



THE EFFECTS OF CONTEXTUALIZING AND DE CONTEXTUALIZING TECHNIQUES ON STUDENTS' VOCABULARY MASTERY AT THE EIGHTH GRADE OF AL-IHSAN SCHOOL

Dariyanto

Prodi PGSD, Fakultas Ilmu Pendidikan, Universitas Bhayangkara Jakarta Raya

Email: miskdariyanto@gmail.com

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Correspondent:

Dariyanto

miskdariyanto@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT

The present study was conducted to respond to the students low ability to master vocabulary. This was likely due to lack of teachers' practice, particularly the vocabulary teaching techniques. Therefore, the study was aimed at improving vocabulary by comparison two techniques on mastering it. The research question was formulated as: Does contextualizing technique work more effectively than decontextualizing on vocabulary mastery?, and do the students taught by decontextualizing have a better vocabulary mastery than those taught by contextualizing technique in teaching it? The research design used was quasi-experimental research. The subjects were two classes of the eighth grade of Junior High School. Each class consisted of 28 students. Both of them were taught to learn targeted English words by memorizing word lists associated with their Indonesia meanings (a decontextualizing technique) and having a lot of inside and outside of the class practice. In the other group, the students were taught to learn the targeted English words by guessing meaning of the word in sentence (a contextualizing technique). The data were collected using two types of vocabulary test; a guessing meaning of the word test and a rote memorization test. Both of them provided in multiple choice test (MCT). The results of the study to $t > t_{crit}$ ($2.237 > 2.005$), and P_{value} ($0.029 < 0.05$), it revealed that the students received treatment in decontextualized group outperformed statistically than those in the contextualized one. Based on the findings of the study, it can be concluded that rote memorization of word-lists can work better than guessing meaning of the word in sentence (context). In other word, the decontextualizing technique is still more effective than the contextualizing one in teaching vocabulary especially for the eighth grade of Junior High School.

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INTRODUCTION

Vocabulary building is an important aspect of a language development, and a variety of studies has proven that appropriate vocabulary instruction benefits language students, especially school-age learners. It is also accepted that second or foreign language learners who possess good word power or knowledge of vocabulary are usually successful language learners than those limited vocabulary. In short, the acceptable vocabulary instruction is extremely required to guide the language learners acquiring the words, and it is also a key unit of building up four skills.

Furthermore, while the students of Al-Ihsan School in the eighth grade want to improve their skill, to retain vocabulary is one of the main problem they have. Besides they do not know well the techniques and strategies used to solve the problem, their language teachers have not applied any techniques to help them acquire a number of vocabulary. Their teachers usually don't focus on teaching vocabulary at the top of teaching EFL eventhough they are still at lower proficiency. The teachers tend to get monotonous techniques to present vocabulary in teaching and learning English. This is the facet of problem the students have in vocabulary acquisition. All these problems often come up in the English lesson due to several reasons.

First, the language teachers give a little attention to teach vocabulary for helping the students learn vocabulary by some appropriate techniques before new activity done in developing four skills. This is occurred because a target curriculum that the teachers must accomplish on a certain period of time make them ignore to teach vocabulary. In this circumstance, the language teachers must complete their objective of teaching, and to be keen on presenting vocabulary tends to be less. To cope with this problem, the language teachers in this school always translate the difficult words into native language during teaching and learning language. Thus, this technique looks simple, but so far the students have inadequate vocabulary.

Second, teaching vocabulary at the beginning of the lesson is better way to do in order to help the students comprehend a new activity, and the students easily to meet the target vocabulary in intended material the teachers want to teach. In contrast, the teachers do not teach vocabulary at prior instruction because a little time span they have. They usually give meaning spontaneously when the students do not know unfamiliar words in reading text.

In addition, the language teachers hardly ever present the vocabulary using the context and guess the meaning from it. The students need to be taught how to use the context to help them understand the meaning of unfamiliar words. Conversely, the teachers love to present the meaning of difficult words in first language or to write the list of words on the board without any efforts to modify their techniques. Both of the techniques are often employed used in order to achieve the target words they must present in teaching language activity.

Furthermore, to present multiple exposure to new vocabulary items is essential way in vocabulary instruction. The students make educational gains when they are exposed to vocabulary items repeatedly in rich contexts. On the other hand, the teachers have not conducted exposure to the students. They look busy developing four skills so that to cultivate vocabulary seriously tends to be ignored.

Finally, another problem that the students have in vocabulary instruction is the way to use the bilingual dictionary. Furthermore, the use of dictionaries in learning vocabulary is a tool for the students to improve their skill. On the contrary, the language teachers seldom review the use of bilingual dictionaries. They always ask the student to find out the meaning of words without some corrections to the students' task.

Based on the above preliminary problems, the researcher is eager to examine and review some alternative techniques that are tried and applied to overcome these cases. Besides there are a number of techniques can be employed in vocabulary instructions, both of contextualizing and decontextualizing teaching techniques are probably presented to cope with the students' problem. There are not familiar terms among the teachers, nor have they applied them in the classroom seriously. Briefly, contextualizing technique has focused on studying vocabulary in the text material reading, listening, and writing practice. On the other hand, decontextualizing technique. Provides a list of vocabulary in which the students have to memorize words or use the flash cards. In other words, both of these techniques have different features in learning demonstration and implementation.

In this regard, both of the above mentioned teaching techniques have definite impacts on students' vocabulary mastery. There is a problem which remains unsolved to date. The problem is whether decontextualizing technique is superior to contextualizing or not. Moreover, how far the effect of decontextualizing and contextualizing teaching techniques is on students' vocabulary mastery. This study is interesting to conduct in order to enlarge and to shed more light on these problems by focusing on two teaching techniques which are widely used in direct and indirect approaches to vocabulary mastery.

BASIC THEORY

A number of research studies have dealt with the effects of the direct and indirect approaches of vocabulary teaching/learning on learning vocabulary, in general, and on learning English vocabulary as a foreign or second language in particular. What follows is a brief review of the related literature on the topic question.

In a study, Laufer and Shmueli (1997) examined the relationship between memorization of new words (short-term and long-term) and teaching techniques involving different modes of vocabulary presentation and different language of vocabulary glossing. The four modes were: (1) words presented in isolation, (2) in minimal context, that is, in one meaningful sentence, (3) in text-context, and (4) in elaborated text context, namely, in the original text supplemented by clarifying phrases and sentences. In each mode of presentation, half (ten) of the words were translated into learners' L1 and half were explained in English.

An additional group of learners served as a control group. They were asked to learn the words for a quiz by themselves. All subjects were tested on the short-term and long-term retention of the target words. Retention scores were compared by mode of presentation, language of glossing and the interaction between the two. The results of the study revealed that words glossed in L1 were always better retained than those glossed in L2. As for context effect, words presented in lists and sentences were remembered better than those presented in text and elaborated text. The control group received the lowest scores. The results underscored the importance of attending to newly learnt vocabulary and relating it to the first language. Based on the

results of this study, it is suggested that mental elaboration which is claimed to affect retention may not necessarily take place when words are encountered in texts. On the other hand, bilingual lists may be conducive to such elaboration.

In another study, Qian (1996) compared the learning of second language words in lists and in contexts. He employed 63 Chinese university learners of English learning a set of 15 English target words. The No-context group produced significantly better scores on an immediate recall test than the context group did; and this difference was also observed on post-test administered one week and three weeks later. The findings of his study suggest that decontextualised L2 vocabulary learning with feedback is more effective for these particular students than contextualized vocabulary learning without feedback. He also provided a comprehensive review of research that compares the learning of L2 words in lists and in contexts.

Based on the results of this review he argues that most of these data are equivocal, in that it fails to show significant effects for one method over the other. He also challenges the assumption that contextualized vocabulary learning always leads to superior retention.

In still another research project carried out by Lawson & Hogben (1996) the behavior of university students with experience in Italian (N = 15) attempting to learn the meanings of new Italian words was observed using a think aloud procedure. The great majority of the procedures used involved some form of repetition of the new words and their meanings - mostly a simple reading of the dictionary-like entries provided, or repetitions of the word-meaning complexes. Relatively little use of the physical or grammatical features of words, or elaborative acquisition procedures was evidenced. This lack of acquisition between use of context and recall of word meaning is contrasted with the stress placed on context by many researchers. Even when the subjects did use the cues in the sentences to generate possible meanings for the target words, it did not help them establish representation for the meanings of the words.

In a further experiment, Prince (1996) explored the role of context versus translation as a function of proficiency. In this study a recall experiment was performed to determine the relative advantages and disadvantages of context learning and translation learning as a function of learner proficiency (N = 48 English as a foreign language students). The results revealed a superiority of translation learning in terms of quantity, but an inability of weaker learners to transfer their knowledge into second-language contexts.

Khuwaileh (1995) also investigated the effect of contextualization on vocabulary at the intermediate level of English for academic purposes in an experiment with Jordanian university students (N = 40). Two lists were created, each containing 20 new words. List 1 was presented with English meaning and discussed in Arabic; the words of list 2 were embedded in a text for silent reading with vocabulary questions. After 14 weeks, the subjects were tested on list 1 and a second text containing the words of list 2 in the same meanings as in the first text. The number of correct responses to each list was tabulated and it was revealed that the average correct was 9.3 for list 1 and 14.04 for list 2, showing a clear advantage of contextualization for comprehension learning and or recall.

With respect to the use of word lists as a technique for learning vocabularies, Ianacone (1993) argued that vocabulary lists are isolated and isolating. They are

artificially constructed lists which lack context and are not capable of inspiring motivation to learn. Based on his teaching experience and the specific approach which he adopted, he suggested that words should be learned in a context in which students are actively engaged in guessing word meanings as they appear in natural contexts. He finally stated that this approach allows students to build their own vocabulary lists and forces them to assume responsibility for their own learning.

The gist of the foregoing points in relation to vocabulary teaching technique which emphasizes on the direct learning is essentially effective to support the learners for gaining a number of vocabulary. In addition, the use an incidental learning such as guessing the meaning from context is also necessarily required to intensify the students get the knowledge of words. As an alternative vocabulary learning strategy for students at low levels of proficiency learning from word lists is highly recommended. "Learning from word lists, as stated by Waring (1995) is a conscious intentional strategy whereas learning from context is usually incidental to the task at hand, and seeks to aid learners in deepening their knowledge of already known words.

Meara (1982) also claimed that presenting vocabulary in list form is an efficient study method in which students can learn large numbers of words in a short time. Hulstijn (2001) also maintain that if learners are supposed to have access to a rich L2 lexicon that is the foundation of fluent communicative ability, it is necessary to include procedures such as regular rehearsal of words, rote learning, and training in automatic word recognition as one component of vocabulary learning, especially for beginning and intermediate-level learners.

Gathering the research findings presented in this section, one can conclude that, in general, the majority of the research findings such as Laufer and Shmueli, Qian and Prince who provide support for the superiority of decontextualizing vocabulary learning techniques over contextualized one.

Only Khuwaileh, supported the use of contextualizing techniques for vocabulary learning. As far as the ideas of the authorities on the subject of vocabulary learning are concerned, a synthesis of the views presented in this section also lends support for the appropriateness of using decontextualizing techniques of vocabulary learning/teaching rather than contextualized techniques such as Waring, and Hulstijn, especially for beginners. Ianacone is an exception in this regard because, as stated above, he argued that vocabulary lists, as a decontextualizing technique, are isolated and isolating, they are artificially constructed and lack context and, as a result, are not capable of inspiring motivation to learn.

Having a look at the syntheses of the research findings and ideas, it can be concluded that there is still a sort of discrepancy involved. As the results of Qian's comprehensive review of research comparing the learning of L2 words in lists and in contexts, in general, fails to show significant effects for one method over the other, we can come to an understanding of the necessity of further research in this area notably dealt with reading comprehension.

RESEARCH METHODS

The aim of this research is to find out the impacts of contextualizing and decontextualizing techniques on students' vocabulary mastery. The design used in this research was Quasi- Experimental design. Furthermore, there were two reasons for choosing the design. First, quasi-experimental design was chosen because true

experimental was not feasible. Second, because of having limited time and cost, it would be awkward to use different approaches in the same classroom. The researcher decided to use the contextualizing teaching technique for class VIII A, and to use the decontextualizing for class VIII B as a comparison group.

According to Lynch (1996), "There are two kinds of quasi research designs; quasiexperimental design with and without control." Based on the theory, the second design would be applied in this research. Both groups got treatments, so both groups functioned as control groups. There were two groups in this research: the contextualized and decontextualized groups consisting of 56 students.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The Effect of Contextualizing Technique on Students' Vocabulary Mastery

With respect to the results obtained from the analysis of data pertaining to the test, it can be concluded that besides the difference between two techniques, contextualizing and decontextualizing are statistically significant, it also claimed the treatment given to the contextualized and decontextualized class had effect on the students to some extent.

Moreover, the using of a guessing meaning of the words as contextualizing technique has been recommended by some researchers as Hunt and Beglar cited by Richard and Renandya (2002) stated that the learners of EFL need to be taught strategies for inferring words from context which can help them to retain the meaning of the words they have encountered.

The finding of this study might imply that the students in the contextualized class could not perform as well as they were expected to answer the test. It was because they could not guess the meaning of vocabulary properly even though they were taught the way to guess a meaning of difficult words. Another reason which can be claimed regarding the lower performance of the subject in the contextualized class is that these students were doubtful to decide the suitable word in the context. Even when the students received feedback from the teachers, they were diffident to apply the technique given to answer the test correctly.

The effect of decontextualizing technique on students' vocabulary mastery

The interesting finding of this study can be mainly attributed to the results of the administration of the test that two experimental groups had outperformed significantly.

Even though both of them had performed significantly, students in the decontextualized class had a better performance. It can be seen at the mean in all of the analysis data, and t test also revealed that both of techniques had mean difference to students' vocabulary mastery. The students at decontextualized class could recall the meaning of the words in composed multiple choice test. They also could answer the vocabulary correctly.

DISCUSSION

This study found that both of decontextualizing and contextualizing techniques affect the students' vocabulary mastery. However, the effect is different. Decontextualized class had a greater effect than the contextualized class on mastery of vocabulary. It can be seen from the data that students in decontextualized class had higher score than those in contextualized class. The t table 4.11 displays that the mean of

contextualized class is 15.3214, and decontextualized class is 18.2857 or the range is 2.9643 between contextualized class and decontextualized class.

These findings are in line with Qian's and Hustijn's studies. They found that some language learners in decontextualized L2 vocabulary learning with feedback is more effective than contextualized vocabulary learning especially for beginners and intermediate learners. The writer agrees to this opinion because there are some reasons found when the decontextualized technique treatment is given. First, this is simple technique to recognize the targeted words. Second, this technique is able to help the students retain a number of vocabulary. Third, it can develop the students' fluency with known words.

The students in contextualized class as Khuwaileh believed that contextualized vocabulary learning is more effective is not proven significantly with the feedback in this study. The writer found that the contextualized technique is not effective to beginners or lower level learners because of

Finally, it is generally believed that most words from context is useful and productive way to learn words, but the beginners or low proficiency level still need basic vocabulary, and to enrich the vocabulary by rote memoration is necessarily supported to practice before starting to guess word meaning in/from the context.

CONCLUSION

The vocabulary mastery of the students are influenced by some teaching techniques. Two techniques that the writer applied are contextualizing (guessing meaning the word) and decontextualizing (memorization of word list). Those techniques are the variables that the writer employed to know how effects they are in students' vocabulary mastery.

The finding of the study showed that decontextualizing technique (the rote memorization of word lists) is more effective than contextualizing one (guessing meaning of the words) on vocabulary mastery, particularly for learners at the lower intermediate levels of language instruction.

SUGGESTION

Based on the result of this study, the writer's opinion language teachers need to develop the learners' awareness of alternative vocabulary technique that involves active processing of the targeted vocabulary. Language teachers also need to make learners conscious of the need to improve their vocabulary by certain modifying technique which the students enjoy applying it. Greater amounts of decontextualized vocabulary instruction should be given to beginners - lower intermediate level learners, gradually increasing toward more context-based vocabulary learning as their language ability develops. Teachers need to be aware that the learners may resist the learning of vocabulary technique because they are culturally quite different. In sum, the result of this study provides more support for the notion that direct instruction is more beneficial for English foreign language vocabulary teaching particularly for learners at the lower proficiency levels of language instruction.

This study also found that guessing word meaning in context as contextualizing technique or incidental learning was less effective for English language learners particularly at the eighth grade of SMP. To determine more effective instruction for ELL, the students need more sight recognition words. To guess word meaning in context properly, the students should recognize most of word in sentence (context). It

is also a consideration of the characteristics of learners and environments as well as instructional approach. In sum, before applying contextualizing technique for lower proficiency learners at SMP, the teachers should intensify the decontextualizing one to enrich vocabulary.

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