

Literature review on effect of task types on English vocabulary acquisition

Xiemusikaimaier·SAIMAITI

Dalian University of Foreign Languages, Dalian 16000, China

Abstract: English vocabulary can be seen as an overt manifestation of one's English competence. However, in China, students have a variety of problems in vocabulary acquisition, such as only learning the Chinese meaning of vocabulary without learning its connotation, insufficient vocabulary input. Therefore, in order to solve these problems in students' English vocabulary acquisition, cultivate students' English vocabulary ability and improve the efficiency of English vocabulary learning, the study of vocabulary acquisition has become a hot topic in the field of second language acquisition. This study compares 3 empirical studies and analyzes their differences and similarities in terms of theoretical basis and research design. At last, it also provides references and suggestions for English vocabulary teaching and learning.

Key words: task type; English vocabulary acquisition; English learner

1 Introduction

1.1 Research background

With the continuous development of science and technology, the process of globalization is increasingly intensified. English plays a significant role in promoting international cooperation. As a result, the teaching of English is becoming increasingly important, especially in middle school education. In the process of second language acquisition, vocabulary acquisition is always of prominent significance. In addition, National English Curriculum Standards of Compulsory Education (2022) introduces new requirements for English vocabulary teaching. Middle school students should accumulate common vocabulary collocation and be able to communicate with others based on the topic in daily life [4]. The amount of vocabulary that middle school students need to master has increased.

Domestic and foreign scholars have found that under different task types, the effect of students' vocabulary acquisition is different, which has important enlightening significance for classroom vocabulary teaching. In order to fulfill the requirements of National English Curriculum Standards of Compulsory Education, the effect of task types on English vocabulary acquisition must be explored so as to enlarge students' vocabulary and cultivate students' vocabulary capacity.

1.2 Problems in English vocabulary acquisition

However, for most English learners, it's not easy to learn English vocabulary. Students' vocabulary ability is urgent to be improved as there are some problems in current English vocabulary teaching. Firstly, students' vocabulary knowledge and understanding are not sufficient. Besides, the input of English vocabulary is not sufficient. Therefore, when it comes to language output, students' vocabulary is not sufficient. Lastly teachers and students are lack of appropriate guidance on English vocabulary learning. Nowadays, English teaching under the new curriculum standards must pay attention to

students' learning abilities and learning needs. Teachers need to help students develop effective learning strategies. Therefore, it is necessary to dig into the effect of task types on English vocabulary acquisition and solve the problems in English vocabulary acquisition.

Hence, this research compares 3 empirical studies about the effect of task types on English vocabulary acquisition which can promote the development of research on task types of English vocabulary acquisition. Moreover, from the classroom perspective, the comparative study about the effect of task types on English vocabulary acquisition is conducive to the construction of an efficient classroom and promotes innovation in English vocabulary teaching.

2 Literature review

After clarifying the purpose and background of this research, here comes the detailed analysis of the topic. In this section, the researcher explores 3 empirical researches (Bao Gui, 2015; Baogui & Wu Yifei, 2019; Zhang Weidong, 2022) at home and aboard and compares the 3 studies from the following aspects, namely, theoretical basis and research design.

2.1 Theoretical basis

Although the 3 studies are all about the effect of task types on English vocabulary acquisition, they are organized by different theories. Bao Gui explores the influence of task types on foreign language learners' acquisition of receptive and productive vocabulary knowledge based on the involvement load hypothesis (ILH) [1]. Moreover, domestic researchers also focus on the study about the effect of task types on English vocabulary acquisition. Based on LOP (levels of processing) and TAP (transfer appropriate processing) frameworks, Baogui & Wu Yifei have designed formal, meaning and formal-meaning mixed tasks to compare the effects of the three types of tasks on English learners' initial vocabulary acquisition, and provided suggestions for classroom vocabulary teaching [2]. Compared to lexical studies under LOP theory, the research about vocabulary acquisition guided by Nation's three important conditions is not sufficient. Pang Shujuan and Zhang Weidong(2022) take Nation's three important conditions of vocabulary acquisition as the theoretical basis to explore whether the absence of corresponding tasks in each condition will have an impact on students' vocabulary acquisition [3].

2.2 Research design

When it comes to the research design, the 3 researchers conducted different experiments in terms of research subject, research method and data collection.

According to Bao Gui's research, the study applied sentence-context between-subjects design to investigate the influence of task types on English vocabulary adaption [1]. This study designed five tasks, namely control, definition, composition, translation and sentence writing. Task type was a factor between subjects. English vocabulary knowledge is the dependent variable and measured by receptivity and productive vocabulary knowledge. The participants were 153 first-year university students in China. The research data were collected through 5 procedures, namely target words, EFL reading task, EFL vocabulary learning tasks, vocabulary knowledge test and piloting. Students' test papers were collected and graded by teachers. The researcher then analyzed the data based on the scores.

Domestic researchers Baogui and Wu Yifei's study addressed the question that what are the effects of different types of vocabulary learning tasks on English learners' comprehensive vocabulary knowledge acquisition, and whether the effects of different component acquisition are consistent [2]. Task types include formal class, meaning class and mixed form and meaning class. The effect of vocabulary knowledge acquisition is measured from three aspects, namely spelling, part of words and word meaning. The research subjects were 88 first-year college students in a university of China. The study analyzed the one-way variance by SPSS and showed that random allocation was ideal. In this study, the statistical analysis software was R 3.5.0, and the robust multivariate analysis of variance method adopted Wald type displacement test.

At last, Pang Shujuan and Zhang Weidong also explored different effects of task types on students' English vocabulary acquisition. Based on the three important elements of Nation vocabulary acquisition, namely attention, extraction, and creative use, Pang Shujuan and Zhang Weidong's study designed three tasks, namely, word meaning matching task, essay filling task, and sentence making task, and put forward the following research questions [3]. The experimental subjects were 30 non-English majors in a university of Shandong Province, all from a class of computer science majors in grade 2021, with an average score of 122 in the English college entrance examination. All subjects studied the same English courses, with the same teachers and textbooks after admission. In this study, R4.1.2 and SPSS were used for box-plot visualization analysis and pairwise sample test to analyze the performance differences between the experimental group and the control group three times.

2.3 Summary of literature review

In the study about the effect of task types on English vocabulary acquisition, the theoretical focus of research has gradually shifted from the ILH (involvement load hypothesis), to LOP (levels of processing) and TAP (transfer appropriate processing) frameworks and to Nation's three important conditions of vocabulary acquisition. The 3 studies are guided under different theoretical basis.

While the 3 empirical studies have some similarities. All of them invite university students as research subjects. And the number of participants is within 200. The number of research subjects is not completely sufficient. More research participants should be invited to make the research more reliable. Besides, the research instruments of the 3 studies all belong to quantitative research. The future study should combine both qualitative and quantitative analysis to make the research results more reliable.

Hence, based on the previous researches, few researches focus on the middle school student as research subjects. English teaching under National English Curriculum Standards of Compulsory Education must pay attention to students' learning abilities and learning needs. Teachers need to help students develop effective learning strategies. Therefore, it is necessary to dig into the effect of task types on English vocabulary acquisition and provide suggestion in English vocabulary acquisition.

3 Implications

3.1 Focus on the context in vocabulary acquisition

The meaning of a word is not determined by its own meaning, but by the collocation of words and the context. Students use a variety of strategies, including meta-cognitive strategies and cognitive strategies, to learn English vocabulary. Context includes sentence context and discourse context. Discourse provides more complete context than sentence. Thus it can promote learners' vocabulary acquisition with a greater effect.

Different words may refer to the same thing, and there is no conceptual difference between the two words, but it is determined by the changing factors such as communicators, communication situation, region and social characteristics. Therefore, English teaching should provide learners with as many different contexts as possible, so that they can use, practice and understand the true meaning of the words. It turns out that words in a certain context are better remembered and have deeper memory traces than words without context.

3.2 Combine cultural background with vocabulary acquisition

In order to acquire vocabulary, learners must also understand words with cultural content. Because words are products of cognition in a certain environment, they must bear the cultural and social characteristics of their respective nations. When learning English, some students cannot accurately understand the meaning of words, especially in reading, because they do not know the cultural background of the target language, and can not correctly grasp the content of the article,

which leads to the error reading comprehension. This is the result of a lack of cultural knowledge in the vocabulary.

In addition, metaphors in English are also related to culture. Metaphor is the main reason for the generation of meaning. Therefore, metaphor should be an important part of English vocabulary teaching in China and an important means to improve the efficiency of vocabulary acquisition. Through association, it not only helps students to have a deeper understanding of vocabulary knowledge, but also helps them to improve their word acquisition effect.

4 Conclusion

This study compares and analyzes 3 experimental researches, and puts forward some suggestions for current students' vocabulary acquisition. Based on the analysis of these 3 studies, this study puts forward some teaching suggestions. Vocabulary memory is related to the type of task. Teachers need to design different learning tasks for the purpose of vocabulary acquisition. In addition, teachers should combine vocabulary learning with context and cultural background, and then guide students to learn more about the various meanings of vocabulary. Learning vocabulary requires a cognitive process.

Conflicts of interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

References

- [1] Bao G. 2015. Task type effects on English as a foreign language learners' acquisition of receptive and productive vocabulary knowledge. *System*, 3: 5384-95.
- [2] Bao G, Wu YF. 2019. An experimental study on task types and English vocabulary acquisition. *Foreign Language Testing and Teaching*, 2: 41-49.
- [3] Pang SJ, Zhang WD. 2022. A study on the influence of task types on vocabulary acquisition of non-English majors. *English Plaza*, 32: 27-33.
- [4] *English Curriculum Standards for Compulsory education*. 2022. Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China. Beijing Normal University Press.