Research Paper

The Effectiveness of Morphological Awareness Training in Acquiring Vocabulary for English Foreign Language Learners

Ermy Dikta Sumanik

Magister Degree of Linguistics, Brawijaya University, Malang, East Java

Abstract: The aim of this study was primarily to investigate the effects of morphological awareness training in acquiring vocabulary of EFL' Learners. The design of this study was quasi-experiment design. The total population of this study was 263 students at the first grade from SMPN 2 Singosari. The sample was 66 students consist of 33 students from class VIIE as control group and 33 students from class VIIG as experimental group. There were two independent variable, control group and experimental group. The experimental group received 5 lessons on strategies whereas the control group did not. Vocabulary Measurement test that adapted from Coxhead (2000) were used and descriptive statistics were reported. In this study the effectiveness of Morphological Awareness was investigated by using *independent sample t-test.* The result showed that tcounted was lower than tcritical (-18.00<2.000) with P value 0.00 (df=64). The P value was less than 0.05 which it indicated that there is significant differences between control and experimental group. The result of this study has shown that there was an effect of morphological awareness training in acquiring students' vocabulary. Also, the findings have shown that students had motivation to practice their vocabulary ability. Morphological awareness also makes the learner more aware of the writing system.

Keywords: acquiring vocabulary, EFL, morphological awareness.

Corresponding author: Ermy Dikta Sumanik, E-mail: ermydikta12@gmail.com, Tel. +6282331542808.

Introduction

Vocabulary is the important part in English language teaching because without sufficient vocabulary students cannot understand others or express their own ideas. In the area of language learning, vocabulary knowledge has been equated with success in second language (SL) or foreign language (FL) learning with respect to different language skills in a large number of studies (Laufer & Goldstein, 2005; Nation & Meara, 2002).

In spite of its importance, English vocabulary is complex, with three main aspects related to form, meaning, and use, as well as layers of meaning connected to the roots of individual words (Nation&Meara, 2010). Vocabulary has become the problems among students. This situation is brought about by several factors. First, the size of the task, the number of words that students need to learn is exceedingly large. Second, the differences between spoken English and written, or "literate" English. The vocabulary of written English, particularly the "literate" English that students encounter in textbooks and other school materials, differs greatly from that of spoken, especially conversational, English. Students-both English language learners and those for whom English is the first language-may have limited exposure to literate English outside of school. Third, the limitations of sources of information about words. The sources of information about words that are readily available to students-dictionaries, word parts, and context-pose their own problems. Each can be difficult to use, uninformative, or even misleading. Last, the complexity of word knowledge. Knowing a word involves much more than knowing its dictionary definition, and simply memorizing a dictionary definition does not guarantee the ability to use a word in reading or writing. Adding to the complexity is the fact that different kinds of words place different demands on learners.

In fact, many Indonesian learners feel difficult to differentiate the meaning of English words for example "helpful" and "unhelpful". So, it is necessary to build the morphological awereness students. Morphological awareness is defined as the ability to use the knowledge of word formation rules and the pairings between sounds and meanings (Kuo & Anderson,2006). With morphological awareness learners are able to learn disassembling complex words into meaningful parts, reassembling the meaningful parts into new meaning, and learning the meaning of roots and affixes.

The principal aim of the morphological awareness training is to help students, especially in acquiring vocabulary. Research indicates that morphological awareness training is effective in improving significantly the spelling performance of poor spellers in certain inflectional and derivational morphemes (Griva & Anastasiou, 2009).

Based on these problems, the present study is founded on assumption that morphological awareness training have an effect in acquiring learners vocabulary. Based on the background of the study stated above, the researcher formulates the statement problem as follows: Do students who are taught morphological awareness training have better ability in mastering vocabulary than those who are taught without morphological awareness training?

The purpose of this study is to investigate the effectiveness of students' ability in acquiring vocabulary that are taught by morphological awareness training and those who are taught without morphological awareness training. It also to investigate whether there is significant difference in the students' ability in acquiring vocabulary those who are taught by morphological awareness training and those who are taught without morphological awareness training.

Based on the background above there are hypotheses as follows:

Ho : There is no significant effect of morphological awareness training in acquiring vocabulary for control group and experimental group.

H1 : There is a significant effect of morphological awareness training in acquiring vocabulary for control group and experimental group.

Methodology

In this study, the researcher conducted quasi-experiment research, nonrandomized design or purposive sampling, because it was not possible for the researcher to assign subjects randomly to group. It means to prove the hypothesis, this design was used since it was impossible to assign the existing subject randomly to group and to interrupt the schedule of the class and to reorganize the class for the research purpose.

Participants

The population of the study was the whole first year students of SMPN 2 Singosari. In this research, the researcher chose SMPN 2 Singosari because based on the preliminary study that conducted in SMPN 2 Singosari found that most of the students in the first grade have the difficulties in differentiate and remember the meaning of words. The whole population from seven classes was 263 students, each class around 32 until 33 students. As a sample, the researcher determined experimental class and control class from two classes available (VII E and VII G, each has 33 students) that the one was recommended by the English teacher.

Measures

The instrument that used in this research was a test. The test which was used for pre-test and post-test was adapted from Academic Word List (AWL; Coxhead, 2000). The researcher tried out twenty word lists to the students in the same grade of SMPN 2 Singosari. The result of the tried out was five word lists were difficult to the students. So, the researcher chose fifteen word lists that would be tested. The design of the vocabulary measures to be receptive, rather than productive, vocabulary design. The vocabulary measure consists of a multiple-choice task, containing fifteen morphologically complex words and four answer choices for each word. One choice corrected, containing the morphemic elements of the word. Three choices were incorrect. One contained the meaning of the base word, but incorrect meaning of the suffix. Another contains the correct meaning of the suffix, but incorrect base word meaning. The final choice was completely incorrect, neither the base nor suffix meanings were correct. The order of correct and incorrect choices was randomized.

Procedure

Before conducting the treatment both of class give same pre-test. After that the experiment class got 5 lessons using morphological awareness training but the control class did not receive it. Then, both of class got same post-test.

Results and Discussion

The reasearch question addressed the effect of morphological awareness training in acquiring vocabulary for EFL learners. In response to this question, a series of statistical procedure were carried out on each dependent variable in order to determine for which group differences reached significance. The minimum alpha for confirmation of research hypothesis was .05. At first the descriptive data of pre-test for experimental group and control group displayed in Table 1. Similary, summary of the result from t-test is displayed in Table 2.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics for morphological awareness training.

Descriptive Statistics			
	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Control	33	42.0091	8.39985
Experimental	33	75.7164	6.62513
Total	66		

Table 2. Independent sample test.

Independent Sample 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
Test_ Score	Equal variances assumed	1.006	.320	-18.100	64	.000	-33.70727	1.86230	-37.42765	-29.98689
	Equal variances not assumed			-18.100	60.705	.000	-33.70727	1.86230	-37.43155	-29.98300

The main scores and standard deviation of post-test for control and experiment group are presented in Table 1. The mean scores for experiment group are higher that control group, indicating that participant in the experimental group tented to acquire vocabulary well.

The result of t-test, illustrated in Table II, show that there is a statistically difference (p< .05) between the control and experiment group. The mean of experimental group are greater in morphological awareness training. Thus, the first null hypothesis "There was no significant effect of morphological awareness training on the first grade students' vocabulary at SMPN 2 Singosari" was rejected. But, the alternative hypothesis (Ha), "There was a significant effect of morphological awareness training on the first grade students' vocabulary at SMPN 2 Singosari" was accepted. It means that there was a significant effect of morphological awareness in acquiring vocabulary between control group and experimental group.

The present study investigated the effectiveness of morphological awareness training in acquiring vocabulary for EFL learners. From the post-test showed that the students could perform well in choosing one the meaning of the word. The effect of morphological awareness training, it could be seen on the acquiring of students' vocabulary. The resulting t-test showed a significant difference between control group and experimental group that -18.100 lower than $t_{critical}$ 2.000.

Based on the explanation above, the result showed that morphological awareness training was an effective way for acquiring vocabulary. The learners who have high of morphological awareness will have a good vocabulary and vise versa. Its because the learners' use of metacognitive strategies of reflecting and manipulating word formation rules to derive the meaning of new words in the absence of communicative context. This finding was parrarel to another study in Midwestern research university, on the effect of morphological strategies training for EFL learners (Deng, Q & Trainin, G, 2014). He found that morphological awareness training positively affect the morphological awareness to acquiring the vocabulary of ELLs.

Furthemore, the successful effect using morphological awareness training to teach vocabulary is also supported by previous resercher who proved that morphological awareness training was able to improve students vocabulary knowledge. The study was done by by McBride, Chang, Bonnie, Shu (2005) examined of measurement of morphological awareness for explaining children's vocabulary knowledge especially in kindergartners. The combined task of morphological awareness is good predictors of vocabulary knowledge, even once phonological processing, word reading skill, and age are statistically controlled. The result indicates that morphological awareness is a cognitive construct separable from phonological processing and reading skills and important for vocabulary aqcuisation. It was in line by the finding from Latifi, Kasmani, Taleb, Shirvani (2012) examined the relationship between morphological awareness and vocabulary size in Iranian EFL learners. The results of this study have shown that students performed better in analysis section than what they did in synthesis section but the differences between them were low and there was a high correlation between analytic and synthetic knowledge so that analytic knowledge could highly predict synthetic knowledge and vice versa.

Morphological awareness training also gave implication both of the students and teachers. For the students, they are more aware to the writing system in English. They were not confused again to find the meaning of word that contain of bound morpheme.

The result of the study shoow that most of the scores gain in Post test are higher that the ones obtain in Pre test. The researcher is aware that this can be the weakness of the study because the Pre test used is the same as the Post test. The high score might result for memory rather than the morphological awareness training in vocabulary. Therefore, it is suggested furter research conduct study using different test but the same level of difficulty.

Conclusion

The result shows that morphological awareness training is an effective way for acquiring vocabulary. The learners who have high of morphological awareness will have a good vocabulary and vice versa. It's because the learners' use their metacognitive strategies of reflecting and manipulating word formation rules to derive the meaning of new words in the absence of communicative context. Therefore, using morphological awareness training is effective to teach vocabulary to EFL learners' especially the first grade students of SMPN 2 Singosari. The strength of morphological awareness training in teaching vocabulary could be seen from the fact that this strategies could improve not only for the students' ability in acquiring vocabulary but also the students motivation to practice their vocabulary ability. Morphological awareness also makes the learner more aware of the writing system.

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