The Role of Corpus-based Language Teaching on Developing Language Acquisition

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ABSTRACT

Vocabulary learning is one of the most difficult learning tasks for EFL learners. Since, vocabulary in English is easily forgotten; a new approach such as corpus-based learning through paying attention to cognates and roots can be helpful. Several linguists suggest that prior language knowledge should be taken into consideration in vocabulary teaching. The present study aims to verify the positive effect of cognate recognition and cognate-based instruction in the process of EFl language acquisition. Students randomly assigned to an experimental and a control group by using a PET test. In the pre-test, an English vocabulary test was carried out among students (who are bilingual and know Persian and Azari languages). During the treatment, students in the experimental group, worked on reading passages and translated them. The researcher mentioned the cognates between Persian, Azari and English languages. Students in the control group, worked on the same materials. However, the researcher did not mention the cognates between Persian, Azari and English languages. The results show that the experimental group obtained slightly higher scores on the vocabulary test in the post-test than the control group. The results of this study confirm the expectations that cognate-based instruction can positively influence language acquisition.

INTRODUCTION

When trying to assess the influence of corpus linguistic research on second/foreign language learning, it seems reasonable to address the influence of native and learner corpus research separately given that they have had rather different implications on instructional settings. Yoon's study (2005) shows for instance that the use of corpora in writing classes provides students with common usage and collocation patterns that can be recycled immediately in their own writing, helps them develop longer-term cognitive skills (such as a greater awareness for lexico-grammatical aspects), and promotes independent learning. Vannestal and Lindquist (2007) find similar results but add that weak students find corpus consultation difficult or boring, and that some students do not find corpora very useful to help them improve their grammatical knowledge of the target language. All the studies listed above also stress the fact that teachers who want to use corpora with their students need to have a good understanding of the multi-faceted aspects of corpus literacy if they want the experiment to be successful. More research on the impact and learning outcomes of corpus methods is definitely in order to provide clearer evidence on the types of tasks and skills that would benefit most from a corpus approach. Cognates are words in two languages that share a similar meaning, spelling, and pronunciation. Researchers who study first and second language acquisition have found that students benefit from cognate awareness. Cognate awareness is the ability to use cognates in a primary language as a tool for understanding a second language (Carlo *et al.,* 2004; Jessner, 1999; Rodríguez, 2001; Soares and Lima, 2012; Solak and Cakir, 2012). One of the most widely accepted practices in foreign language teaching proposes that other languages should be excluded and that the target language is the only one allowed in the classroom. Contrary to this, Jessner (1999) recommends that prior language knowledge should be reactivated in the classroom and that students should look for