

Repetition Facilitates Retrieval Opportunity in Vocabulary Learning

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Abstract. As in most of secondary schools in Indonesia tend to focus on words list in vocabulary lesson which is easily forgotten by learners, providing retrieval opportunity to strengthen their memory about words can be effective since the retrieval is one of the psychological processes to make the students remember the words. Accordingly, providing retrieval opportunity during vocabulary learning is encouraged in this essay. After reviewing some literature related to retrieval process, repetition is one effective way to promote retrieval process. Since repeated encounters of the words facilitate the students to access the words-related information in their mind, repetition activity will be the effective solution for this context. The spaced repetition as proposed by Baddley (1990) can be appropriate for this context since learners will not be bored about the repetition. This idea is then developed by providing students with Southeast Sulawesi folklore as the reading material in order to obtain target words. It is believed that this kind of reading material can enhance the students' active engagement in the classroom as well.

Keywords:

1. Introduction

There are numerous ways to teach new vocabulary to students. It can be through extensive and intensive reading, words lists, games, songs, and any other media. These ways tend to be used in private language institution where I used to work in Indonesia. The teachers are provided with vocabulary book which must be used to teach English words. The teachers apply many fun ways to introduce the words to the students. Similarly, in one of the public secondary schools, when I was a student, vocabulary was taught by providing students with Indonesian-English translated words list in order to help the students achieve the learning objectives that have been set by the teachers, for example for reading, writing, or speaking activity afterwards. The teachers encouraged their students to notice the words that they will be using the activity being set up beforehand.

In addition, most of English teachers in this context tend to be aware of that explicitly teaching all vocabulary to the students is impossible since there are the massive amounts of words in English. Therefore, they teach vocabulary strategies to the students to develop their vocabulary. For instance, how to guess the meaning without translating every single word on the reading passage, do an extensive reading to obtain new vocabulary, make lists of vocabulary that they just learnt are some of the strategies exposed to the learners nowadays. These ways of teaching seem effective in noticing new vocabulary. However, in the next time, when the students are asked to recall the vocabulary being learned from the previous instruction, they tend not to remember them. This could be because the students have not applied strategies to study vocabulary outside the class. Moreover, they might not have been provided with the opportunity to retrieve the vocabulary they have learned. There must be any rationales behind this issue; this essay will spell out the issue of vocabulary teaching in Indonesian classroom, present some reviews of the literature to support and justify this problem, and provide practical solutions on that. The brief conclusion will be presented as last part of this essay.



In both public and private secondary schools in Indonesia, most of the teachers teach vocabulary integrated to begin or end English skills' activities in the classroom. They often give some target vocabulary which will be used for the whole learning session. The number of words can be varied according to what the activity they will do in that session. This words list might help the students to do the task during the class and improve their vocabulary as well. However, giving words list and using them in just one day could not guarantee that these words can be stored in their long-term memory and can be retrieved later on. Accordingly, it is common to find the students already forget some, if not at all words that have been learned previously. There is less, even no opportunity to retrieve the words in the class. After using the words one day, they tend to have other words list at the next meeting.

Based on the above case, it seems to me that the teachers tend to draw more attention to make students notice the target words, to add more words on students' vocabulary list. However, learning vocabulary does not stop once the learners notice the new words and know their meaning. The process is more than that. As Nation (2001) points out that there are three processes, occur when the students successfully remember the words being learnt; noticing, retrieval, and generative use. In this sense, noticing refers to drawing full attention to the lexical item and studying the word, while retrieval means that to retrieve the words that have been noticed to use them creatively. In this sense, the more frequently the words occur, the more memorable the words are. What the teachers need to do in my context is providing retrieval opportunity and enabling the students to use the words that they have learnt in creative use since they tend to concentrate on exposing the students to new vocabulary, and tend to neglect the retrieval and generative process.

2. Method

This study is a library study in which the authors read thorough some related literature to obtain the effective way in vocabulary repetition. In the future, this research needs to be examined further in the form of experimental research to decide whether the proposed technique is effective.

3. Result and Discussion

3.1. The concept of vocabulary retrieval and generative use

Retrieval is the process of bringing back information stored in mind. To recall the information, the learners should be able to retrieve it from where it is stored in their mental lexicon. According to Melton (1963) as cited in Mcdermott & Roediger (2016), three necessary stages in the learning and memory process are encoding, storage, and retrieval. Encoding refers to the initial presentation of information; storage is organizing the words in the mental lexicon, while retrieval refers to accessing stored information. In the light of vocabulary learning, retrieval is one of the psychological processes to help the students remember the words; it is initiated by noticing process and followed by generative use of words. Initially, the learners should be able to notice the unknown words that they intend to learn by drawing their full attention to the words. Opportunity to retrieve these words then should be provided so as the students to be able to recall the words. The recalling forms can be producing the words or reformulating the words into creative use. According to Baddeley (1990), retrieval can be productive and receptive. When the learners retrieve the meaning of words form that they meet during listening or reading, it is called receptive retrieval. On the other hand, the productive retrieval occurs when the learners retrieve the spoken and written form of the words and intend to convey the meaning in speaking and writing activities. Retrieval occurs when the students listen to and read certain word forms, and they attempt to bring back the meaning of the words based on their previous knowledge or information gained at the present meeting. Therefore, retrieving words could not be undertaken if the teachers simply present the words forms and their meaning simultaneously. This is often neglected in vocabulary teaching in most of the secondary schools in Indonesia where the students are provided with a list of words and the meaning. The students might neither apply the vocabulary strategy outside the class nor have an opportunity to strengthen their knowledge about the words.

Since many years ago, retrieval has been found as one important factor to strengthen the students' knowledge about words. Roediger & Gynn (1996) points out that testing target words can positively affect the students' knowledge about the words since it requires retrieval process. In this sense, what matters is the retrieval process in learning vocabulary. Mcdermott & Roediger (2016) point out that the significant factor of learning and memory is retrieval stage. They argue that even if we record all thousands of events, words, ideas, conversations, sounds, sights every day, but we fail to access them when we need them, it is no use to have them in our memory. Particularly in vocabulary learning, Baddeley (1990) argues the positive effect of retrieval to build up form-meaning of the words. Consistent with this, Craik & Lockgart, 1972 (cited in Barcroft, 2007) explain that two long-term advantages of retrieval process are enhancing students' word knowledge durably which leads to long-term retention of the words and making easier for students to do the subsequent retrieval of the words. Although it was done in 1972, which can be considered as old evidence, the more current research supports and justifies the result. In addition, the retrieval process is completed by the next psychological process called the generative/ creative use of words. This process occurs when the learners meet the known words in different use and context that they have already learnt. This will encourage them to reconceptualise the meaning or the form of the words since generative use is not limited to the word meaning, but also the forms include inflexion and collocation (Nation, 2001). According to Barcroft (2007), when the learners generate the items on their own, it also can lead to the positive effect of the words' retrieval on their memory since before using the words generatively, the learners are required to retrieve the words. In line with that, McNamara & Healy (1995) point out that the generative process can promote the students' cognitive ability which enables them to connect the words to their previous knowledge in order to strengthen their words knowledge.

3.2. *Repetition and retrieval opportunity*

According to Nation (2008), the teachers often considerably put attention to language-focused strand in which it enables the students to enhance their explicit knowledge of the words, such as the form, meaning, and uses. It is because the knowing a word means that the learners have to know about the words' form, meaning, function, and position. Besides, it allows the students to draw their attention to vocabulary learning strategies; guessing the meaning from the context, using word cards, word parts, and the dictionary which seem beneficial for them to enrich their vocabulary. However, the amount and strength of learning relies on the quality of mental processing of the learners. Being able to retrieve and recall what they have learned can be the focus of vocabulary learning.

Meeting the words being learned during listening, speaking, writing, and reading activities might provide retrieval process for the learners. For instance, the reading passages provided can be filled or replaced by the target words in order the learners can notice, retrieve, and even use the words during productive activities. In addition, retrieval opportunity can occur when the teachers use picture-word pairs in vocabulary classroom. He finds out that introducing vocabulary through pictures with few seconds of lag to make the students retrieve the words positively affects the students' memorization in that they remember the words longer than those who do not have an opportunity to retrieve. Not only in intentional vocabulary learning, Barcroft (2015) points out that in incidental learning; in this case during reading, the learners who are provided with retrieval opportunity perform better than those who are not. It indicates that retrieval opportunity positively affects the students' words' knowledge.

In other words, retrieval process enables the students to strengthen their memory about the words. The more frequently they retrieve the words, the easier the recall of the words will be later on. Nation argues that repeated encounters of the words can increasingly facilitate retrieval of the words which make the students remember them. Consistent with this, Webb (2007) finds out that the learners can gain greater knowledge about the words as repetition of the words is increased. His study implies that if the learners encounter the same words frequently, the bigger opportunity to develop their knowledge about those words. Furthermore, Schmitt (2000) coins that the teachers should not present

the words once and forget about it at the next meeting, but repeatedly present and reintroduce them over and over. However, Baddeley (1990) suggests that what matters is not simply repetition but more likely the repeated opportunity to retrieve the words. In this sense, the learners should be encouraged to retrieve the items in every repeated encounter to move the items to their long-term memory. Accordingly, the learners should be aware of repetition of the words that they are studying to notice the words and be able to retrieve them. Not only the learners have to maximize the retrieval opportunity, but also the teachers need to ensure that the time lapse between initial presentation and later meeting of the words are not excessively apart because if too much time has passed, the later meeting is as same as the first encounter.

Regardless of the benefits of repetition in general, for example as Webb investigates the effect of different encounters of the words in vocabulary learning with the result that the learners remember the more frequent words they see than those which rarely occur, Baddeley (1990) suggests spaced repetition as more secure and beneficial activity over massed repetition to strengthen the students' memory; in this case, knowledge about the words. In this light, the learners do not necessarily spend certain time continuing to study the words at one time. Instead of such repetition, they are encouraged to spread a certain amount of time on several occasions. For instance, the words can be studied for three minutes at that time, another three minutes in a few hours later, three minutes in the next day, and so on. The repetition allows the students to meet and access the same words several times to retrieve the meaning or the forms, which will make them easier to recall the words in another occasion. This way positively contributes to the students' result in learning in which they remember and access the words automatically.

Repetition is one retrieval opportunity for the words being learnt. In each repeated encounter of the words, the learners are enabled to retrieve the meaning or the form of the words to use them creatively. In providing repeated encounters, the teachers do not provide the words along with their meaning to promote retrieval process in which the students directly access the word-related information in their mental lexicon. Baddeley and Barcroft point out that retrieval opportunity strengthens the linking path of the words in the mind which can positively affect the subsequent retrieval. This suggests that encouraging the learners to retrieve the words by providing an opportunity to do so is something that the teachers can do in intentional vocabulary learning.

3.3. The activities promoting retrieval

The fundamental platform of retrieval is accessing the stored information in the brain. Accordingly, the teachers should design the activities, particularly vocabulary learning so that the learners can access their word knowledge in their mental lexicon. Johnston (2010) points out that the way to assist the children in retrieval process is presenting cues of the words being learned, such as phonetic cues, meaning associated cues, blank filling of sentence completion, rhyme cues, and multiple choices. Moreover, to retrieve the words, the words must be spoken. However, according to Nation and Baddeley, retrieval process can occur when the learners are either using the words productively (writing and speaking) or meet the words during listening and reading. In a nutshell, the words do not need to be spoken to be able to retrieve them, but speaking can be one of the ways to enable retrieval process. Adapting from Bowen, Johnston also outlines some ways to promote retrieval process; encourage the children to speak slowly so that they have time to retrieve the words, not to interrupt the children when they are speaking, play words' games, make them frequently read amongst others. Regarding of word games, Thanasuan has investigated that playing cognitive word games are found to be effective to enhance the students' memory and access to the words in their mental lexicon as well as their vocabulary skills.

Nation proposes some varied ways to encourage retrieval; reading the same stories several times for children will do and story chains for the older learners. The learners can encounter the same target words several times while reading the story. The learners are not encouraged to use a dictionary every time they meet the target words on the story; they have to take time to retrieve the words which

can benefit for their long-term memory. These ways imply the repeated encounters of the words through repetition of the same story. Harmer proposes ‘remembering’ activity (p.164) in which the learners are forced to use the target words for example in order to remember them. It is in line with the idea of repetition as well. In addition, Nation points out that retrieval opportunity can be designed for the speaking activity where the learners are asked to use the target words while speaking. It can be through retelling the story that they have read. Meanwhile, Thornbury suggests that using the words in written activity can enable the students to retrieve the words. It can be concluded that using the words being learned in speaking or writing activity can also provide retrieval opportunity for the learners.

4. Conclusion

As in most of the secondary schools in Indonesia tend to focus on words list in vocabulary lesson which is easily forgotten by the learners, providing retrieval opportunity to strengthen their memory about the words can be effective since the retrieval is one of the psychological processes to make the students remember the words. Accordingly, providing retrieval opportunity during vocabulary learning is encouraged in this essay. After reviewing some literature related to retrieval process, repetition is one effective way to promote retrieval process. Since repeated encounters of the words facilitate the students to access the words-related information in their mind, repetition activity will be the effective solution for this context.

The teachers can design vocabulary activities in the form of several ways. Firstly, reading the serial story repeatedly. In this case, the teachers can replace certain words with the target words in order that the learners encounter the same target words. The initial presentation can be at the very beginning of the lesson, while the later meeting can be an hour later to provide retrieval opportunity through the story. The next encounter of the words can be in the form of assignment; reading the story which contain the same target words. During retrieval opportunity, the learners are given once to check the meaning of the words, while in the subsequent meetings; the learners are encouraged to retrieve the meanings. The spaced repetition can be appropriate for this context since the learners will not be bored with the repetition. Furthermore, after reading the story, the learners can be asked to retell the story using their own words but applying the target words as practice. When they do retell the story, they also have time to retrieve the words before using them creatively.

Secondly, as an alternative, adapting from what has been undertaken by Brancroft, the teachers can use picture-word pairs to introduce the target words. The learners are asked to draw their attention to the pictures of the target words, and then they are shown the words. This spacing aims at making the learners access their previous knowledge about the words of the pictures. Although not all words can be described through pictures, abstract noun, for example, this can be one of the alternatives and be repeatedly done to strengthen the students’ memory about the words.

In conclusion, what the teachers should pay attention to when they are attempting to encourage retrieval process is they should not present the words and the meaning simultaneously because the interval between words and meanings can be an opportunity for them to retrieve what they know about the words. Besides, the teachers should not only focus on how to make the students notice unknown words and add their vocabulary size, but they have to provide an opportunity to strengthen the words that they have learned previously.

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