

The Study of the Differential Effects of the Reading Aloud Technique on Impulsive-Reflective Iranian EFL Learners' Vocabulary Learning

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ABSTRACT

This study compared the significant differential effects of the reading aloud technique on Iranian impulsive and reflective EFL learners' English vocabulary learning. To this end, two groups of intermediate impulsive (n=26) and reflective (n=26) students were selected. After grouping the students, a vocabulary pre-test was administered to them. Then, the treatment was applied to both groups. The teacher started teaching the reading texts through using the reading-aloud technique. The teacher read the texts and new determined words with a loud voice. At the end of each session, the participants had to find the meaning of the words with the help of the teacher and answer the reading comprehension questions. The whole procedure of this study was carried out in ten sessions. In the end, both groups took the vocabulary post-test. The results of paired samples t-test revealed that there was a significant difference between the pre and post-test scores of the two groups. Moreover, the results of independent samples t-test showed that there was not a significant difference between the post-test scores of impulsive and reflective students. This study has implications for teaching and learning vocabulary.

KEYWORDS: Reading aloud; Vocabulary learning; Reflectivity; Impulsivity

INTRODUCTION

According to Hubbard (1983), vocabulary can be defined as a powerful carrier of meaning. Additionally, Diamond and Gutlohn (2006) suggest that vocabulary is the knowledge of words and their meanings. This means that without establishing a strong vocabulary base, comprehension and use of a language will not be achieved. The knowledge of word meanings and the ability to access that knowledge efficiently are recognized as important factors in reading and listening comprehension, speaking and writing fluency. Thus, vocabulary knowledge helps students with language comprehension.

McKeown (2002) states that vocabulary knowledge is the heart of a language comprehension and use. Additionally, Barra (2005) suggests that to comprehend a text successfully students need to have sufficient word knowledge. This is to say that the comprehension of a language depends on the amount of words that are known in that language. Also, students need to have sufficient word knowledge to understand what they read. Students can understand a writer's message only if they know the meaning of most of the words used in a text (Barra, 2005).

Vocabulary knowledge is crucially needed and it is one of the most vital components of second/foreign language learning. Read (2000) mentions that vocabulary learning is considered as an unavoidable scope of language teaching by ELT researchers in which words are the basic building blocks of language, the units of meaning from which larger structures such as sentences, paragraphs, and whole texts are formed. Moreover, Nation (2001) states that vocabulary learning plays a primary role in language learning and for being successful in acquiring a language; a large vocabulary knowledge is required for someone to use language in a desired manner.

Nation (2001) asserts that readers need to know at least 97% of the vocabulary in a text for an adequate understanding of it. Without knowledge of the key vocabulary in a text, a learner may have serious trouble in understanding the message, that is, word knowledge is crucial to reading comprehension and determines how well students will be able to comprehend the texts they read. So, having students with a large amount of vocabulary knowledge is essential to language comprehension.

In addition, vocabulary helps students with language production. Hubbard (1983) states that the more words a student knows the more precisely that student can express the exact meaning he/she wants. Based on this view, to

communicate effectively students need to know a large number of word meanings. Likewise, Cardenas (2001) mentions that vocabulary is used to determine the proficiency a student has in oral context. This is to say that vocabulary is an essential component to determine how much a student is able to communicate successfully. Therefore, students have to overcome the lack of vocabulary knowledge in order to communicate effectively. Language teachers should focus on effective instruction to teach vocabulary to help students to develop their vocabulary knowledge in order to communicate successfully (Praia, 2007).

According to Snowling and Hulme (2011), reading aloud is one of the main goals of early education. Learning whether in an academic setting or on one's own tends to be highly relied on the comprehension of information from text sources (McKeown, 1990). In this regard, White (2004) believes that reading truly is basic in every academic area. Reading aloud is one of the styles of reading. Reading aloud means just that-reading aloud. According to Fountas and Pinnell (1996), reading aloud is viewed as a technique in the reading process that allows teacher to read the text in a loud and fluent voice to understand the text by learners. Reading aloud is a simple technique in increasing reading comprehension to beginner children in the EFL/ESL classroom contexts (Dhaif, 1990). As Amer (1997) mentions, when educators apply reading aloud technique in the classroom context, it assists EFL readers explore unit of meaning that should be read as phrases rather than word by word.

According to Huang (2010), reading aloud has five functions in foreign language teaching; the first function is practicing pronunciation, reading aloud is a kind of comprehensive practice of pronunciation. The material for reading aloud is the passage with certain contents and circumstances. Not only should we pronounce every word properly, but we should divide the meaning groups correctly, arrange the pause based on the content. Meanwhile, we should apply suitable stress, intonation and rhythm. Therefore, reading aloud is a very good pronunciation practice. It can help the students correct their dialect effectively.

The second function of reading aloud is improving oral English: The students with perfect oral English should pronounce properly and speak fluently. Most students learn English with a focus on reading and writing skill. For some students who do not have the confidence to practice spoken English, reading aloud can help them overcome the faults of disfluency, repeat, improper pause, and develop natural and good pronunciation habit. We should try to read with expression, change the pitch (high-low), tone (gentle-rough), and volume (soft-loud) of our voice to show different characters or create a mood. Reading aloud can not only help us open our mouths, but also improve our oral English evidently (Huang, 2010).

The third function of reading aloud is getting deeper understanding; in fact, reading aloud is reappearance of all the original contents of idea, feeling, attitude and style in the form of voice. Therefore, standard reading not only can make the students keep great attention, arouse their sense and imagination, but help them understand original correctly and deeply (Huang, 2010).

The fourth function of reading aloud is strengthening the knowledge: We can strengthen what we have learned by listening, speaking, reading and writing. Reading aloud, which has relevant to listening, speaking, and reading is the practice of pronunciation, grammar and vocabulary (Huang, 2010).

Improving the classroom atmosphere is the fifth function of reading aloud. In class, especially in intensive class, students may feel tired and dull after some time. At that time reading aloud can help them back to the class. During read-aloud, we share the excitement, the suspense, the emotion, and the sheer fun of a new book and its intriguing or annoying characters (Huang, 2010).

Some affective factors such as dichotomy of impulsivity/reflectivity can influence language learning. The notion of impulsivity/reflectivity stems from trait theories of personality developed in psychology. According to Eysenck (1981), impulsives persons are motivated to engage in stimulating social activities because of their inherent arousal. Unlike impulsives, reflectives are disinclined to engage in stimulating social activities either because such actions are unnecessary or may cause reflectives to quickly become over-stimulated. Brown (2007) states, impulsivity is a person's quick answer to a problem while reflectivity is a person's slower and more calculated answer to a problem. According to Kagan (1965), reflectives make fewer errors in reading than impulsives and Doron (1973) asserts that reflectives are slower but more accurate than impulsives in reading.

The impulsivity/reflectivity notion is one of the most important psychological traits which has an effective influence on the language learning; but most of language teachers in Iran do not pay attention to this notion as an influential factor in language learning. Therefore, the primary purpose of the present study was to examine the possible differential effects of the reading aloud technique on impulsive and reflective EFL learners' vocabulary learning.

PROBLEM AND PURPOSE

Up to present, reading aloud has been considered as one of the efficacious and traditional methods to the mother language teaching. Although reading aloud seems to be an important method in learning and teaching, most

students have negative attitudes toward this technique in the class (Huang, 2010). They think reading aloud has several disadvantages. Firstly, reading aloud frequently will slow down our reading speed that we always emphasize to improve. Secondly, reading aloud only can give a few students chances of practice while the others feel bored. Thirdly, the students are easy to be embarrassed when reading. They will read worse when being corrected by teacher. Fourthly, it is too difficult to most students to read some unprepared literature. Fifthly, compared to conversation and discussion, reading aloud skill has little practical value unless the student will be the announcer in the future. Finally, this kind of reading is aimless. Every student has original material. As a result, only a few students can continue reading regardless of the embarrassment (Huang, 2010).

On the other hand, some researchers (Shalchian, Vahdany, & Arjmandi, 2014; Zolfagharkhani & Kowsary, 2013) proved the positive effects of reading aloud on enhancing the students' English learning especially in pronunciation area. Considering the above-mentioned advantages and disadvantages attributed to reading aloud, more comprehensible studies are needed to prove if reading aloud is effective or not. In addition, in Iranian EFL educational context, a few empirical studies have been carried out on the effects of reading aloud technique on improving vocabulary learning of impulsive and reflective students. Recent research indicates that teaching vocabulary may be problematic because many teachers are not confident about the best practice in vocabulary teaching and at times do not know where to begin to form an instructional emphasis on word learning (Berne & Blachowicz, 2008). Teaching words is a crucial aspect in learning a language as languages are based on words (Thornbury, 2002). It is almost impossible to learn a language without words; even communication between human beings is based on words. Teaching vocabulary is one of the most discussed parts of teaching English as a foreign language. When the teaching and learning process takes place, problems would appear to the teachers. They have problems of how to teach students in order to gain satisfying results (Alqahtani, 2015). The teacher should prepare and find out the appropriate techniques, which will be implemented to the students. A good teacher should prepare himself or herself with various and up-to-date techniques.

One variable that teachers do not pay attention to is the students' personality; obviously students' personalities are different. Some students are impulsive and some are reflective, so they learn differently. Some teachers do not consider these differences and employ the same teaching method for all students regardless of their personality types. In order to overcome the mentioned problems and to improve Iranian EFL learners' vocabulary knowledge, the present study aimed to investigate the possible effects of reading aloud technique as a specific technique on improving vocabulary learning of Iranian EFL impulsive and reflective students.

Vocabulary knowledge is necessary for success in reading. The role of the reading skill in vocabulary learning cannot be neglected. Krashen (2004) declared that the reading skill is as one of the most important ways for learners to acquire vocabulary. Decades of research have confirmed the important role that vocabulary plays in reading comprehension and in students' overall academic success (Hiebert & Kamil, 2005). In the present study, the role of reading aloud technique was investigated in vocabulary learning of impulsive and reflective students. It is assumed that language learning and especially vocabulary learning may be different between impulsivity and reflectivity. This study compared the possible significant differential effects of reading aloud technique on the impulsive/reflective EFL learners' vocabulary learning. This study tried to answer the following question:

RQ: Is there any significant difference between impulsive and reflective students' learning English vocabulary through reading aloud technique?

METHOD PARTICIPANTS

In order to carry out this study, the Oxford Quick Placement Test (OQPT) was given to 70 students at Mehr high school, Ahvaz, Khuzestan, Iran. Based on their performance in the mentioned test, 55 of them were at intermediate level. Then, the Persian translated Eysenck's Personality Questionnaire was distributed among the students to determine their personality trait. According to this questionnaire, 29 students were impulsive and 26 of them were reflective. The authors excluded 3 of the impulsive students in order to have equal groups. In fact, two experimental groups were included in the current study; impulsive group (n=26) and reflective group (n=26). The participants' age range was 16 to 17 years old and they had the same native language (Persian). The subjects of this research have been studying English for 5 to 6. The participants of this study were all female and were at the second grade senior high school.

INSTRUMENTS

The first instrument, which was utilized in the present study to homogenize the participants, was the OQPT. It helped the authors to have a greater understanding of what level (i.e., elementary, pre-intermediate, intermediate) her participants were at. This test had 60 multiple-choice items and based on it, the learners whose scores were 0 to 10 were beginners; the learners whose scores were 11 to 17 were considered as breakthrough; the learners whose scores were 18 to 29 were elementary; those learners whose scores were 30 to 39 were pre-intermediate; the students whose scores were 40 to 47 were intermediate; the learners whose scores were 48 to 54 were considered as the advanced learners and those whose scores were 55 to 60 were very advanced learners.

A questionnaire proposed by Eysenck (1975) was used to assess the participants' degree of impulsivity/reflectivity. It included 30 items and in front of each item three answers including 'Yes', 'No', and '?' were presented. The authors translated the questionnaire into Persian in order to help the students understand the statements. The reliability of the Persian questionnaire was computed through using inter-rater reliability by means of Pearson correlation analysis as ($r=0.83$). The participants were instructed to answer each item by putting a circle around the 'Yes' or the 'No' as quickly as possible. They were asked to put a ring around the '?' if they found it impossible to decide one way or the other for any reason.

The third instrument which was used in the current study was a vocabulary pre-test designed by the authors. The pre-test included 40 multiple-choice items from the students' course book (Vision 2). Five words from each determined reading text were selected for the pre-test. The reliability and validity of the test were calculated. After making the test, it was checked by 5 English experts for its face and content validity. That is, for making sure about the Content Validity Index (CVI) of the test items, 5 English university instructors checked the test and offered some changes concerning the clarity, simplicity and the representativeness of items. As a result, the authors modified some items of the test and then she piloted it on 10 students in another high school who were the same as the target groups regarding their course book and English proficiency level. Then, the authors computed the reliability of the pre-test through using KR-21 formula ($r=0.81$). The allocated time for answering the test was 30 minutes.

The fourth instrument utilized in this study was a vocabulary post-test. The modified version of the pre-test was used as the post-test of the study. All characteristics of the post-test were the same as those of the pre-test in terms of type and the number of items. The only difference of this test to the pre-test was that the order of questions and alternatives were changed to avoid the probable recall of the pre-test answers. It was administered to help the authors measure the effectiveness of the treatment on the students' learning improvement. Since the post-test was the same as the pre-test, it was regarded both valid and reliable (the reliability and validity of the pre-test were reported above).

MATERIALS

Six reading passages were selected for the treatment. The reading texts were selected from Vision 2. The level of reading texts was intermediate. The difficulty level and the length of the passages were almost the same. The participants were provided with a list of new words from the passages. Based on the assumptions of Dufon and Fong (1994), the target words which will be taught would be unknown, unfamiliar, or difficult for the participants, so the authors selected the target words out of the mentioned reading texts. The participants' degree of familiarity with the target items was realized through a vocabulary list. In other words, a list of 60 words was prepared by the authors and it was given to the students to determine their familiarity with the words. If a word was known to the majority of the participants, then it was excluded from the study. After answering this list, it was revealed that 50 words were unfamiliar and unknown for the students and they were regarded as the target words.

PROCEDURE

To achieve the purpose of this study, the following steps were taken: In the first step, 55 intermediate participants were selected through administering the OQPT. Then, Eysenck's personality questionnaire was given to the respondents to determine whether they are reflective or impulsive. After determining their personality trait, the subjects were divided into two groups; impulsive group ($n = 26$) and reflective group ($n = 26$). As stated before, impulsive students were 29 but 3 of them were excluded in this study. After grouping the students, the treatment was applied to the both groups. The teacher started teaching the reading texts based on the reading-aloud strategy. The teacher read the text and new determined words with a loud voice. Then, the authors read the texts into the microphone and wanted the students to listen to her carefully. At the end of each session, the participants had to find the meaning

of the words with the help of the teacher and answer the reading comprehension questions. This procedure continued for six sessions for the two experimental groups. For the homework, the authors asked the students to read the texts loudly and simultaneously record their voice by their Smartphones and bring it back in the class. It should be noted the treatment for the both experimental groups was completely the same.

The whole procedure of this study was carried out in ten sessions. Each session was 60 minutes. In the first session, the participants were homogenized. In the second session, the participants' personality trait was determined. In the third session, both groups were pre-tested. From fourth session to the ninth session, six texts with new words were taught to the both groups; in each session one text was taught. In the tenth session, both groups took the vocabulary post-test.

In order to answer the research question, data analysis was carried out by using Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) software version 22. Firstly, Kolmogorov-Smirnov (K-S) test was used in order to check the normality of the data. Secondly, descriptive statistics including means and standard deviation were calculated. Finally, to examine the impacts of the treatment on Iranian EFL learners' vocabulary knowledge, a paired samples t-test and an independent samples t-test were run. Paired samples t-test was used to compare the pre and post-tests of each group and independent samples t-test was applied to compare the impulsive experimental group's pre and post-tests to the reflective group's pre and post-tests.

RESULTS

In order to analyze the collected data, the SPSS software version 22 was used. For analyzing the data, K-S test, paired samples t-test and independent samples t-test were run to reach the final results. The results are reported in the following tables.

Table 4. *Descriptive Statistics Pertaining to the Test of Normality*

Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test			
	Statistic	df	Sig.
Pre Group	.162	24	.153
Post Group	.217	24	.76
Pre Group	.110	24	.141
Post Group	.138	24	.127

$p < 0.05$

Table 1 shows that the statistics of scores are normal as the results obtained from using SPSS 22. In this case, the parametric statistics like independent samples t-test and paired samples t-test can be used to get the final results.

Table 2. *Descriptive Statistics of Both Groups for Pre-test*

Group Statistics				
Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Imp	26	14.9615	2.58427	.50682
Ref	26	14.7308	1.99113	.39049

In Table 2, the descriptive statistics of both groups are presented. The means of both groups are almost equal. The impulsive group's mean score is 14.96 and the reflective group's mean score is 14.73. This means that the both groups are somehow similar at the beginning of the treatment. An independent samples t-test was run (Table 4.3) to understand whether the difference between the pre-tests of both groups is significant or not.

Table 3. *Independent Samples t-test (Pre-test of Both Groups)*

Levene's Test for Equality of Variances				
F	Sig.	T	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
5.321	.025	.361	50	.720
		.361	46.948	.720

In Table 3, an independent samples t-test was used to show the scores of both groups on the pre-test. Since Sig (.720) is greater than 0.05, the difference between the groups is not significant at ($p < 0.05$). In fact, they performed the same on the pre-test.

Table 4.
Group Statistics (Post-test of Both Groups)

Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Imp	26	17.0385	2.34061	.45903
Ref	26	16.6923	2.03508	.39911

Table 4 reveals the descriptive statistics of both groups on the post-test. The impulsive group's mean score is 17.03 and the reflective group's mean score is 16.69. This table indicates the both experimental groups had almost the same performance on the post-test. To see if the difference between the groups is significant on the post-test, an independent samples t-test was run in the following table.

Table 5. *Independent Samples T-test (the Post-test of Both Groups)*

Levene's Test for Equality of Variances				
F	Sig.	T	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
1.717	.196	.569	50	.572
		.569	49.053	.572

As Table 5 indicates, Sig (.572) is greater than 0.05; therefore, the difference between the groups on the post-test is not significant at ($p < 0.05$). In fact, the treatment improved the vocabulary learning of both groups equally.

Table 6. *Paired Samples Statistics (Pre and Post-tests of Impulsive Group)*

	Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pre-test	14.9615	26	2.58427	.50682
Post-test	17.0385	26	2.34061	.45903

Based on the descriptive statistics in the above table, the mean scores of the impulsive group on the pre and post-tests are 14.96 and 17.03 respectively. It can be concluded that impulsive group gained better scores on the post-test in comparison to their pre-test. In the following table, a paired samples t-test was run to understand whether the difference between the pre and post-tests of impulsive groups is significant or not.

Table 7. Paired Samples T-test (Pre and Post-tests of Impulsive Group)

		Paired Differences							
		95% Confidence Interval of the Difference					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	Lower	Upper					
Pair 1	-2.07692	.48358	.09484	-2.27224	-1.88160	-21.900	25	.000	

In the table above, a paired samples t-test is used to compare the pre and post-tests of the impulsive group. Since Sig (.000) is less than 0.05, the difference between the pre-test and post-test of the impulsive group is significant. Reading aloud helped this group to improve their vocabulary knowledge.

Table 8. Paired Samples Statistics (Pre and Post-tests of Reflective Group)

	Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pre-test	14.7308	26	1.99113	.39049
Post-test	16.6923	26	2.03508	.39911

In Table 8, the descriptive statistics of reflective group are displayed. As this table shows, the mean scores of the reflective group on the pre and post-tests are 14.73 and 16.69 respectively. It can be claimed that reflective group had better performance on their post-test. A paired samples t-test was run in Table 4.9 to indicate whether the difference between the pre and post-tests of reflective groups is significant or not.

Table 9. Paired Samples T-test (Pre and Post-tests of Reflective Group)

		Paired Differences							
		95% Confidence Interval of the Difference					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	Lower	Upper					
-1.96154	.59872	.11742	-2.20337	-1.71971	-16.706	25	.000		

In Table 9, a paired samples t-test is used to compare the pre and post-tests of the reflective group. Since Sig (.000) is less than 0.05, the difference between the pre-test and post-test of the reflective group is significant. Reading aloud could help reflective students to learn more vocabulary items.

DISCUSSION

After conducting different analyses, the answer of the research question was obtained. Therefore, the question of the study is answered below. The findings of this study revealed that there was not any significant difference in the between the vocabulary learning of impulsive and reflective students through reading aloud. The results indicated that both impulsive and reflective groups had an equal performance on the pre-test, similarly, both groups had the same performance on the post-test. It should be noted that a significant difference was found between the pre and post-tests of each group. The reading aloud technique had positive effects on impulsive and reflective students' vocabulary knowledge.

One possible explanation for the significant effect of reading aloud could be related to the fact that the students were reading a short, isolated passage as opposed to a longer book, where characters and events are linked throughout the text. When students are reading a book, they are more likely to develop a significant

meaning of the events and they are given the opportunity to internalize those events. The results that the authors found, including the success of reading aloud may not have been consistent if they had been asked to read a longer text.

The results showed the positive impacts of reading aloud on vocabulary learning of the EFL learners. One reason for this could be that when students read a passage aloud, the information has already been processed orally which in turn makes it easier for them to remind the information more easily.

The reason for having students read aloud was to share texts, to develop listening skills and vocabulary, to build confidence, to develop strategy use, and to assess students. If students read aloud, they can better understand the author's purpose and the meaning of the text. Some positive effects of oral reading include: accessing to more difficult texts, developing fluency, paying closer attention to punctuation and typographical cues, and practicing with syntax.

The findings of the current study are in line with Silverman, Crandell, and Carlis (2013) who conducted a study to investigate the effects of reading aloud extension activities on vocabulary in Head Starts classrooms. Their outcomes indicated that reading aloud decreased ordinary vocabulary knowledge of the participants.

In addition, the findings of the present research are compatible with Shalchian, Vahdany, and Arjmandi (2014) who studied the improvement of Iranian EFL students' English pronunciation of first stressed two syllable words by reading-aloud after listening to a native speaker model. The findings of the research showed that reading aloud could help students to improve their pronunciation specially the pronunciation of first stressed two syllable words.

The students with perfect oral English should pronounce properly and speak fluently. Most students learn English with a focus on reading and writing skills. For some students, who do not have the confidence to practice spoken English, reading aloud can help them overcome the faults of disfluency, repeat, improper pause, and develop natural and good pronunciation habit. Students have to read with expression, change the pitch (high-low), tone (gentle-rough), and volume (soft-loud) of their voice to show different characters or create a mood. Reading aloud can not only help students open their mouths but also improve their oral English evidently.

CONCLUSION

In order to understand the language, vocabulary is crucial to be mastered by the learners. Vocabulary mastery is needed to express our ideas and to be able to understand other people's sayings. Useful techniques should be employed to help the students learn English vocabulary. Reading aloud as an effective technique was examined in the current study. It was proved that this technique could develop the students' vocabulary knowledge. Both reflective and impulsive students could make use of reading aloud technique in order to learn more English words. Thus, based on the results obtained from the statistical analysis on the collected data mentioned in chapter four of this thesis, using reading aloud technique can be safely suggested as an instrument to improve vocabulary learning of Iranian EFL students. Reading aloud has proven advantageous for English vocabulary learning, therefore, it is important to be incorporated into the classroom on a regular basis.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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