The Effect of Using Multimodal Approaches of Language Teaching and Learning on Sawa Private University English Department Students' Reading Abilities[1]

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ABSTRACT

For both instructors and students, a multimodal approach in the classroom may inspire creativity. It does not necessarily rely on technology and instead makes use of the existing kinaesthetic, auditory, and visual modalities. In this essay, we shall quickly define modes and trace the history of multimodal research. We can recognize modes through a multimodal lesson that incorporates video and see how they connect to both modern culture and certain cognitive processes. This combination can improve the learning environment by allowing for flexibility and creativity in teacher-student interaction.

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Background and Purpose

As an instruction technique, input enhancement which is commonly used in second language (L2) acquisition is aimed at helping L2 learners to focus on different components of language such as its vocabulary and grammatical morphemes and structures (Smith, 1991). Smith believes that focusing L2 learners' attention on structures and lexical aspects may not resonate with their natural orientation to take into account L2 meaning without considering structure (Smith, 1993).

Multiple models within the context of second language acquisition lend support to input enhancement. In the same vein, Gass (1997) offers a detailed discussion of noticing the cognitive-linguistic dimensions of L2 input as an advantage to the intensifying process of that input. Similarly, input noticing paves the way for changing input into intake, resulting in the creation of structure-meaning associations. This leads to the final merging of these associations into the L2 learner's developmental system, bringing about general acquisition processes.

Moreover, the condition of noticing needs to be met for moderating input to intake. As Schmidt (1995) notes, this phenomenon requires the individual to pay attention to how an event unfolds, followed by its storage in the memory. Should the learners acquire a new language, they should pay attention and notice those

Initially, Mike Smith (1993) introduced the notion of input enhancement (IE) with the aim of highlighting the instruction methods and techniques used by L2 instructors to clarify the specifics of the second language acquisition(e.g., accents, pitch, idiomatic expressions and slang). There are some differences between input enhancement and other similar terms when it comes to L2 acquisition such as mothers or teacher talk. In the case of the latter, the major purpose is to teach the L2 while paying no attention to a native accent.

Input enhancement is also consistent with the application of traditional techniques employed to teach grammar. Smith (1993) makes a distinction between external input enhancement and internal input enhancement. Based on this perspective, external input enhancement is mainly concerned with the application of techniques employed in the planned instruction of an L2. The notion of internal input enhancement points to the adoption of more common events or circumstances.

In another classification input enhancement is divided into two broad categories of visual and auditory input enhancement. The most frequently used technique in visual input enhancement is to simply improve the perceptual salience of the target forms or vocabulary items by using a combination of various techniques used in formatting including bolding, capitalizing, or underlining, coloring the font, and in some cases these might be followed by an explicit instruction especially in case of grammar (Han, Park & Combs, 2008).

Aural input enhancement, on the other hand, entails modification in the listening materials. These modifications may include increasing the volume of the target items in the text through inserting a short pause before and/or after the intended items Gascoigne (2006). As Gascoigne (2006) maintained "aural input enhancement" might also be achieved intonation, stress or gestures.

Emphasized in the discussions of scholars in the context of second language acquisition, vocabulary acquisition is considered as the most important dimension in second language learning and instruction (Knight, 1994). Moreover, as Schmitt (2008) maintains, it is deemed as a crucial component of mastering a second language.

Wilkins (1972) says that an individual can convey little without having knowledge of grammar while lacking the knowledge of vocabulary would make it impossible to convey anything.

As a result, it is of enormous importance for L2 instructors to assist L2 learners in learning the required strategies for the development of their vocabulary knowledge. In the same context, O'Malley and Chamot (1990) defined these strategies as particular thoughts or behaviors employed by learners to comprehend, learn or maintain newly acquired information. In the same vein, Richard and

In the case of independent learning strategy, L2 instructors can enhance learners' strategies. These strategies make it possible for them to apply those strategies independently for improving their vocabulary repertoire. Concerning explicit learning, L2 teachers can spot words that learners need, offer them and therefore expand their word knowledge.

Cooperative learning, according to Alhajmee, is a type of group activity in which "the teacher is likely to involve the specification of goals, tasks, resources, responsibilities, and rewards by the teacher, who supports or more strongly guides the interactive process."(Alhajmee A. 2023)

Statement of the Problem

Based on the consensus among the majority of second language acquisition scholars, learning vocabulary and expanding lexical items knowledge should be considered as one of the integral components of a language. In fact, the acquisition of L2 vocabulary should be viewed as one of the major requirements for L2 learning. Undoubtedly, it is the vocabulary through which L2 learners can fulfill the following main four language learning skills: listening, speaking, reading and writing (Richards & Renandya, 2002).

The exclusive role of vocabulary knowledge in the context of universities (Donley &Reppen, 2001) and in reading ability (Kitajima, 2001, Huckin, 1997) has been reiterated in the area of L2 learning. Given the whopping number of vocabulary items to be learned, some researchers and educators believe that 5,000 words is the minimum L2 learners of English need in order to be able to read and understand the general, non-specialized (Laufer, 1997, Nation, 1990) or un-simplified texts (Hirsh & Nation, 1992).

However, according to Groot (1994) to grasp the specialized and academic texts, we need to know 7,000. Along the same lines, Schmitt (2000) claims that we need to know 10, 000 word stocks to figure out the specialized texts. Accordingly, 5,000 words are necessary to be communicatively competent in a second or foreign language (Nation, 1993). Foreign language or L2 learners should be able to memorize many vocabularies as the first step in their

endeavors to learn a second language. Irrespective of different perspectives whether or not vocabulary needs to be taught, there is a consensus that a systematic and purposeful instruction plays an essentially important role in helping the L2 learners to become better. It is worth noting that definitely the acquisition of vocabularies of another language is of enormous significance to language learners.

Moreover, a review of the previous studies on input enhancement (Fahim, &Vaezi, 2011; Farahany, 2015; Goudarzi, &Moini, 2012; Hassani, Azarnoosh, &Naeini, 2015; Loewen, &Inceoglu, 2016; Rashtchi, &Gharanli, 2010; Rosas Mayén, 2013; Seyedtajaddini, 2014) indicates that, to date, to the best knowledge of the researcher, no study has attempted to compare the effects of auditory vs visual input enhancement on learning vocabulary items by EFL learners.

Purpose of the Study

The present study aims to investigate the effects of two types of input-enhancement instruction, i.e. visual and auditory, on the vocabulary learning among Iraqi EFL learners. Moreover, the study seeks to explore which method of input enhancement is more effective in the vocabulary learning of these EFL students.

Research Questions

The present study seeks to explore the effect of visually input enhancement-based instruction versus auditory input enhancement-based instruction on the vocabulary learning of Iraqi EFL learners. To this end, the following research questions are formulated:

Q1: Does X instruction have any significant effect on the Y of Iraqi EFL learners?

Research Hypotheses

The hypotheses stated in line with the questions are as follows:

H01: X instruction does not have any significant effect on Y of Iraqi EFL learners.

Significance of the Study

Gass and Toress (2005) put much emphasis on the integral component of input in the programs and classes involving learning a new language. In the meantime, all theories or approaches to teaching and learning L2 acquisition take into account the significance of input, yet theories differ as to the extent of its importance.

Cook (2001) maintains that the major goal of L2 teaching is to offer most effective samples of language for the learner to take advantage from the best input during language learning. It is worth noting that all the tasks that an instructor conducts should provide the L2 learners with opportunities to handle the language. In other elaborations on the significance of input in language acquisition, it is reiterated that input is viewed in different studies as being a necessity but inadequate requirement for language learning (Larsen-Freeman and Long, 1991).

It is claimed that all the input to which L2 learners are exposed to will not end up being taken as intake for language learning. Therefore, recently research on L2 learning and teaching has been focused on examining the contribution of attention to mediating input and learning. An overall finding of these studies show that attention is a requirement for the occurrence of learning. In the view of Schmidt (2001), the higher attention to input would lead to more language learning.

To drive home his perspective, in his Noticing Hypothesis, Schmidt (1990) asserts that intake constitutes that component of the input that the L2 learner notices. He argues that language acquisition is led by what L2 learners pay attention to and notice in L2 input.

The notion of input enhancement has been reiterated in the discussions over the instruction of foreign and second languages. Many scholars, curriculum designers, and instructors apply the findings of research studies in which input enhancement is viewed as one of the essential elements in L2 instruction processes. Consequently, possessing a good

knowledge about how to enhance input would be of great use for L2 language instructors and curriculum designers as well.

Definition of Key Terms

Auditory Input-Enhancement

As stated by Dahl (1981) and Håkansson, (1986), auditory input-enhancement refers to a kind of enhancement in which the targeted forms, terms or features of the input become highlighted through auditory means e.g., raising the pitch of the feature or repeating the feature etc. Auditory input enhancement is operationally defined through audio recording the texts of the course book under instruction and inserting pauses about 1.5 seconds before and after the intended vocabulary items. To provide more auditory enhancement, some of the vocabulary items will be read using a funny voice or repeated several times so as to make them as unnatural as possible and gain the students' attention.

Visual Input Enhancement

According to Norris and Ortega (2000), visual input enhancement refers to the enhancement in which the input receives emphasis through visual means including: underlining, boldfacing, italicization, capitalization, and other strategies such as color coding or using different font sizes or types. Visual input enhancement in this study is operationally defined through retyping the course material and carrying out the required modifications i.e. underlining, boldfacing, italicization, capitalization, on them.

Vocabulary Knowledge

According to Richards and Schmidt (2002, p. 629), vocabulary is "A set of lexemes, including single words, compound words and idioms". As pointed out by Nation (2001), vocabulary knowledge is the amount of vocabulary that a person knows and can most probably use to understand written or spoken language. He further maintains that this knowledge is usually put into use by EFL learners after they get repeated exposure to the vocabulary items. In the current study, vocabulary knowledge is operationally defined as the scores the participants will obtain based on a 30-item researcher-made vocabulary test.

(De) Limitations

Similar to other studies, factors other than independent variables, namely limitations and delimitations may influence the findings of the present study. The limitations and delimitations of the present study are described as follows:

Limitations

The main limitation of the present study is that, it will not be possible for the researcher to select the participants of the study randomly. Additionally, the participants' age range between 22-26 years old. Thus, the findings may not be generalized to other age groups.

Delimitations

The researcher will delimit the focus of this study on only two types of enhancement namely auditory and visual and other types of enhancement will not be included in this study. Moreover, the effect of these types of enhancement will be investigated only on vocabulary learning and other skills and components of language will not be the focus of this research. Additionally, the participants of the study will be chosen from among intermediate students.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Background

Teaching and learning are and have to be considered the two sides of the same coin. In educational settings, teaching has to be adapted to the way in which each learner begins to concentrate on, process, absorb, and retain new and difficult information'' (Dunn & Dunn's framework; International Learning Styles Network, 2008). If teaching is adapted to the learning styles of students, the learning outcomes will be met and the learning processstays for a longer

term. Gilakjani et al (2011) assert that "a multidisciplinary approach is needed to understand the social, cognitive, cultural and linguistic variables involved in the process of language learning". They also conclude that language learners can adapt with the multimodal medium of communication if the designers focus on the meaning making potentials of all the modes used. Each of the various presentation modes appeals to students' different sensory modalities.

Eva M. Mestre-Mestre (2015) studied communication in the particular setting of the second language classroom, and two different modes in combination were analysed in order to describe the types of intersemiotic resources used by the students. The representation of two dissimilar semantic groups were chosen for analysis.

The results show that students chose different strategies combining texts and images to construct their meaning, depending on the type of concept they were trying to communicate. In many cases, images are only used to support the text, whereas in other cases most images and texts perform the same functions and confirm each other.

Marchetti and Cullen (2016) shed light on a multimodal approach in the classroom as a "creative" domain for learners and teachers. They argued that a multimodal approach can increase the interaction and engagement between the teacher, students, materials, and topics. They concluded that "students perceived enhanced learning experience through the association of images and external audio to spoken interaction" (p.47).

Grapin (2018) compared the weak and strong version of multimodality as they have different perspectives on language. He concluded that "in the weak version, nonlinguistic modes are scaffolds need to be removed once Els develop proficiency with oral and written language. In the strong version, multiple modes are the semiotic resources necessary for engaging in disciplinary practsies and are especially beneficial to ELs" (p.20). he also states that students (need to) consider the limitations and affordances of all modes and what to include and exclude from their design.

Multimodal approach to communication

Communication has always been multimodal in nature as different semiotic resources are resorted to in meaning making (meaning production, transference and interpretation). The writings/drawings on cave walls and clay tablets which, at least some of them, date back to eternity are evidence that communication has always been multimodal in a sense.

For instance, when people speak, they use words, intonation, gestures, facial expressions and other modes of communication to cross over their intended message. The addressee needs to depend on all the sign making assemble to interpret the message. The sign maker (speaker) chooses the modes or semiotic resources according to his/her interest (Halliday, 1978; Kress, 2010); but s/he needs to take the addressee into account. In other words, the speaker has to use semiotic resources that are recognized and can be interpreted by the addressee to the best of his/her knowledge. Multimodality focuses on the choices people make amongst a group of available modes and the socio-cultural reflections and effects of these choices on meaning production and interpretation.

In recent years, communication has shifted drastically due to technological advancements and globalization. The contemporary usages of abbreviations in texting and emojis in texts and internet communication sites (Facebook, Messenger, Instigram, Twitter … etc) change the way we perceive communication. Language is no longer the sole bearer of information and knowledge. Visual, aural, spatial and gestural aspects affect how meaning is made and perceived.

Also, the forces of globalization and manifest local diversity increasingly juxtaposed modes of meaning making that were sharply different from each other. The challenge of learning to communicate in this new environment was to navigate the differences, rather than to learn to communicate in the same ways (Cope and Kalatzis, 2015, p.2). Wong and May (2019) drew the effects of social context in meaning making and their data were mostly visual to shed light on the importance of visual mode in different discourses like advertisements, postage stamps and diary keeping. There are three assumptions which act as prerequisites to communication. The first assumption is concerned with the mediums and systems used for articulating meaning. The second assumption regards communication as multi-faceted that requires multiple modes operate together and this co-operation among the modes makes meaning despite the meaning of each of the modes. The third assumption is about the instability of the meaning potentials of modes and the derivation and exclusion of meaning potentials in different communicative acts and settings (Kress et al, p.43). In

other words, communication is carried out through the use of meaning making systems and modes that operate together and simultaneously, they acquire and lose meaning potentials in different social contexts.

Multimodality challenges the predominance of language as the primary means of communication. It entails that communication happens across multiple modes, like visual, spatial, aural, gestural … aspects of the communication context (Jewitt, 2013; Kress, 2010). Language (spoken and written) are studied in multimodal discourse analysis approach to communication, but it is analyzed within the framework of the multimodal ensemble encompassing all the other modes that accompany it. The modes are of equal status and important for both the meaning producer and interpreter(s).

Learning styles and multimodality:

People have individual and collective identities based on how they see themselves and their preferences, on one hand, and based on how people see them and identify them. Students have preferences and identities. The term ''learning styles'' refers to the way in which learners concentrate on, process, and retain new information (Dunn and Dunn, 1992; 1993; 1999). Teaching, by the same token, should be adapted to the different learning styles of students.

Teaching has to be adapted to ''the way in which each learner begins to concentrate on, process, absorb, and retain new and difficult information'' (Dunn & Dunn's framework; International Learning Styles Network, 2008), (b) the learner's preferred modes of perception and processing (Kolb's, 1984, 1985, framework), or (c) ''the fit between [people's] learning style and the kind of learning experience they face'' (Hay Group, n.d., p. 11).

Omrod (2008) wrote, ''Some cognitive styles and dispositions do seem to influence how and what students learn. . . . Some students seem to learn better when information is presented through words (verbal learners), whereas others seem to learn better when it's presented through pictures (visual learners)'' (p. 160, italics in original). Furthermore, "Factors that can influence learning styles include culture, school climate, expectations, teaching style and classroom practices" (Reid, 2005, p. 51).

Kolb's (1984, 1985) Learning Styles Inventory is a very popular scheme. According to the model, learning styles are divergers (concrete, reflective), assimilators (abstract, reflective), convergers (abstract, active), and accommodators (concrete, active).

Honey and Mumford (1986) proposed another model for the inventory of learning styles. They are Activists (prefer to learn by doing), Reflectors (observe and like to collect information before decision making), Theorists (work towards adding new learning into existing frameworks by questioning and assessing the possible ways that new information might fit into their existing frameworks of understanding), and Pragmatists (look for the practical implications of any new ideas or theories before making judgments on their value).

There are different models of learning style assessment, but they all support the idea that we do not learn in the same way. There are certain physiological, psychological, cultural and environmental elements that affect the way people acquire, process and retrieve information and data.

Multimodality and teaching/learning

Communication has been multimodal for long. However, what has changed is the sociological interaction at large, and these technological developments have challenged communication forms and mediums along with the status of language in interactive communication. Language is a psychological and social phenomenon that stems from the mind and is represented and reinforced through its social use. Undoubtedly, the technological developments have impacts on language production and interpretation which will, subsequently, alters ways of learning and teaching.

Language is widely taken to be the dominant mode of communication in learning and teaching. Image, gesture and action are generally considered illustrative supports to the 'real thing'. Our observation of teaching and learning in the science classroom casts doubt on this assumption (Kress, et al, p.42).

McLaughlin (1987) in his book (Theories of Second Language Learning) lays down five theories for Second Language Acquisition: the monitor model, interlanguage theory, linguistic universal, acculturation/pidginization theory, and cognitive theory.

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Information and communication technology provide academics with an opportunity to create rich learning environments for their students, enhanced by the wealth of information and resources on the internet, as well as the inclusion of a range of multimedia-based learning elements.

Multimodal teaching is a style in which students learn material through a number of different sensory modalities. For example, a teacher will create a lesson in which students learn through auditory and visual methods, or visual and tactile methods. Teachers can use any combination of learning modalities; however, in multimodal teaching, a teacher must utilize more than one. This successful teaching style implements many strategies to ensure students understand and retain information.

The visual and verbal modes complement each other to realise an intersemiotically coherent multimodal text, I also suggest that the intersemiotic resources used to realise this complementarity can be readily explored for pedagogical purposes.

Multimodal learning environments allow instructional elements to be presented in more than one sensory mode (visual, aural, written). In turn, materials that are presented in a variety of presentation modes may lead learners to perceive that it is easier to learn and improve attention, thus leading to improved learning performance; in particular for lower-achieving students (Chen & Fu, 2003; Moreno & Mayer, 2007; Zywno 2003). Mayer (2003) contends that students learn more deeply from a combination of words and pictures than from words alone; known as the „multimedia effect". Further, Shah and Freedman (2003) discuss a number of benefits of using visualisations in learning environments, including: (1) promoting learning by providing an external representation of the information; (2) deeper processing of information; and (3) maintaining learner attention by making the information more attractive and motivating, hence making complex information easier to comprehend. Fadel (2008) found that, students engaged in learning that incorporates multimodal designs, on average, outperform students who learn using traditional approaches with single modes" (p. 13).

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

Research design

This research will employ case-study research design as it is suitable for the context of this case study and qualitative methods will be chosen to address the research questions.

Participant

The participants of this case study are 50 EFL students from Saw private university in south of Iraq with English as its medium of instruction. Participants will be chosen using the purposive sampling technique based on certain common characteristics.

Instrument

This case study that will be employed is the semi-structured focus group interviews as the research instrument. This instrument will be used because it is a very flexible technique for small scale research (Drever, 1995 as cited in Pathak & Intratat, 2012). Questions that will be used in the focus group interviews will be open-ended and semi-structured to allow participants to express their thoughts freely and openly without having to fit into pre-determined categories. Questions will be rephrased and orally administered to reflect specific individual experiences instead of generalized thoughts in order to help the researcher to gain in depth information.

Procedure

This study will employ a qualitative approach whereby data will be collected from 50 students of a private University through sessions of semi-structured focus group interview. Each focus group consist of 10 students and each session will take about 45 minutes to an hour. Every group will be given a particular time slot to avoid clashes with their school routines. The interview schedule will be divided into two to effectively elicit answers from students to effectively answer the research questions. Data collected will be immediately transcribed to avoid overloading the researcher with extensive amount of data. Data that will be collected is going to be collected and analyzed based on the Grounded Theory.

CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

Students have a wide range of learning preferences when they attend school. As a result, the optimal educational experience should include all modalities and accommodate all of these learning types. A universal design for learning is aided by multimodality, which conveys ideas in the most efficient methods and ensures that everyone receives the information they require. As an illustration, having Reading and hearing are supported by both text and audio. The attention-grabbing power of images and animation Examples help people grasp. Children can also gain from multimodal learning and develop their skills. According to Cisco research, pupils who got information that included both text and pictures learnt more effectively than those who simply received text. Multimodal learning is more efficient at teaching than the stricter unimodal learning that you may imagine when you think of conventional classroom settings.

Multimodal learning strategies

Multimodal learning methods need techniques from each learning modality since the multimodal learning style combines several learning modalities. Multimodal learning combines multimedia with many learning modalities at once. As many of the aforementioned techniques as feasible would be included in a perfect multimodal learning environment. Let's examine a situation where multimodal teaching techniques were used in a classroom. A teacher may provide the reading assignment and then deliver the lesson using a multimedia presentation that includes movies and visuals to assist the students comprehend the textbook information. Then, teachers could prepare an in-class activity to provide context and help students interact with the material in ways that are more direct.

The different models of multimodal approaches:

These individuals respond better to visual cues like pictures, graphs, or charts and learn best by seeing. What they observe outdoors could preoccupy them.

Aural learners respond well to aural stimuli such as spoken instructions, conversations, or musical compositions. Noises outdoors can preoccupy them.

Although read/write is occasionally described as a segment within the visual category, the VARK model places it in a separate category. These individuals respond best to written cues like lecture notes, books, and cue cards by reading and writing about what they have learned. Text that is badly written or that doesn't match speech may divert their attention.

Kinesthetic learners respond to tactile signals like movement, activities, and real-world examples to learn best by doing. The warmth of the room or the uncomfortable seats might divert their attention.

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