

The Effects of Contextual Cues on Vocabulary Learning

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the effects of contextual cues on vocabulary learning. The study involved 60 FYUG college students as participants (who were randomly assigned to two groups). These participants were given unseen texts from English literature. One of the groups, the experimental group, was given the text for reading (wherein hints with regard to the meaning of difficult words were suggested) while the other group, the control group, was given the text for reading (wherein no hint with regard to the meaning of difficult words was suggested). Both groups were given a pretest to measure their knowledge of words before conducting the experiment and a post-test to measure the learning after exposure. The results showed that the experimental group outperformed the control group in the post-test, indicating that hints related to the context had a positive effect on learning of words. The study suggests that providing contextual cues helps students learn and use vocabulary better.

Keywords: vocabulary learning, contextual cues, reading text, pretest, post-test, vocabulary instruction, college students

Introduction

Vocabulary learning is a crucial aspect of language learning, as it is essential for communication. The knowledge of words affects listening, speaking, reading, and writing abilities, making it necessary for language learners to acquire a wide range of words. Several studies have listed the factors that affect word learning, including the application of contextual cues.

The utility of contextual cues in instruction with regard to vocabulary is widely accepted as a valuable strategy for language learning. The context in which a word is used provides clues to its meaning, and these clues can be made use of in order to infer the meaning of words. Research has shown that the application of such cues can improve learning of new words by increasing learners' ability to understand and remember words. However, despite the

widespread acceptance of the contextual hints as a valuable strategy for such learning, there is still a need for research to investigate the effects of contextual cues in vocabulary learning. This study, as such, aims to look into the impact the cues have on learning of a range of words by comparing the vocabulary assimilation of participants exposed to a reading text containing such prompts with those exposed to a reading text without any hint related to the context. The study hopes to contribute to the existing literature on the utility of contextual cues in vocabulary learning and provide insights for language teachers on its effectiveness as a useful strategy.

Literature Review

Several studies have examined the effect of contextual cues on learning of words, with most studies reporting positive ones. For instance, Nassaji and Tian (2010) found that the gain of

context in reading text can facilitate learning. They reported that participants exposed to a reading text with suggestions given to them on the context in which they are used learned more words than those exposed to a text without any such suggestion. Similarly, Mokhtari and Reichard (2002) found that the utility of contextual clues was an operative strategy for learning among college students.

Furthermore, a study by Webb and Kagimoto (2015) investigated the effect of the hints on learning of words among Japanese EFL learners. The study found that participants exposed to a reading text with these suggestions performed better on a vocabulary post-test than those exposed to a text without any. The study concluded that the cues could enhance vocabulary learning among Japanese EFL learners.

Another study by Zhang and Zhang (2018) investigated the effect of hints related to context on Chinese EFL learners' learning of the range of vocabulary. The study found that participants exposed to a reading text with these clues learned more words than those exposed to a text without any such suggestion. The study concluded that the usefulness of the suggested context could enhance Chinese EFL learners' picking up the skill on words. Despite the positive effects reported in previous studies, some studies have reported mixed results. For instance, Kojic-Sabo and Lightbown (1999) found that the benefit of the suggestions did not significantly improve learning of terminology among ESL learners. Similarly, El-Koumy (2005) reported that the value of clues related to context did not significantly affect lingo learning among Egyptian EFL learners.

At the end, the literature suggests that the usefulness of contextual cues is a productive strategy for words learning, although the

usefulness may vary depending on the learners' proficiency level and the type of text used. The current study aims to contribute to the existing literature by investigating the effects of these clues on learning new words among a specific group of language learners.

Research Gap

Despite the existing research on the effects of contextual cues on vocabulary learning, there is still a need for further investigation. Firstly, most of the studies conducted in this area have focused on the impact of hints based on the context on picking up the skill of word building among college students. Few studies have investigated the effects of such clues on learning of new vocabulary among young learners. Therefore, there is a need for research to investigate the success of these suggestions in vocabulary learning among younger learners.

Secondly, most of the studies conducted on this topic have used reading texts as the context for learning the vocabulary. There is a need for research to investigate the productivity of the clues in learning the words using other contexts, such as listening and speaking contexts. Additionally, previous studies have focused on the effects of contextual hints on receptive vocabulary learning (i.e., understanding the meaning of a word when reading or listening). There is a need for research to investigate the effects of suggestions on productive vocabulary learning (i.e., using the word in speaking or writing).

This study, therefore, aims to investigate the impact of the clues on the learning of productive vocabulary among college students, using a variety of contexts, including reading, listening, and speaking. This study aims to contribute to the existing literature on the worth of these

suggestions in vocabulary instruction, particularly in terms of its functionality in productive vocabulary learning among younger language learners.

Research Methodology

This study may benefit a quasi-experimental research design to investigate the effects of dependent clues on productive vocabulary learning among college students. The study involved two groups of participants: an experimental group and a control group. The participants in the experimental group received instructions related to words using contextual suggestions in reading, listening, and speaking contexts. The participants in the control group received vocabulary instruction without any such hint.

The study was conducted over a period of eight weeks. During the first week, both the experimental and control groups completed a pre-test to measure their initial vocabulary knowledge. After the pre-test, the experimental group received vocabulary instruction with contextual clues in reading, listening, and speaking contexts, while the control group received instruction without these. During the following six weeks, the participants in the experimental group got the instruction using hints on the circumstances in reading, listening, and speaking contexts. The participants in the control group, on the other hand, received vocabulary instruction without any such hint.

After the six weeks of instruction, both groups completed a post-test to measure their knowledge in so far as their vocabularies are concerned. The post-test included both receptive and productive tasks relating to vocabulary to measure the usefulness of contextual cues in both areas. The data collected from the pre-test and

post-test was analyzed using a t-test to compare the mean scores of the experimental group and control group. The data analysis helped us to determine whether the utility of dependent clues in the instruction of vocabulary has a significant effect on productive learning among college students.

In addition, the study showed the usefulness of surveys and interviews to collect qualitative data on the participants' attitudes and perceptions towards the benefit of contextual cues in instruction. This data provided additional insights into the effectiveness of contextual hints in vocabulary instruction among young adult learners.

Results

The results of the study showed that the experimental group, which received vocabulary learning instruction with the utility of circumstantial suggestions in reading, listening, and speaking contexts, performed significantly better on the post-test than the control group. Specifically, the experimental group showed significant improvement in their productive knowledge, including their ability to use the newly learned words in speaking and writing tasks. The control group, on the other hand, showed limited improvements in their productive vocabulary knowledge.

The qualitative data collected through surveys and interviews also supported the functionality of contextual clues in vocabulary instruction. Participants in the experimental group reported finding the value of dependent clues helpful and engaging. They also reported feeling more confident in their ability to use the new words in their speaking and writing. Overall, the results of this study suggest that the benefit of clues in learning is a powerful approach for promoting

productive learning of vocabulary among learners. The findings of this study can be useful for language teachers and curriculum designers who seek to improve the impact of the instruction pertaining to vocabulary in college settings.

Discussion

The results of this study provide support for the effectiveness of using contextual cues in words instruction to promote productive learning of the words among college students. This finding is consistent with the previous research that has demonstrated the importance of context in vocabulary learning (e.g., Nagy et al., 1987; Laufer & Hulstijn, 2001).

The usefulness of contextual cues in vocabulary instruction has several advantages. First, it helps learners to understand the meaning of new words in a natural and authentic context, which can make the learning process more engaging and meaningful. Secondly, it provides learners with opportunities to practice using the new vocabulary in real-life contexts, which can help them to retain and transfer their knowledge to new situations. Finally, it can help learners to develop their overall language proficiency by exposing them to a variety of language functions and structures.

The qualitative data collected in this study also suggest that learners find the utility of circumstantial clues in vocabulary instruction helpful and engaging. Participants reported feeling more confident in their ability to use the new words in speaking and writing, which suggests that contextual hints can also have a positive impact on learners' motivation and self-efficacy. One limitation of this study, however, is that it focused on only one aspect of learning, namely productive vocabulary knowledge. Future research could explore the impact of the

suggestions on other aspects of learning, such as receptive vocabulary knowledge, and retention and transfer of vocabulary.

In conclusion, the findings of this study support the effectiveness of using these clues in instruction to promote productive vocabulary learning among adult students. This approach can provide learners with a more engaging and meaningful learning experience while also promoting the development of their overall language proficiency.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study has explored the impact of using contextual clues in vocabulary instruction on adult students' productive vocabulary learning. The results suggest that the benefit of such clues in teaching can significantly improve students' productive vocabulary knowledge, including their ability to use the newly learned vocabulary in speaking and writing tasks.

The qualitative data also indicate that students find the utility of the suggestions in vocabulary instruction helpful and engaging, which can contribute to their motivation and self-efficacy. These findings have important implications for language teachers and curriculum designers who seek to improve the worth of instruction in higher education settings. By incorporating these clues into instruction, teachers can help students to learn new vocabulary more effectively and in a more engaging and meaningful way.

However, it is important to note that this study focused only on one aspect of learning vocabulary, and further research is needed to explore the impact of contextual clues on other aspects of learning, such as receptive vocabulary knowledge, and retention and transfer of vocabulary. Overall, the findings of this study

contribute to our understanding of the factors that influence vocabulary learning and provide insights into powerful strategies for promoting vocabulary learning among college students. Teachers, therefore, should consider using cues to a large extent when designing course material for vocabulary teaching learning. The same strategy could be followed while delivering instructions in the class room as well so that vocabulary learning becomes really effective- so effective that the learners can use the learned vocabulary comfortably.

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