments agree in faring learners interaction with

words to satisfy their needs and desires as well as expressing their thoughts. This requires raising the learners interest and enthusiasm to part of the realistic nature of the exploited learning situation. The underlying principle is that knowledge construction and lexical internalization are vital constituents in the learning process. In opposition to these views appear the intentional properties of vocabulary learning in their widest senses to reform he teaching and learning process quite differently.

Materials and methods

The pre-test is given to both subject groups of incidental and intentional learners in the beginning of the semester to be followed by an experiment of practical teaching. The post-test is taken at the end of the same semester to see change in learners' performance in vocabulary achievement. The two tests are similar in being based on words previously taught relating to academic topics of literary nature. 60 words are chosen according to the level of students with specific attention to second year learners. The sampling questions include: matching words with their synonyms or antonyms, identify word class, using words in new sentences, completing statements, questions and paragraphs. The post-test specifies incidental questions to second year students and intentional questions to fourth year students. Each item is given one mark without penalty for false responses. The aim is to find out if incidental learners can benefit from the given clues to provide perfect answers. Samples of tests are given below:

1-Match words with their synonyms:

no	synonyms	Words	answers
1	forest	Signs	
2	forced	Herds	
3	marks	Jungle	
4	Cattle	Gather	
5	Collect	Obliged	

2- Use the given words to complete the following paragraph:

Herds, jungle, gather, obliged, signs.

The boy intended to..... the white shells in the sands. Enjoying the game, he arrived the..... gradually. As he

was walling, he saw the.....of animal feet. He followed them till he found same.....grazing the grass. He was afraid and was..... to return home.

Results and discussions**Table (1) compared results of the post-tests: incidental vs. intentional**

Q	1	2	3	4	5	6	mean	Type
Q1	61.25	67.5	56.25	25	72.5	70	67.8	Inc
Q2	61.25	56.25	51.25	67	50	63.25	52.9	Int

Incidental learners achieve better than intentional learners

Table (2) compared results of the pre-test with the post-test in incidental learning

Q	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	mean	type
pre-t	39	80	26	77	31	37	36	15	41	24	40.6	Int+Inc
Post-t	61.25	62.5	56.25	25	72.5	70	—	—	—	—	62.8	Inc

Incidental learners achieve more progress in the incidental post-test

Table (3) compared results of pure incidental pre-test with the post-test in group one

Q	1	2	3	4	5	6	mean	Type
pre-test	37	36	15	41	24	—	30.6%	Inc
Post-test	61.25	62.5	50.25	75	75.5	70	67.8%	Inc

Incidental testing provides direct results in the pre and post-tests

Table (4) compared results of the pre-test and post-test among incidental learners

Q	1	2	3	4	5	6	mean	Type
Pre-test	37	36	15	41	24	—	30.6%	Inc
Pre-test	39	80	26	77	31	—	50.6%	Inc+Int
Post-test	61.25	67.5	56.25	75	72.5	70	67.8%	Inc

The given tables show that in incidental learners succeed in exploiting contextual clues to achieve better than the intentional learners in the post-test. Similarly, learners reflect more progress when investigation are centred around the same incidental group as a signal significant level of achievement. This takes place as a result of adopting

incidental techniques and the direct type of measuring incidental learning which is not the case for intentional learning. A clear distinction between the two learning approaches can be read in relation to learners performance.

The data represented in the given tables is elaborated under the categories of lexical achievement , aspects of

incidental learning, learning and measuring dependence ,intentional learning and its influence on incidental learning. The set of comparisons available inform that, with a mean of(43%)in contrast to (49%), incidental learners appear to achieve less limited vocabulary learning. Conversely, with a mean of (68%) in contrast to (59%) , incidental learners seem to is now more about vocabulary use. Typically, with a mean of (67%) in contrast to (30%), incidental learning is directly measured. On the other hand, with mean of (52%) in contrast to (43%) intentional learners show more knowledge about vocabulary. As for learning promotion, it ranges from (30%) in the pure incidental type of question to arrive at (50%) in the mixed type of questions till it reaches (67%) in the final incidental type of tests. These figures show gradual progress in vocabulary achievement in relation to test type as based on learning approach distinctions, strategies and techniques.

Aspects of Incidental Learning

The incidental process to vocabulary learning may be practically approached in various ways of distinct aspects . The most common activities reflecting the nature of such a learning pattern include the keen survey of the surrounding environment of the lexical items . It is fully involved in discovering contextual clues to account for the actual structure of statements, questions , expressions , paragraphs as well as the newly created ones to suit lexical functions . This is because words may exist in contexts altering by being used as nouns or verbs as indicated by the context in which they appear . For example , the word 'bank' may be interpreted as either the financial institution or the river side . It is knowledge of the physical world that

provide contextual clues for the precise use .

Statement Clues

The context of a complete or incomplete statement usually consists of certain clues that distinguished it from other contextual markers . In the case of incomplete statements , the use of lexical items for completing is often indicated by the nature of accompanying clues . It is restricted to the structure and function of the given statement in relation to purpose . Both linguistic and non-linguistic properties participate in the mental process concerning lexical selection .

In this respect , when asked to use some words in completing certain statements in the post-test , with a majority of (61%) subjects in the incidental group provide responses as a clear sign of progress . When compared with their previous performance in the pre-test , only(31%) of the same subject group manage to give accurate answers . It is obvious that learners achieve a reasonable advance whose source of success is mainly attributed to the amount and type of vocabulary work practical during the experiment . Learners are exposed to statements of different contexts in which they elicit clues at many level of lexical interaction. The idea behind that is revealed when regarding the process of internalizing the exact meaning of a word in a specific context as actually emerging from the content of the message intended by the exact words produced . The set of clues included in the contact holding between message partners constitutes the bridge through which the message components are transferred . Therefore , certain mental skills are required to enable the existence of free matching

operations necessary for lexical perception , store and use . Thus , brain activities underlying these activities are well developed in terms of cognitive awareness of their role in vocabulary learning through incidental procedures .

Questions Clues

The skill of extracting valid contextual clues from the structure of incomplete question is a key factor to use such clues in filling the gaps with the suitable lexical elements . This ability depends on the activities prior to the actual task of question completing . It is the sort of interrogative form that determine the contextual clues required for choosing the accurate lexemes to complete the blank a spaces in questions.

Investigation in this area reveal that subjects in the incidental group , with a reasonable majority (67%) show their levels of ability in interpreting the clues included in the questions to be completed . They succeed in using these hints to select the exact lexical items suitable for occupying the given banks in the suggested questions . By comparison , with a minority of (36%), subjects in the same incidental group perform the typical task with a lower level of accuracy in the pre-test . This parts that the correct responses in the post-test as a result of the effort exerted in the experimental exercises .Learners receiving training in grasping interrogative clues to be employed in the post-test with a sense of awareness which is not the case before applying the techniques of the incidental vocabulary learning .

Consequently , it follows that identifying appropriate questions clues is strongly affected by the degree of contextual modulation . That is , the linguistic situation where the meaning of words

and other morphemes very according to their collocations or the linguistic context in which they occur . For example , the choice of verbs seems to vary due to the nouns which they govern with regard to nature of event , the means by which it is accomplished , its typical object and the extent to which it is deliberate may all vary in these different uses . This directs attention to the truth that variation in contextual modulation is of great value to the process of incidental learning in general and to emphasize clues elimination or functioning in particular .

Paragraph Exploiting

In an attempt to discover learners' abilities in finding the set of devices underlying the lexical components of paragraphs , the post-test includes some words to be used in filling in the blank spaces of a paragraph . The idea is that written texts normally consist of guiding clues of various sources , e.g. situational , social and cultural. Such components enrich learners' coherence and text cohesion that work as functional equipments to place lexical items in the appropriate sequencing necessary for perception and regeneration . This task is purely mental , but strongly determined by the physical world surrounding words and their textual constructions .

When accounting for feature of exploiting paragraph clues among learners , the results of the post-test show that more than half of subjects (56%) in the incidental group provide correct responses . This informs that learners achieve progress in employing paragraph clues to use words better than their work in the pre-test where only (15%) of subjects participate positively . The degree of variation observed to raise up to (41%) proposing a

considerable level of improvement in learners' ability to activate contextual clues . Thus , one can say that incidental learning gains good grounds as learners exploit the available clues to complete the given paragraph with the assigned words .

In this way ,coherency of clues is no longer isolated form text cohesion since words are syntactically filling together to be semantically internalized .

This usually involves factors such as knowledge the world , lexical users , the influence they make , the proposals they hold and in particular , the way in which coherent communication is mediated through the use of speech acts . Therefore, the ultimate goal of incidental vocabulary learning is directed towards extensive learners training in creating coherent textual models of carefully selected block of lexis to convey meaningful messages on the bases of accurately picked contextual clues of homogenous parts .

Expression Diversity

The ability to use a certain lexical item in different expressions of ten yields in various senses of interpretations as suggested by the structural properties of such items. It is the major goal of incidental learning to develop learners' abilities in recognizing words in their different possible expressions regardless of their superficially fixed linguistic meaning . It is the current use of words in diversity of contexts that activates , motivates and brings new life to language as lexical mobility is of a dynamic nature .

In favour of examining learners constructed skills in dealing with words in multi-contextual situations , a main question with ten partial items is used in the pre-test. Subjects are asked to

complete ten different expressions including the word 'how' at initial position in all expressions . The results reveal considerable levels of ability in clues recognition and therefore completing the given expressions with the suggested words . With majority of (75%) subjects in the incidental group respond positively as an observed signal of progress . This takes place in spite of the fact that such type of questions is introduced for the first time in the post-test . That is , subjects benefit from the rich wealth of clues included in the expressions to choose the lexical items suitable to fill in the blank spaces in the different expressions .It is the experience acquired from exposure to a wide range of vocabulary activities involving identification of contextual clues of specific types .

The occurrence of such learning types can be explained in terms of contextual modification . It is the cognitive skill seen as the most interactive device that determine the exact sense of meaning in question .

This is due to the notion that words ordinary possess essential meanings that tend to be modified in various ways to suit the context of use . Therefore , incidental vocabulary learning insists on learners to be widely acquainted with varieties of styles serving issues of extended meaning . This often results in well developed coherency , better understanding and precise use of words in accurate collocations .

Lexical Dimensions

The idea lexical dimension refers to the extent to which vocabulary items tend to convey senses of meaning in relation to certain dimensions of use . It is the properties of clues that suggest the sort of literary appreciation predicted from

the target context under consideration . In this case , linguistic knowledge alone is either insufficient or sometimes misleading to enable interpreting the exact sense of meaning . For the sake of casting sheds of light on such an area , aid is sought from tacit non-linguistic components picked out from text ingredients .

In order to investigate this feature of incidental learning , a short passage is introduced to provide the kind of clues relevant to find the meanings of ten words in the post-test. A multiple choice question based on reading comprehension skills is used to account for word meaning as indicated by the given distracters . The results show that subjects in the incidental group exploit the lexical dimension of words in the test to extract word meaning . It is found that with a majority of (79%) subjects achieve correct responses. This takes place in spite of the fact that a similar question is given to the intentional group, but without reference to any reading passage . Word meaning is introduced through synonyms to be chosen by subjects who manage to gain (63%) of the correct responses obtained. In this way, it is observed that incidental learners have clear advantage over the intentional ones as indicated by their scores . The touchable degree of variation (9%) informs that incidental subjects are able to extend the lexical dimension of words to express some additional senses of meaning which is not the case for intentional learners . This can be related to learners' ability to widen the range of word indexicality assumed to be implied in contextual clues . That is , learners with limited experience in creating vast indexical ranges normally face difficulty in

conveying concepts , expressing feelings and reproduce lexical terms relate to specific frames of reference . Therefore , incidental learning is capable of drawing learners' attention to the efficiency of extending the indexical dimension of words to cover as many senses of meaning as possible .

Lexical Contextualization

Most of words in a language tend to occupy various positions in different contexts . Their linguistic values are often characterized by the sort of clues they imply to express the intended sense of meaning . That is , in each new situation words usually gain specific sets of companions that guide the process of accurate word use in a systematic way . The assigned sets of clues bear the seeds distinguishing the contents of sentences , paragraphs and passage .

When locating this feature to incidental learning in general and using words in new sentences in particular , it is of crucial importance to survey its presence in learners performance . For this purpose , the same previously introduced paragraph is employed to elicit some information about learners' abilities to reconstruct new sentences . Some words are taken from the given text so that subjects may apply their original clues in constructing new sentences of similar contextual ones. The obtained data reports that subjects in the incidental group succeed in placing the given words in new sentences whose clues reasonable the original ones . That is , with a majority of (70%) subjects achieve progress in dealing with the newly contextualized words . This can be read with reference to the results of the pre-test where less than half of subjects (41%) provide correct responses a sign of limited knowledge ,

experience and strategy of the altering nature of word context .

Accordingly one can issue that learners' experience in addition to the norms of learning strategies constitute a major division in raising awareness of word properties . This factor , if well developed among learners , it gradually increases the level of cognitive skills denoting word position in new sentences as well as texts . For example , knowledge of transferring an attribute from an object to a property of that object is of great value in creating new word's context . The seeds of a spring flower is assumed to be like wise of a spring nature . It is text that reflect such a process since real support exists when learners are acquainted with the familiar nature of clues shift . The fixed patterns of clues dominate the intentional process need to be treated so that their modifications may function in parallel ways of meaning deviations .

Conclusion:

It could be deduced that the two types of tests provide different scores in incidental and intentional types of question. The incidental group performs significantly better in the incidental type of vocabulary tests. The intentional group manages to achieve progress, but that goal is obstructed by some interfering learning factors as well as the nature of indirect measurement. Therefore, incidental vocabulary techniques are better than the intentional ones in the teaching and learning process. This is because incidental learning develops the cognitive process of learning rather than merely relying on rotting mechanisms evoked by intentional learning. The short comings

of the deliberate approach techniques are best remediable by combining them to the incidental ones in a complementary fashion.

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