The Impact of Vocabulary Learning Strategies on ESP Learners’ Vocabulary Retention: An Experimental Study

Abstract

The current experimental study aimed to gain insight into ESP learners’ vocabulary retention and vocabulary achievement processes by examining their use of vocabulary learning strategies (VLSs). Accordingly, the objective of the experimental study was to explore the impact of instruction in VLSs on Indian ESP learners’ vocabulary retention and achievement. Also additionally, the study investigated if there was any significant difference between vocabulary retention and achievement of Indian male versus female ESP learners after being exposed to VLSs instruction and as well as the most and least frequently VLSs used by Indian ESP learners. For the purpose of this study, one hundred first-year participants of University Institute of Legal Studies, Panjab University, Chandigarh (i.e., 50 males and 50 females ranging from 18 to 19 years old) were selected based on one step cluster sampling. They were randomly assigned into two groups; and then both groups i.e., experimental and control groups were given a pre-test. The results of the pre-test underlined the homogeneity of the groups. During a twenty-session course, both groups covered 10 expository passages extracted from a textbook entitled “Leaves From My Personal Life”. The participants in the experimental group were additionally instructed in vocabulary learning strategies and the use of VLSs while the students in the control group received conventional teaching vocabulary training without any treatment for 20 sessions. Finally, participants appeared for the immediate post-test at the end of the course to reveal the result of treatment on vocabulary achievement, and after a three-week interval, they took the delayed post-test to check their performance as to vocabulary retention. T-tests analyses were used and findings revealed that the difference between two groups was significant in terms of gaining vocabulary in immediate post-test (vocabulary achievement) and delayed one (vocabulary retention). Also, a student VLSs questionnaire was distributed to the participants to see what is the most and the least frequently VLSs used by ESP learners. The result of the
immediate and the delayed post-tests revealed that VLSs instruction had positive impact on ESP learners’ vocabulary achievement and retention among the participants of the experimental group (p<.05). However, based on the data obtained from the current study, no significant difference was observed among female and male ESP learners’ vocabulary achievement and retention after receiving instruction in VLSs. Furthermore, the results of the students’ VLSs questionnaire depicted that determination and memory strategies have been ordered as the most and the least frequently used strategies by the ESP learners respectively. The final results of the study also suggested the importance of including VLSs into language courses and training the ESP learners to use the strategies as frequently as possible to make language learning more convenient and more effective.