Effect of Text Type on Iranian Intermediate EFL Learners' Verb Learning through Glossing

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to examine the effect of different text types on the learners' verb learning when glosses were used. In this true-experimental research, two types of texts, namely, expository and narrative, were utilized. To achieve the objective, 30 female learners in the 16-20 age range who were studying at Adib English Institute in Rasht, Iran were selected from among 50 participants based on their performance on Quick Placement Test. The qualified learners were randomly divided into two groups (control and experimental) comprising 15 learners in each. Afterwards, a 30-item vocabulary pretest was administered. Then both groups were exposed to ten reading texts (five narrative texts and five expository texts) with the target verbs glossed for the experimental group. After the completion of a five-session treatment, participants of both groups were given a vocabulary posttest to measure their verb learning. The findings showed that in the experimental group the use of glossing in expository texts leads the learners to more proficiency in verb learning. In other words, the experimental group that received instruction on glossing for the reading tasks made a noticeably better performance on expository type as compared with narrative text type.

1. Introduction

English includes both skills and sub-skills. Its skills are as follows: reading, writing, speaking and listening. Its sub-skills contain vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation and so on. Among these sub-skills, vocabulary is one of the significant parts of English, and its learning in an efficient way is very considerable. Researchers considered that one of the most efficient ways for vocabulary learning is through extensive reading for the purpose of rapid expansion of vocabulary. According to Hong (2010), extensive reading provides learners with rich contexts that lead to vocabulary learning.

Despite the obvious merits of extensive reading, it is believed that extensive reading alone is hardly enough, and that it needs to be complemented by some other activities or techniques to raise the learners' consciousness and consequently enhance vocabulary learning (Zarei & Hasani, 2011). According to Yousefi and Biria (2015), as an aid to learning new L2 vocabulary items and reading comprehension, glossing has been the focus of much research interest in the field.

Glosses, in general, are vocabulary guides during reading; they offer additional information beyond text and thereby assist the learner as a mediator between learner and text (Yee, 2010). Another issue that is of great importance but has greatly been ignored is the issue of text type. "Psychological models of text comprehension have distinguished between two types of texts: narrative and expository. Narrative texts include poems, short stories and novels" (Farvardin & Biria, 2011, p. 1409). "Expository text is a text whose main goal is to inform" (Farvardin, 2009, p. 17).

Among the abundant studies conducted regarding glossing and its impact on vocabulary learning you can hardly see a study that investigates the effects of using glosses in different types of texts.

Therefore, along with the previous studies, this study is intended to investigate, from a text analysis point of view, the effect that the two most common text genres to EFL learners, namely narrative and expository, may have on their potential verb learning. To fulfill the aim of this study, the following question is proposed:

RQ: Do the text types (i.e., narrative and expository) have any statistically significant effect on Iranian intermediate EFL learners' verb learning through glossing?

2. Literature Review

As one of the building blocks of any language, vocabulary has a crucial role in learning a new language. In order to be able to express your feeling or understanding your addressee, even in your first language, you should have a rich repertoire of vocabulary.

According to Yali (2010), in L2 lexical teaching and learning, there are two types of vocabulary learning: intentional and incidental vocabulary learning. He defined intentional learning as concentrating on vocabulary and joining it with all kinds of conscious vocabulary learning strategies and means of memorizing words. Incidental learning is defined as the type of learning that is a byproduct of doing or learning something else. In terms of vocabulary learning, incidental learning always means the approach of learning vocabulary through texts, working on tasks or doing other activities that are not directly related to vocabulary. Incidental learning is one of the most important strategies of learning vocabulary that involves extensive reading and listening

Generally, Zwaan (1994) suggested that the reader mentally represent and process texts differently, depending on the genre of the text involved and their related expectations and schemas. There is a long tradition of research into the differences between expository and narrative texts. Narrative text tells a story. It focuses on one moment or day in time. In the narrative text the purpose is to entertain readers. Expository text gives information. In the expository text, the author gives reasons and examples to support the thoughts and information they are writing about. The author's purpose is to inform and the reader's purpose is to learn or be informed (Oswalt, 2013).

Moazzeni (2012) investigated the effect of L1 and L2 glosses as well as no-gloss on L2 incidental vocabulary learning.

The results showed that all glossed groups (L1 & L2) outperformed the no gloss group.

In other study, Tadayonifar (2016), examined the effects of glossing on different types of texts with different difficulty levels and varying lengths on vocabulary retention. The findings indicated that the texts which were short with regard to length, easy with regard to difficulty, and expository with respect to type helped students retain the glossed words better than other texts. The findings proved the facilitative effects of glossing on vocabulary learning. However, there was a gap in this area of research with respect to studying the differential effects, if any, of two text types namely narrative and expository on verb learning. Hence, the research presented here seeks to explore the gap.

3. Methodology

3.1 Design

This study was a true experimental study in which the participants of the study were homogeneously selected and then randomly assigned into two groups of control and experimental in order to investigate the research question. First, the vocabulary pretest made up of 30 questions was given to the main participants to measure their knowledge about the target verbs and to find out the potential initial differences of the participants' verb knowledge between the experimental and control groups prior to the treatment.

Then, the treatment began, in which both groups were asked to read 10 reading texts (five expository texts and five narrative texts). Texts were quite similar in terms of length, readability and lexical profiles. Using the Fog index of readability, the difficulty level of the passages was computed. During each session of the treatment, both groups were given two texts, one expository and one narrative text. In each passage about eight unknown verbs were bolded and underlined. In the experimental group the participants had the opportunity to have glosses. The glosses were printed in the margins of the texts. On the other hand, the participants in the control group received the same texts, but with no glasses for the troubling verbs in the texts..

In the end, the posttest was administered to the learners to measure verb learning and the amount of progress made by students from the pretest to the posttest and the effectiveness of the treatments in the experimental group with the help of glossing. The main purpose was also to see

in which type of text glossing was more effective. Data gathered from the research were submitted to statistical analysis. Since the control and the experimental groups are equal in size, an independent t-test was used and results from both groups compared together.

3.2 Participants

This study was conducted initially with 50 female learners studying at Adib English Institute in Rasht, Iran. To homogenize the learners and assess their proficiency level, the standard Quick Placement Test (QPT) was administered. Based on their performance on the proficiency test, from among the 50 participants, 30 learners who got the scores within the range of 28-38 were recognized as being at the intermediate level and were selected as the main participants. The participants were randomly assigned to two different groups. They were divided into one experimental group and one control group with 15 participants in each.

3.3 Instruments

3.3.1 Proficiency test: For the purpose of homogenizing, QPT by Oxford University was administered as a proficiency test which included 60 multiple-choice questions, vocabulary (20 questions) reading (20 questions) and language use (20 questions). It was administered and those who scored 28-38 were selected as the participants of the study at the intermediate level.

3.3.2 Pre-test: A vocabulary pretest was administered prior to the treatment to consider the initial differences existing among the groups with respect to their verb knowledge. The purpose of this pretest was also to ensure that the participants had little or no knowledge about the target verbs.

3.3.3 Post-test: In the end, the posttest was given to the participants. The results obtained from the posttest were used to measure the amount of progress made by participants in two groups from the pretest to the posttest in order to examine the effectiveness of glossing. The results were also used to see which type of text led better to verb learning when glossing was used. The gathered data were analyzed via an independent samples t-test between the scores of the control and experimental groups. The results are discussed below.

4. Results and Discussion

Tables 1 and 2 display the results of independent-samples t-test used to analyze the participants' scores in the pretest of vocabulary.

Table 1: Group Statistics for the Pretest of Vocabulary in Expository and Narrative Text Types

Group Statistics					
	Groups	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pretest expository	Control	15	7.6667	1.54303	.39841
	Experimental	15	7.0667	1.83095	.47275
Pretest narrative	Control	15	7.1333	1.35576	.35006
	Experimental	15	6.5333	1.40746	.36341

Table 2: Independent-Samples Test for the Pretest of Vocabulary

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means					95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference		Lower	Upper
Pretest expository	Equal variances assumed	1.37	.25	.97	28	.340	.600		-.66	1.86
	Equal variances not assumed			.97	27.21	.340	.600		-.66	1.86
Pretest narrative	Equal variances assumed	.02	.87	1.18	28	.244	.600		-.43	1.63
	Equal variances not assumed			1.18	27.96	.244	.600		-.43	1.63

The independent-samples t-test was conducted to compare the performance on the pretest of vocabulary for the control and experimental groups on expository and narrative text types. Concerning the expository text type of the test, there was no statistically significant difference in scores for the control ($M = 7.66$, $SD = 1.54$) and the experimental group ($M = 7.06$, $SD = 1.83$; t (28) = .97, p = .340, two-tailed). The magnitude of the differences in the means (mean difference = .600, 95% CI: -.66 to 1.86) was small (eta squared = .0325). With regard to the narrative text type of the test, no statistically significant difference was found between the scores for the control (M = 7.13, SD = 1.35) and the experimental group (M = 6.53, SD = 1.40; t (28) = 1.18, p = .244, two-tailed). The magnitude of the differences in the means (mean difference = .600, 95% CI: -.43 to 1.63) was small (eta squared = .0473). In other words, both groups were approximately at the same level of proficiency in terms of their foreign language vocabulary learning in expository and narrative text types in the administered test at the beginning of the study.

To provide answer to the research question, an independent-samples t-test was run to compare the mean scores of the expository and narrative text types of the vocabulary test for the two groups. The results of the descriptive statistics are presented in Tables 3 and 4.

Table 3: Group Statistics for the Posttest of Vocabulary

	Groups	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Posttest expository	Control	15	7.8667	1.59762	.41250
	Experimental	15	12.0667	1.66762	.43058
Posttest narrative	Control	15	7.4667	1.76743	.45635
	Experimental	15	9.3333	2.09307	.54043

Table 4: Independent-Samples Test for the Posttest of Vocabulary

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference Lower	Upper
Posttest expository	Equal variances assumed	.09	.76	7.04	28	.000	-4.20	-5.42	-2.97
	Equal variances not assumed			7.04	27.94	.000	-4.20	-5.42	-2.97
Posttest narrative	Equal variances assumed	1.18	.28	2.63	28	.013	-1.86	-3.31	-.41
	Equal variances not assumed			2.63	27.23	.014	-1.86	-3.31	-.41

The Sig. (2-tailed) values for the expository and narrative text types were (α expository = .000 and α narrative = .014), respectively. As these values were lower than the required cut-off of (.05), it could be concluded that there were statistically significant differences in the means of the posttest scores of vocabulary for the control and experimental groups on both expository and narrative text types implying that text type had statistically significant effect on the verb learning of Iranian intermediate EFL learners through glossing.

As it was shown the control and the experimental groups performed better in the posttest of vocabulary test in both expository and narrative text types. However, this improvement in the verb learning was statistically significant simply for the experimental group in both text types but not for the control group. In other words, the experimental group that received instruction on glossing for the reading tasks made a noticeably better performance on expository and narrative text types as compared to the control group in the posttest of vocabulary. Moreover, the experimental group performed better in expository text type as compared with narrative text type.

The findings of this study are in tune with several other studies in this domain. In other words, the results of the present study corroborate previous findings in the field which have demonstrated the profound effect of glossing on improving the learners' vocabulary learning.

The results of this study are in line with Moazzeni (2012), who measured the effect of L1 and L2 glosses as well as no-gloss on L2 incidental vocabulary learning. The results showed that participants took advantage of glossing. According to Azari, Abdullah, Heng and Hoon (2012), the better performance of participants in the experimental groups compared to control group supported the Noticing Hypothesis. Based on Noticing Hypothesis, conscious attention is essential for learning. In the present study, the researcher provided glosses to help learners to notice vocabulary items which appear in reading materials to facilitate their learning.

The results of the present study are remarkably consistent with the study carried out by Tadayonifar (2016). He examined the effects of text type, text length and text difficulty on vocabulary retention through glossing. The findings indicated that the effect of text type on vocabulary retention was statistically significant and expository texts received better rank than the narrative texts.

It is argued that depending on the genre of a text, readers invest processing resources with different depths and varying degrees of cognitive elaboration for the task of comprehension. Narratives can be claimed to invite relational processing or processing directed toward understanding global and thematic information whereas expository texts invite individual item processing, directing readers' attention to the details of the passage (Shokouhi & Maniati, 2009).

5. Conclusion

The results of this study may be of great benefit to EFL learners since glosses allow them the easiest and fastest access to the meanings of unfamiliar words. Glosses also provide multiple exposures to target items and hence increase the learning of previously unknown words. That is, encountering an unknown word in the passage (the first exposure), looking at its gloss to understand its meaning (the second exposure) and going back to the word in the passage to see whether the meaning fits in the context (the third exposure).

Moreover, the findings help learners build up their interpretation and vocabulary learning skills by telling them how they can learn more vocabulary if they utilize the types of texts that the participants in this study performed better on them. The results can help them to be more selective in their

use of the materials to read. The results of this study provide teachers with useful information about the use of glossing in texts that have proven to respond positively to glossing.

In addition to teachers and learners, these results can be useful for material developers. The results indicated that expository texts were better for glossing when the purpose was vocabulary learning so, material developers can use this finding to their advantage and provide glossed textbooks that are mainly informative.

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