



The Impact of Teaching Medical Vocabulary Through Collocations on Language proficiency of EFL Medical Students

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ABSTRACT

Teaching technical vocabulary in ESP context is a vital part of English language teaching at a university level and can promote language proficiency of students. This study aimed at examining the effect of teaching medical vocabulary through collocations on language proficiency of EFL medical students. This quasi-experimental study with a pre-test/post-test control group design was conducted on 80 students majoring Nursing and Midwifery at Kashan University of Medical Sciences. At first, the OPT test was used to homogenize the students and 60 students were selected as intermediate students. The students were divided into two equal groups of experimental and control. For four months, the control group was taught the new medical words in isolation with traditional techniques such as synonym, antonym, definition and mother tongue translation. In the experimental group, the new medical vocabulary was instructed by providing students with collocations of a particular word through using concordancers and corpus-based activities. After the experiment, both groups participated in a language proficiency test (post test). The results showed that the experimental group outperformed the control group in the posttest, implying that teaching medical words via collocations can improve students' language proficiency.

Keywords: Collocations, Teaching vocabulary, Language proficiency, ESP

1. INTRODUCTION

English language teaching has several branches, including English for Specific Purposes (ESP) and general English. ESP provides contexts to meet specific student needs emphasizing disciplinary knowledge in the teaching of English [1]. Learning a second language involves the manipulation of four main skills including speaking, writing, listening and reading, which leads to effective communication. One crucial factor in this process is the amount of vocabulary one possesses as vocabulary forms the biggest part of the meaning of any language [2].

we can determine the overall proficiency of L2 learners by knowing their vocabulary knowledge. Students can enhance their listening, speaking, reading and writing abilities by learning new words. New words could be presented with collocation technique which is extremely important for acquiring vocabulary and has yet to be exploited to its full potential [3].

There are varieties of techniques to teach and present vocabulary in a course such as physical demonstration, verbal explanation, providing the students with synonyms and antonyms, translation, using visual aids, asking learners to check the meaning in the dictionary, exemplification and presenting a word in the context [4, 5].

Among the proposed techniques, lexical approach to language teaching places more emphasis on presenting the words in language chunks (collocations) not in isolation [6]. Consequently, it is essential to make students aware of chunks, giving students opportunities to identify, organize and record these. The potential impact of several studies have lent support to the beneficial effect of concordancing on vocabulary learning [7].

However, reviewing the literature of the lexical approach and data-driven learning in EFL context shows that there is limited study on the effect of teaching medical vocabularies through collocations using concordancers on students' language proficiency. Therefore, the current study aims at examining the effect of teaching medical collocations by concordancers on EFL learners' language proficiency.