Effectiveness of Culturally Familiar Context on the Growth of Lexical and Morphological Knowledge of Second Language Learners

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Abstract

The present study intends to examine the link between the morphological knowledge of second-language learners and their english comprehension in the context of culturally familiar texts. The experimental approach was used to determine the impact of explicit instruction on the experimental group. The lesson plans are based on passages from "English for Academic Purposes" to provide students with comprehensive and understandable instruction in morphological comprehension. Analysis of the data is made between the Pre and Post test results for both groups of students. The statistics show that improved word power among language learners is significantly influenced by a morphological understanding of culturally familiar texts. Texts that are relevant to the learner's culture may substantially enhance their comprehension of morphology and vocabulary. The researchers draw some findings and make some recommendations towards the end, highlighting the importance of morphological and lexical knowledge for English as second language learners.

Keywords: morphological knowledge, culturally familiar texts, lexical knowledge, second language learners

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Introduction

The research aims to evaluate the association between vocabulary and morphological knowledge in English by placing it in the context of literature that second language learners are already familiar with on a cultural level.

Theoretical and practical consequences of understanding language morphology help English language learners (ELL) grow their active vocabulary, which they use to improve both their receptive and productive capacities. According to recent studies in the area of applied linguistics, the value of culturally relevant texts cannot be overstated in terms of vocabulary growth and the formation of a form-meaning connection when it comes to the process of learning a second language (SiSwati, 2009, p.34). Students' involvement with these texts initiates a cognitive process that captivates their interest in the content,

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heightens their awareness of lexical patterns, and makes it easier for them to analyse the texts' grammatical structures (Casalan, & Lucas, 2019, p.36). The process of text analysis significantly influences how well students learn the linguistic ideas required to build an active vocabulary.

Understanding morphology is a very crucial ability for expanding one's vocabulary. Morphological knowledge is concerned with the fundamental word formation structure for word formation to construct discourse. Language learners may also develop new words and employ word combinations in a variety of contexts, helping them to communicate successfully in a wide range of settings (Goodwin, p.93,2016). Morphemes are essential because they are the smallest meaningful components of a language and may be utilized in several contexts. Learners` metalinguistic capacity to recognize and focus on this knowledge of word structure supports them in applying morphological connections to a range of morphologically complex words (Ella, Casalan, & Lucas, p.33,2019).

According to studies, between 60 to 80% of children's primary school vocabulary is comprised of words with complicated morphologies (Goodwin, 2016, p.98). Carlisle also investigated the notion that morphological comprehension may aid in vocabulary expansion (p.26,2003). She concluded that morphemes are a vital component that facilitates the learning of new words with complex morphology for young speakers. Numerous studies on morphological awareness have led specialists to the conclusion that learners may deduce the meaning of words by analysing their key components. Teaching language learners the meanings of morphemes in the context of sentences is essential. Students are required to recognize the substantial impact that each morpheme has on the overall meaning of a word (Kieffer, p.169,2012). Due to a lack of understanding of the meanings of morphemes, students of all ages make grammatical errors with word endings, but teenagers with a poor morphological base make the most errors (Candy, Deconinck, & Eyckmans, p.227, 2017).

The educational process is significantly impacted by several cultural elements. It can be helpful for information transmission and reception as well as for figuring out what people in a society believe. "Culturally responsive instruction" acknowledges the necessity of including students' cultural allusions in a variety of language-learning techniques (Zhang, Koda, & Leong, p.385,2016). To promote more efficient foreign language learning, literature that is culturally accessible takes advantage of topics that are culturally relatable and reveals the reader's historical and cultural background. The learning process is made more fun and meaningful, and new language and structures are absorbed more gradually and deliberately when they are

first introduced through culturally relevant readings. According to Sheridan, Tanaka, and Hogg (2019, p. 23), adopting culturally recognizable content for reading purposes is a sensible and effective method for boosting students' motivation and interest in the reading curriculum for foreign languages.

The following research questions will be addressed in this study:

1. What is the impact of cultural context on language learners' understanding of a text`s lexical and morphological content?
2. How does a culturally familiar context influence comprehension of a specific lexical form?

One advantage of learning a language in a situation familiar to the learner's culture is the capacity to relate newly acquired language to earlier experiences. Learners of second languages are generally already acquainted with the culture linked with their native speech (Mellom, et al, p.99,2018). If the learner's native background and culture are included in the texts being studied as part of the language learning methods, the "foreignness" of the text may be readily removed. The Socio-Educational Model of Gardner has been used widely to examine the acquisition of second languages, and this research's theoretical foundation is based on his model. In the 1960s, Gardner created his socio-educational model as an illustration of the attitudes and motives associated with learning a second language. According to Gardner, learning a second language may occur under a range of conditions, and it is vital to consider learning contexts while analysing this phenomenon. This provides evidence in favour of the hypothesis that a learner's cultural milieu influences how quickly and how enthusiastically they take up a language. Gardner (1992) emphasized four major aspects that are essential to the process of second language learning within the framework of his socio-educational model. The bulk of this study was done in formal classrooms that were intended to teach the acquisition of second languages (Gardner,2010). This paradigm focused on four interconnected aspects of second-language learning. It includes the learning environment, the student's social and cultural backgrounds, the differences among learners` aptitudes in language classes, and the linguistic outcomes.

The focus of the current study has been on the instructional materials as well as the learning environment that is utilized in the process. Students applying lexical and morphological ideas while reading literary works that are recognizable to their culture effectively represent the elements of this paradigm.

Literature Review

People may communicate with one another in a variety of ways. The usage of a set of symbols, whether spoken or written, is what is meant by the term "language." Some of the fundamental language abilities that must be acquired to communicate successfully in a second language are phonetics, grammar, and vocabulary (Jones & Waller, p,53,2017). Effective communication depends on one's command of vocabulary, which is the fundamental building block of language. It is vital to have a thorough grasp of how words are constructed; particularly how simple meaningful components contribute to the formation of more complex words. It is difficult to generate or understand language without understanding the processes that go into word production and the crucial components that go into words. English as Second Language (ESL) students attempt to deduce meaning from the context of written texts. This increase reading fluency while enhancing word retention, which is crucial for comprehension. A language's lexicon is a collection of all phrases and terms used in that language (Jones & Waller, p,53,2017). According to psycholinguistics, a speaker must be acquainted with a word to be able to pronounce it properly, grasp its proper inflections and collocations, and be aware of the meaning or ranges of meaning that the word may have depending on the context in which it is used (Candry, Deconinck, & Eyckmans, p,230. 2017). A person's mental lexicon is the set of words that are already deeply embedded in his memory (Jack, 2000). Psycholinguists study how speakers build their word banks and practice utilizing them to accomplish their communication objectives. Morphology is the study of how words are put together (Ke, & Xiao, p.358,2015). Morphology is the study of internal structural patterns that result in meaningful units of meaning. It also takes into account the conventions that govern word construction in a specific language (Celik, 2007; Yule, 2010). Aronoff and Fudeman were the pioneers in this branch of linguistic research (p.141, 2010). It is also known as "the mental process involved in word production," and it also attempts to investigate the internal organization, formation, and generation of words.

Researchers who have significantly increased our understanding of morphology have emphasized the significance of explicitly teaching morphology to language learners. Following prior studies by Chomsky (1970), Adams (1990), Berko (1958), and Seymour, the researchers examined how morphological knowledge may aid in the development of literacy and other language-related issues. Chomsky and Adams' study has focused on the ability of individuals to recognize and comprehend the smallest meaningful units in complicated words (Zhang, p. 548, 2016). This skill allows

one to create new words and distinguish between terms with various spellings, such as "read," "reread," "reader," "reading," and "unread," among others (they all have the root read, and their meaning is related to the act of reading (Carlisle, 2000; Mahony, Singson, & Mann 2000; Deacon & Kirby 2004). Additionally, it has been demonstrated that morphological knowledge and comprehension help language learners strengthen their word-decoding abilities (Deacon, 2012; Deacon & Kirby, 2004; Roman et al., 2009; Singson et al., 2000).

Foreign language learners come from a wide range of contexts, speak a variety of languages, and have a variety of cultural backgrounds. Their learning environment becomes more complicated and varied as a result of this diversity. Additional research on the reading processes of several languages has discovered key parallels (McKeown, et al, p.578, 2018). The variety of cultures and their differences have also been shown to have a substantial impact on a person's ability to read English as a second language. The most variable language traits are phonology, spelling, morphology, syntax, and discourse patterns.

Reading is regarded as a dynamic activity because it requires a variety of mental abilities to carry out several intricate tasks to understand the text. Text-driven macro-features include the assessment of overall text comprehension and the possession of prior knowledge. Text-driven micro-features include the identification of letters and lexical items. Readers make an effort to use both types of text-driven features when reading. Letter and lexical recognition, syntax, and pattern recognition. The text needs to be divided up into smaller, more pertinent chunks for learners to understand the subject (Berhnardt, 1991; Brantmeier, 2004). Enough memory space is needed for either the micro or macro level of each of these actions to prevent mental overload. (Baddeley, 1997; McLaughlin, Rossman, & McLeod, 1983; Pulido, 2003).

To increase student interest and motivation while also enhancing academic achievement, adopting a culturally responsive pedagogy is primarily done to implement a teaching strategy that includes the cultures of students in texts. Ella, Casalan, and Lucas(2019, p. 34) maintain that to enhance a person's overall academic performance, cultural information must be incorporated into their language learning program. The use of culturally familiar training in a classroom context has the potential to yield exceptional outcomes. Learners' motivation will increase and their reading comprehension will improve if they achieve their language learning objectives. Additionally, it has been found that greater academic accomplishment is influenced by the cultural value of familiar literary works (Kerpelman, Eryigit, & Stephens, p.998, 2008).

The current research study has focused on both the learning environment and instructional materials used in the process of learning a second language. The learning environment and linguistic resources used throughout the learning process have a significant impact on the linguistic results of language learning programs, according to Gardner's theory on the acquisition of a second language. Gardner (1993, p. 10) claims that this model explains not only the importance of the role of teachers, instructional strategies, and planning, the context of texts to be presented for learning, but also the importance of learning materials and contexts (Ella, Casalan, & Lucas,p.35,2019).

Methodology

This study employed an experimental research design. There are two distinct groups: the experimental group and the controlled group. This study sample consists of IIUI undergraduate students studying in the BS (Usuluddin) program. Before beginning the three-month experimental study, participants completed a pre-test (an initial assessment). To ascertain whether there had been a visible increase in the learners' performance, the researcher administered a post-test to make a comparison with the pre-test. The experimental group was instructed with carefully crafted lesson plans based on culturally relevant texts to increase their lexical and morphological knowledge as well as their receptive and productive abilities. The control group received instruction utilizing traditional strategies

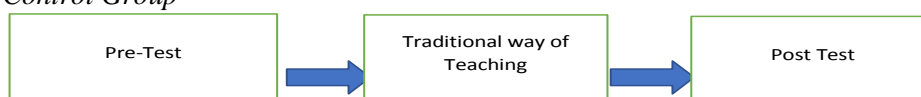*Experimental Research*

Control Group

Figure 1 Control Group
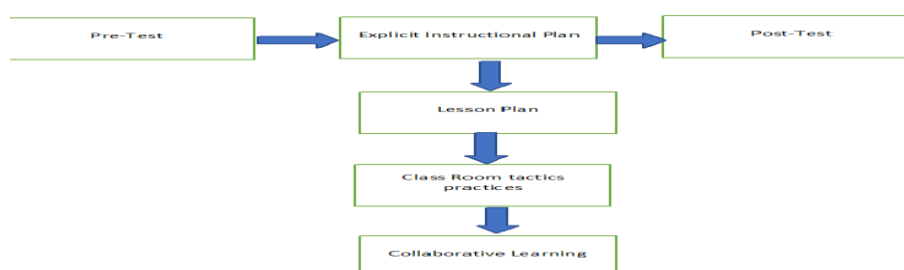
Experimental Group

Figure II Experimental Group

A pre-test is an examination or assessment of the current state of the participants who are taking part in the experimental research. The experimental group will participate in a treatment phase for a predetermined period after this first evaluation to determine the impact of the independent variable on the dependent variable. The results of the pre-test and post-test provided to the experimental group will be compared to assess the efficacy of the treatment phase.

During the treatment phase, the experimental group participants were given a variety of assignments. These exercises and assignments were made to enhance learners' grasp of morphology by utilizing texts that were culturally familiar to them. The activities and assignments are constructed based on the instructional materials. During the teaching phase, all of the activities planned for the experimental group of students encouraged and motivated them to collaborate and work independently to accomplish the desired goals.

Data Analysis

The purpose of the pre-test was to gauge the student's present level of understanding and knowledge of the subject matter. The results of this pre-test enabled the researcher to assess the learners' comprehension and familiarity with English language morphology as well as the weak areas that needed to be strengthened during the treatment phase. Data were gathered from two sections of first-year BS (Usuluddin) students. For this experiment, one section acted as the control group, and the other served as the experimental group. The first analysis was carried out using the data gathered from the pre-and post-tests done by students in both groups.

Descriptive Analysis

Table. I: Descriptive Statistics-For Pre-test and Post-test

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Pre-test	39	19.2308	5.02866	7.00	29.00
Post-test		26.28	9.30442	10.00	43.00

Table II: Descriptive Analysis for Experimental Group and Control Group

Group			Statistic	Std. Error
Pre-test	Experimental Group	Mean	19.7500	.84254
		Median	20.0000	
		Std. Deviation	3.76794	
		Minimum	10.00	
		Maximum	26.00	
		Skewness	-1.076	.512
		Kurtosis	1.816	.992
	Control Group	Mean	18.6842	1.41018
		Median	20.0000	
		Variance	37.784	
		Std. Deviation	6.14684	
		Minimum	7.00	
		Maximum	29.00	
		Skewness	-.285	.524
		Kurtosis	-1.012	1.014
Post-test	Experimental Group	Mean	34.1000	1.04100
		Median	32.5000	
		Variance	21.674	
		Std. Deviation	4.65550	
		Minimum	28.00	
		Maximum	43.00	
		Skewness	.284	.512
		Kurtosis	-1.377	.992
	Control Group	Mean	18.5263	1.22682
		Median	18.0000	
		Variance	28.596	
		Std. Deviation	5.34757	
		Minimum	10.00	
		Maximum	32.00	
		Skewness	.808	.524
		Kurtosis	1.008	1.014

The pre-test experimental group had a post-test score of 32.5 whereas the pre-test control group received a post-test score of 18. The control group's pre-test median score was 20, whereas the experimental group's pre-test median score was also 20. The variances show that the Pre-test Control group is only 28.5 standard deviations from the mean, whereas the other group is 37.7 standard deviations from the mean. The variances for the other experimental group are 14.19 in the pre-test and 21.67 in the post-test.

The pre-test had a maximum possible score for the experimental group of 26, and a minimum potential score of 10. The group's performance was satisfactory. The control group's highest and lowest pre-test scores were, in comparison, 29, and 7, respectively. Contrary to the learners in the control group, the learners in the experimental group underwent a three-month treatment phase in which they were explicitly instructed to improve their lexical and morphological knowledge using familiar texts to them. A post-test was administered to each group three months later. The experimental group's maximum score on this post-test was 43 out of a possible 50 points, while their lowest score was 28. The control group's lowest and highest scores, in comparison, were 10 and 32, respectively. The

control group did not receive any formal teaching, which is why their performance did not significantly improve in the pre-and post-test results. The difference between the results from the pre-test and post-test indicates that the experimental group showed significant improvement.

Based on the outcomes of the tests to evaluate whether or not the data are normal and the variance is homogeneous, the independent t-test was then used to assess whether or not there is a significant difference between the means of these two groups.

Table III: Independent Sample Test

Independent Samples Test

		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	Std. Error Difference		Lower	Upper
Pretest	Equal variances assumed	9.278	.004	.657	37	.515	1.06579	1.62319		-2.22310	4.35468
	Equal variances not assumed			.649	29.574	.521	1.06579	1.64271		-2.29109	4.42267
Post-test	Equal variances assumed	.072	.791	9.714	37	.000	15.57368	1.60314		12.32542	18.82195
	Equal variances not assumed			9.679	35.712	.000	15.57368	1.60896		12.30964	18.83773

An independent t-test (t =.657, df = 37, P > 0.05) revealed that there was no significant difference between the experimental group and the control group before the test. The experimental group underwent a three-month treatment phase that included explicit training before a post-test was taken. The post-test findings make it clear that the experimental group considerably benefited from the focused instruction, which led to a significant improvement in learning. There is a statistically significant difference between the means of the experimental group and the control group, as shown by the statistics T = 9.714 df = 37 and P 0.05. The large performance discrepancy between the two groups on the pre-and post-tests is adequately illustrated by this result.

Results of the Experimental Study

The results of the experimental study supported the following judgments:

1. The researchers found that traditional English language classes do not give students the chance to advance their lexical and morphological understanding of word formation processes and their use in a variety of contexts. Therefore, when given the opportunity, the experimental group's mature students who desired to improve their English language skills studied actively. The setting in which a person is learning a second language, along with the person's natural skill and innate desire to learn, are two of the most important aspects in influencing their motivation to learn, according to Gardner's (2010) model. Students who are more intrinsically motivated and interested will perform better than those who are less motivated and interested. The experimental group's pupils showed a high level of engagement and interest in the learning resources derived from culturally familiar texts.

2. The experimental group, which received the treatment phase, outperformed the control group in the second test, according to the findings of the post-test for both groups. The students in the control group did not get the treatment phase; instead, they received traditional language instruction. The results of the tests led to the conclusion that there was a noticeable difference between the learners' pre-test and post-test performance levels.

3. The results of the pre-tests for both groups show the shortcomings and deficiencies of the learners in terms of their understanding of the steps taken in word generation and the proper use of words in the right settings.

4. One of the most obvious conclusions that can be drawn from this study is that culture influences second language readers' prior knowledge of a text. To understand texts, a learner of a second language makes an effort to build a schema; however, if they are unable to do so or do not acquire the necessary comprehension abilities, their comprehension of the text's actual content will be constrained. This is because creating a schema necessitates the improvement of reading comprehension abilities. In this sense, the usage of texts derived from well-known cultural contexts played a vital part in both inspiring students to learn and retaining their interest throughout the learning sessions. This is the third element of Gardner's socio-educational model, which refers to the social milieu as the person's cultural perspectives or surroundings. It affects language learners' variances on the affective and cognitive levels. The experimental group showed a better understanding of learning

materials based on culturally relatable literature than the control group, which received instruction using the standard resources.

5. One of the main barriers to effective understanding was the learners' inability to understand the texts because of a lack of vocabulary. The exercises and activities based on culturally appropriate texts helped the learners in comprehending the language.

Findings

According to the findings of the experimental study, specialized instruction in strengthening lexical and morphological understanding of the internal structure of words and the processes of word production significantly aids text comprehension. The results of the post-test show how important culturally familiar situations are for helping students understand how one lexical form can have multiple functions. The learners were able to understand novel words and the numerous contexts in which they can be employed since they were able to recognize the meanings of the morphemes. Therefore, it turned out to be quite helpful in terms of increasing the learners' lexical knowledge.

Recommendations

The current study can be replicated or expanded to examine the effects of culturally relatable texts on reading comprehension components like reading fluency, comprehension abilities, and other related strategies to encourage critical thinking in language learners to enhance language learners' reading comprehension. This will make it possible for researchers to look at how culturally relatable texts affect reading comprehension skills like fluency, comprehension, and main idea development. Future studies may look into various morphological awareness dimensions among primary and intermediate level students to further cross-sectional generalization.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study is to investigate whether reading literature from cultures that language learners are already familiar with can improve their morphological awareness. To increase learners' capacity to use and modify word formation processes, this experimental study shows the impact of culturally relatable texts on learners' morphological awareness. The learners were able to understand novel words and the numerous contexts in which they can be employed since they were able to recognize the meanings of the morphemes. Therefore, the culturally familiar texts turned out to be quite helpful in terms of increasing the learners' lexical knowledge.

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