

1 **THE EFFECT OF TEXT-GENERATION ON**
2 **INCIDENTAL VOCABULARY LEARNING IN**
3 **IRANIAN EFL LEARNERS**

4
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6
7 **ABSTRACT**

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9 The present study was undertaken to demonstrate the effect of text-
10 generation on incidental vocabulary learning in Iranian EFL learners. To test
11 the null hypothesis (i.e. there is no significant difference between the
12 vocabulary average performance of the group undergone text-generation
13 processing and the group undergone traditional vocabulary learning
14 processes), two intact classes containing 70 sophomore female and male
15 students of English Translation at Arak State University, Iran participated. A
16 Nelson test of English Language Proficiency (test 250 A) was conducted at
17 the beginning of the study to make sure that the two intact classes did belong
18 to the same population. A multiple choice pre-test was administered at this
19 stage to ensure the insignificant difference between the two groups. The
20 students in the control group were advised to read the texts, whereas the
21 subjects in the experimental group were supposed to use text-generation
22 (reordering the texts) technique while reading the texts. It is worth mentioning
23 that, both groups were provided with the texts in which target vocabulary
24 items were highlighted. At the end of twelve-week period of treatment a
25 multiple choice post-test of vocabulary(the same as pre-test)was administered
26 in both experimental and control groups to compare the subjects' vocabulary
27 achievement. Adopting a quasi-experimental design, the null hypothesis was
28 rejected at 0.05 and (even at 0.01) level of significance for 68 degrees of
29 freedom.

30 Key words: text-generation, incidental vocabulary learning, EFL

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32 **INTRODUCTION**

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34 No wonder, vocabulary learning is of high importance which both
35 teachers and students agree. It seems that most vocabulary learning is through
36 those activities that do not focus particularly on vocabulary. Additionally,
37 many students come to rely on incidental vocabulary learning, finding
38 intentional studying boring. Therefore, more attention needs to be given to the
39 issue of incidental vocabulary learning and finding some techniques to
40 enhance it. The purpose of this study is to determine whether text-generation

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1 technique (reordering of the texts) is helpful or not.

2 3 **LITERATURE REVIEW**

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5 It would be impossible to learn a language without vocabulary. Carmen et
6 al (1999) believe that “vocabulary is an essential element in learning a foreign
7 or second language” (p. 11). Mc Carthy (1991) also claims that “to behave in a
8 natural way in a foreign language learners need a fairly rich vocabulary”
9 (p.71).

10 But, vocabulary learning can take place in two general ways: intentional
11 and incidental.

12 Husltijn, Hollander, and Greidanus (1996) defined incidental learning as"
13 the accidental learning of information without intention of remembering that
14 information" (p.327). Hatch and Brown (1995) defined intentional learning as
15 being designed, planned for, or intended by teacher or student” and incidental
16 learning as “the type of learning that is the byproduct of doing or learning
17 something else” (p.368).

18 As described by Gnoinska (1998) many students consider leaning
19 vocabulary a tedious job. They try studying lists of words – spelling,
20 pronunciation, meaning, and synonyms – only to realize a few hours later that
21 their results are hardly satisfactory. They start blaming their poor memory.
22 They say they are discouraged by the number of words in English and the
23 complex usage. Some authors writing about human motivation seem to
24 support such student’s opinions. Teachers also keep looking for ways to make
25 vocabulary learning easier and more pleasant.

26 There is consensus that the incidental vocabulary learning is an essential
27 component to the explicit teaching of vocabulary. As Schmitt and Carter
28 (2000) puts it, a major reason for this consensus is that the number of words
29 necessary for effective language use is greater than that which can be taught
30 easily.

31 O'Malley and Chamot(1990) state that" in recent years, proponents of
32 learner-based teaching have emphasized on incidental learning"(p.46)

33 Nation (1990) also believes that" most vocabulary learning will occur as a
34 result of language activities that do not focus particularly on
35 vocabulary"(p.192).

36 But, finding some techniques to enhance incidental vocabulary learning is
37 an urgent need. Considering incidental vocabulary learning as a problem,
38 generation as a problem-solving task is helpful.

39 As Barron (2000) puts it: “engagement in problem solving requires in-
40 depth exploration of the materials and affords multiple opportunities for
41 students to create rich problem representations through discussion and
42 application of problem solving strategies” (p.391).

1 A study by Stahl and Clark(1987) investigating the moderating effect of
2 generative processing on vocabulary learning reported findings which showed
3 that generation enhances the acquisition of vocabulary learning.

4 But how does text-generation (reordering of the texts) effect on incidental
5 vocabulary learning is the focus of this research.

6 7 **RESEARCH QUESTION**

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9 In order to account for the purpose of the study, the following research
10 question was proposed:

11 Does text-generation effect the incidental vocabulary average
12 performance of EFL learners?

13 14 **RESEARCH HYPOTHESIS**

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16 According to the mentioned research question the following null
17 hypothesis was formulated:

18 There is no significant difference between the vocabulary average
19 performance of the group undergone text-generation processing and the group
20 undergone traditional vocabulary learning processes

21 22 **METHOD**

23 24 *i. Participants*

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26 The subjects who took part in the study were all at the intermediate level
27 (English Translation sophomores) within the age range of 20 to 24 years old.
28 They were all Iranian and their mother tongue was Persian. Both male and
29 female students participated. They were 70 in number.

30 31 *ii. Instrumentation*

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33 Two tests were applied during the research: Initially, before the treatment
34 a general proficiency NELSON test adopted from NELSON ENGLISH
35 LANGUAGE TESTS BOOK 2 INTERMEDIATE 1976, Test 250 A) was
36 administered in order to make sure that the two groups were homogeneous.
37 Afterwards, a multiple-choice test composed of one hundred items, based on
38 the target vocabulary items in the selected texts, was developed by the
39 researcher. It was used as the pre-test and post-test.

40 41 *iii. Texts*

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2 The readability of the students' book in reading comprehension course was
3 calculated. 0.5 standard deviation below and above the mean was the range in
4 which twelve different texts were provided.

5 6 *iv. Exercise Task*

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8 The vocabulary items which were supposed to make difficulty for the
9 students in the twelve selected texts were underlined and were presented
10 through scrambled sentences for the experimental group and through ordinary
11 sentences for the control group.

12 13 *v. Procedure*

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15 First, two intact classes were chosen. They were 70 male and female
16 sophomores (second year) of English Translation at Arak State university. To
17 determine their homogeneity, a general proficiency NELSON Test (Book 2
18 intermediate, Test 250 A) was administered. An F-test followed by a t-test
19 was run to make sure that the two intact classes did belong to the same
20 population at the beginning of the research. The book they were studying in
21 their course was bound to be "Reader's Choice". The readability of some of
22 the randomly- chosen passages of the book was estimated. The mean
23 readability was calculated to be 22.04. 0.5 standard deviation below and
24 above the mean was the range in which twelve different texts were provided.

25 Next step was to highlight some of the vocabulary items of the selected
26 passages. To do this, the researcher and two other colleagues who had the
27 experience of teaching at this level of students agreed upon 110 vocabulary
28 items which were likely to pose difficulty for the learners. This list was given
29 to ten students who were at the same level to see whether they were difficult
30 for them or not. It was found out that 100 out of 110 vocabulary items were
31 difficult. Then, these 100 items were given to twelve other students at the
32 same level (English Translation sophomores). They were asked to write their
33 definitions. The results indicated that these were really difficult for them. So,
34 they were underlined in the passages as the target vocabulary items. Then a
35 test of one hundred multiple-choice items was developed using the target
36 vocabulary items. A pilot study was done to standardize the test. Then, it was
37 used as the Pre-test for both the experimental group and the control group.

38 The treatment period lasted three months. Class meetings were held once
39 a week, in the morning. Every session, the researcher took 30 minutes at the
40 beginning of the class to introduce the new vocabulary items through one
41 mini-passage. Students in control group were given normal version of the text
42 where sentences were presented in their proper order. The new vocabulary

1 items were underlined. The students were supposed to read the texts.

2 Students in the experimental group were presented with pieces of paper,
 3 with a different sentence from the passage typed on each piece (e.g. if the text
 4 has 14 sentences, there would be 14 pieces of paper. On each of them one
 5 sentence of the text had been typed). Here, again the target vocabulary items
 6 were underlined. They were told to rearrange the sentences into the sequence
 7 that the made the maximum sense to them (this is called text -generation). At
 8 the end, the students were provided with the correct format of the passage.

9 It is worth mentioning that, both control and experimental groups had
 10 more or less equal exposure to the texts.

11 At the end of the experimental treatment period, all subjects were tested
 12 immediately to determine post treatment knowledge of vocabulary. The same
 13 test used for the pre-test was used for this purpose.

14 The whole study lasted 15 weeks. 1 session a week; 12 sessions for the
 15 treatment and 3 sessions for these tests.

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 17 **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

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 19 As it was previously mentioned, two intact groups of students participated
 20 in the study. In the first step, a general proficiency NELSON test was
 21 administered to both groups.

22
 23 Table 1 shows that there is no significant difference between the control
 24 and experimental groups (The t-observed value was 0.576. This amount of t is
 25 much lower than the t-critical value (2.000) at 0.05 and (2.660) at 0.01 level
 26 of probability for 68 degrees of freedom). Thus, it can be claimed that the two
 27 groups are homogeneous.

28

T-observed	Degrees of freedom	T critical	Level of significance
.576	68	2.000	.05
		2.660	.01

29 Table 1: t-statistic for Nelson

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 31 As indicated in table 2, the t-observed value for the comparison of
 32 experimental and control groups on the pre-test was 0.1831. This amount of t
 33 is much lower than the critical value (2.000) at .05 and (2.660) at .01 level of
 34 probability for 68 degrees of freedom. Hence, it can be claimed that that there
 35 is no significant difference between pre-test of the control and experimental
 36 groups.

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T observed	Degrees of Freedom	T critical	Level of significance
.1831	68	2.000	.05
		2.660	.01

Table 2: t-statistic for pre-test

The following is a table for comparing the observed t- value based on the students' post-test performance.

T observed	Degrees of Freedom	T critical	Level of significance
4.5770	68	2.000	.05
		2.660	.01

Table 3: t-statistic for post-test

Here, the 't-value' well exceeds 't-critical' values both at 0.05 and 0.01 levels of significance. Thus, the null hypothesis is rejected; the two groups scored differently on the post-test, and the difference was statistically significant.

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

The quest for finding a technique to enhance incidental way of vocabulary learning was the starting point in conducting the present study. Text-generation was found to be influential.

It is a kind of problem-solving task which enables learners to increase their intellectual potency and awareness of their own cognitive process toward discovery learning. No doubt, the brain retains its own products much better and longer than what is put into it ready-made. Through text-generation, vocabulary escapes from learners' mind with difficulty. It helps the students to increase their power of creative thinking which is necessary for learning, makes them feel involved in classroom activities, and improves their self-confidence. Moreover, it helps the teacher by creating a relaxed atmosphere to remove the students' anxiety and facilitate learning.

The findings may encourage teachers who still believe in teacher-

1 centeredness to change their view points in favor of more learner centered
2 approaches. It is infact, the learner who should play the main role in the
3 process of learning. In other words, the student should no longer be
4 considered as a data collecting machine, rather he is to be regarded as a
5 problem solver and generator. The teacher should stop seeing his own role as
6 a feeder of data: he should, instead, motivate the students to use their own
7 mental capabilities to decipher the materials.

8 Textbooks may need to be designed in a way which guarantees the
9 maximum rate of generation on the part of the learner. Hence, the syllabus
10 designers can include this technique in language classes and programs.

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