Revue de Traduction et Langues Volume16 Numéro 02 /2017, pp. 17-28
Journal of Translation and Languages **مجلة الترجمة واللغات**
ISSN (Print): 1112-3974 **EISSN (Online): 2600-6235**

Approaching Translation Competence: the effect of vocabulary instruction on translated word learning among EFL Master Students at Saida University

Makhlouf Abdelkader
University of Djilali Liabes Sidi Bel Abbes-Algeria
abdelkadrmakhlouf1976@hotmail.com
Laboratotory of Translation and et Methodology TRADTEC
0000-0001-6898-5975
Pr. Boulenouar Mohamed Yamine
University of Djilali Liabes Sidi Bel Abbes-Algeria
medya.bin22@gmail.com

To cite this paper:
Makhlouf, A. (2017). Approaching Translation Competence: the effect of vocabulary instruction on translated word learning among EFL Master Students at Saida University. *Revue Traduction et Langues 16 (2),* 17-28.

Received: 28/12/ 2017; **Accepted**: 31/ 12/2017, **Published:** 31/12/ 2017

Abstract: *This research work is an attempt to investigate the effects of vocabulary instruction on translated word learning. The experimental group was assigned to vocabulary instruction through group work enhanced by short text context, definitions and examples. However, the control group was assigned to the same treatment without examples. The main objective of the present study, therefore, was to approach the students' translation competence with regard to two task conditions: a) isolated-word translation vocabulary. b) Phrase translation within a sentence context. The subjects of the study were First year EFL Master Students of science in didactics at Saida University. The students were divided into four homogenous groups (that consist of 5students for each) according to their performance in the pretest, two of which form the experimental group and the others form the control group. The study indicated the existence of a strong and statistically significant correlation between the two tasks. The findings demonstrated also the existence of statistically significant differences in favor of the experimental group in the post test between the means of the two test scores in the first task. However, there were no statistically significant differences between the two test scores in the second task.*
Keywords: *translation competence, vocabulary instruction, tasks, context, learning translated words.*
الملخص: يهدف هذا البحث الى دراسة آثار تعليمة المفردات على التعلم الترجمي للمفردات. بحيث أنه تم تعيين المجموعة التجريبية لتعليم المفردات من خلال تقسيم الطلاب إلى مجموعات متساوية العدد معززة بسياق النص القصير، التعاريف والأمثلة، على أنه تم تعيين المجموعة الضابطة بنفس الظروف التي خضعت لها المجموعة التجريبية دون التعزيز بأمثلة. ولذلك

Corresponding author : Makhlouf Abdelkader

كان الهدف الرئيسي من هذه الدراسة هو الاقتراب من الكفاية الترجمية للطلاب على أساس الأداء بحسب نوع التمارين غرض التعلم: ترجمة المفردات على أساس الكلمات المستقلة، ترجمة العبارة ضمن سياق الجملة. تتكون عينة الدراسة من طلاب السنة الأولى ما ستير- اختصاص تعليميات اللغة الانجليزية في جامعة سعيدة. كما تم تقسيم الطلاب إلى أربع مجموعات متجانسة (تتكون من 5 طلاب في كل مجموعة) وفقا لأدائهم في الاختبار القبلي، اثنان منها يشكلان المجموعة التجريبية والآخرين يشكلون المجموعة الضابطة. وقد أظهرت الدراسة وجود دلالة إحصائية قوية بين التمرينين. كما بينت نتائج الدراسة وجود فروق ذات دلالة إحصائية لصالح المجموعة التجريبية في الاختبار البعدي بين متوسطات نتائج الاختبار في التمرين الأول. إلا أنه، لم تكن هناك فروق ذات دلالة إحصائية بين نتائج الاختبارين في التمرين الثاني .

الكلمات المفتاح: الكفاية الترجمية، تعليمية المفردات، التمارين، السياق، التعلم الترجمي للمفردات.

1. Introduction

Vocabulary studies in relation to learning are clearly identified through the type of teaching tasks. To this effect, teachers with the application of some vocabulary instructions help students to learn appropriately the target vocabulary. As such, in order to enhance students learning, teachers are required to sustain comprehensible input for them through a more comprehensive instruction. In this respect, the effectiveness of such instruction lies in the suggestion that students can better acquire new vocabulary by giving them opportunities to deal with words in context (Palmberg, 1988). The same objective can be achieved through strategies for inferring the meaning of unknown vocabulary from the context based on words-in-context exercises and context enrichment exercises. (Honeyfield, 1977)

In the same perspective, the type of tasks adopted by the teacher plays a significant role in promoting learning translated words which are identified as an indicator of a learner's translation competence. In this sense, translation competence is commonly perceived as an underlying knowledge or ability needed to carry out a translation task.

1.1. Statement of the problem

How effective is vocabulary instruction, based on group work tasks, in increasing the students' translated word learning?

1.2. Research objective

The main objective of the present study is to understand how university students' translated word learning can be developed through group work and vocabulary instruction in classroom with the hope to minimize translation errors at the level of mainly: isolated-word translation vocabulary, and phrase translation within a sentence context.

1.3. Research Questions

The present study investigates the following research questions:

- To what extent do students' performances in the two tasks correlate to each other?
- Which of the two vocabulary instructions contributes more to translation vocabulary gain with fewer errors as students collaboratively engage in translation tasks?

1.4. Research Hypothesis

The following research null hypotheses were formulated to test the objective:

- Ho There will be no statistically significant correlation between the two translation tasks.
- Ho There will be no statistically significant differences in vocabulary learning between the two vocabulary instruction conditions.

1.4.1. Sub-hypotheses

- There will be no statistically significant differences between the means of the experimental and the control groups in the first task: isolated-word translation vocabulary.
- There will be no statistically significant differences between the means of the experimental and the control groups in the second task: phrase translation within a sentence context.

2. Review of Literature

2.1. Incidental Vocabulary Acquisition

According to Paribakht & Wesche (1999), incidental vocabulary acquisition is determined by directing the students' focus on understanding meaning rather than on the explicit goal of learning new words. For Zeeland, & Schmitt, incidental learning occurs when *"learners acquire new aspects of their L2 without being focused on doing so".* (2013: 609)

Besides, incidental learning can be conceived by its opposition to intentional learning. The latter is defined as *"any activity geared at committing lexical information to memory"* (Hulstijn, 2001: 271, cited in Reider, 2003), which converges with explicit vocabulary learning. According to Hulstijn & Laufer (2001) explicit vocabulary learning occurs when there is a deliberate process associated with a memorization of thousands of words along with grammatical rules. However, incidental vocabulary acquisition does not neglect conscious processes, or means that learners do not have an active role in the learning process **(**Gass, 1999).

2.2.Translation competence

Translation competence is perceived as the underlying knowledge or ability needed to carry out a translation task. It is defined by the PACTE group as *"the underlying system of knowledge and skills needed to be able to translate"* (PACTE, 2000: 1005, PACTE, 2003: 58). Besides, translation competence involves translation errors that learners face and, as indicated by (Nord, 1996: 96-100), is usually originated by a translation problem which has not been solved or has not been appropriately solved.

According to Nord (1991), a translation problem is conceived as *"an objective problem which every translator [...] has to solve during a particular translation task"* (1991:151). In addition, the translation process includes as set of competencies that are defined by Weinert as:

> The cognitive abilities and skills that individuals have or that they can learn to solve specific problems as well as the associated motivational, volitional and social dispositions and abilities needed to be able to apply solutions to problems successfully and responsibly in variable situations. (2001: 27-28)

*2.3.*Context, Tasks and Involvement Load Hypothesis

Researchers maintain that tasks requiring a deeper level of processing lead to better learning results. They suggested that language pedagogical tasks. For example, cognitive tasks involving comprehension with the objective to focus on new vocabulary items can lead to incidental acquisition or retention of the vocabulary items. For instance, the Involvement Load Hypothesis proposed by (Hulstijn, & Laufer, 2001) suggests that task with higher involvement load leads to facilitate vocabulary learning and retention. To put it another way, tasks involving information that are processed at a deep level lead to a significantly higher level of vocabulary learning.

Honeyfield (1977) states that context is indispensable in teaching vocabulary. However, he points out that context can lead to better results when it is equipped with strategies for inferring the meaning of unknown vocabulary. Other researchers like Watanabe (1997) and Peters, Hulstijn, Sercu and Lutjeharms (2009) claimed that text input that contains contextual, lexical, or semantic enhancement lead to vocabulary gains because of the increased processing the learners find themselves involved in (cited in Mohamed, 2016).

Context clues also help students to learn words incidentally (Beck & McKeown, 1991; Beck et al., 2002 cited in Jensen, 2009). Beck et al. (2002) defined context clues as *"words found around an unknown word that provides clues that reveal the meaning of the unknown word"* (cited in Jensen, 2009). One of these context clues is definition *clue.* A *definition clue* exists when the definition of an unknown word is provided directly within the context of the unknown word (Jensen, 2009).

In a study conducted by Clark (1984) fifty-five seventh graders from an urban school were exposed to three different vocabulary instruction methodologies. The purpose of the study was to examine the effect of these three methods. Students in the first method studied a list of words with definitions. In the second method they studied the identical words in context. In the third method (3) students were exposed to the same list of words with definitions and contextual sentence examples. However, the researcher found that all three methods improved vocabulary knowledge, with no single preferred method.

3. Methods

This study applied an experimental design and it is summarized according to the following table:

1. Construct	*Learning translated words through vocabulary instruction and group work.*
2. Independent variables	Exposure to a specific vocabulary instruction based on group work.
3. Dependent variables	Students individual translation performance with regards to: **a.** Isolated-Word Translation **b**. Phrase translation within a sentence context.
4. Subjects	First year EFL Master students (Didactics) at Saida university divided into four homogenous groups (that consist

	of 5 students for each) according to their performance in the pretest, two of which form the experimental group and the others form the control group.
5. Translation tasks from English into Arabic	**Task1** Isolated-Word Translation Vocabulary Test **Task2** Phrase translation within a sentence context.
6. Measuring instruments	**1)** to measure the individual performance with regard to: **A)** Isolated-Word Translation Vocabulary**.** **B)** Phrase translation within a sentence context**.**
7. The experiment (vocabulary instruction in English).	1.The experimental group: Vocabulary instruction through group work enhanced by short text context, definitions and examples. 2. The control group: Vocabulary instruction through group work enhanced by short text context, definitions without examples. 3**.** Students took a pretest and the experience based on a short text in 1001 *Vocabulary and Spelling Questions (see the list of the references)*. The post-test determines the control and experimental participants' translated word learning after the treatment.
8. ***Hypothesis***	Subjects will have more vocabulary gain at the individual level after being exposed to a specific experiment.

Table 1. Construct and experimental design of the study

4. Results

In order to answer the research questions and to test the research hypotheses and to determine whether the observed frequencies had statistically significant difference with the expected ones or they had just occurred by mere chance, the researchers treated the data using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) 22 software.

The following hypotheses will be tested:

First hypothesis

Null hypothesis: There is no statistically significant correlation between task 1 and task 2 (R = 0).

Alternative Hypothesis: There is a statistically significant correlation between the first task and the second task (R # 0).

		task 1	**task 2**	**TOTAL**
task 1	Pearson Correlation	1	0,099	0,867**
	Sig. (2 tailed)		0,678	0,000
	N	20	20	20
task 2	Pearson Correlation	0,099	1	0,582**
	Sig. (2 tailed)	0,678		0,007
	N	20	20	20
TOTAL	Pearson Correlation	0,867**	0,582**	1
	Sig. (2 tailed)	0,000	0,007	
	N	20	20	20

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 4.1. Correlations

There is a strong and statistically significant correlation at 0.01 level between Task1 and Task2. As a result, we accept the research hypothesis that admits the existence of a statistically significant correlation between the first task and the second task.

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
-0,243	2

Table 4.2. Reliability statistics for the first task

The value is negative because of a negative mean covariance among the elements.

Cronbach's Alpha	**N of Items**
0,660	2

Table 4.3. Reliability statistics for the second task

Cronbach's Alpha in the second task is accepted because it is greater than 60%.

The Second hypothesis

Null hypothesis: There are no statistically significant differences between the means of the experimental and the control groups ($\mu 1 = \mu 2$).

Alternative Hypothesis: There are statistically significant differences between the means of the experimental and the control groups in favor of the experimental group ($\mu 1 > \mu 2$).

Level of significance: $\alpha = 0.05$

Area of rejection: 000 Value level of significance $\alpha = 0.05$ and test with one tail, degrees of freedom = 19.

- ***The first sub hypothesis***

There are statistically significant differences between the means of the experimental and the control groups in the first task.

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	Task1B	3,0500	20	0,68633	0,15347
	Task 1	2,2000	20	0,83351	0,18638

Table 4.4. Paired sample Statistics

		N	Correlation	Sig.
Pair 1	Task 1B & Task1	20	0,110	0,643

Table 4.5. Paired sample Correlations

There is a correlation in the first task between the control and the experimental groups with 0.110.

	paired differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
				Lower	Upper			
Pair 1 Task 1B - Task 1	0,85000	1,13671	0,25418	0,31800	1,38200	3,344	19	0,003

Table 4.6. Paired sample Statistics

The T test was used to determine if there were statistically significant differences. It is a parametric test that is suitable for comparing two sets of data.

From the results shown in the table 3.6., we deduce that the value of T (3.344) and the probability value (Sig) is 0.003 which is smaller than the 0.05 mean between the pre-test and the post test. Therefore, we reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternative one (There are statistically significant differences between the means of the experimental and the control groups in favor of the experimental group ($\mu1 > \mu2$)). Thus, it can be concluded that there are statistically significant differences between the means of the two tests in the first task in favor of the post test.

- ***The second sub hypothesis***

There are statistically significant differences between the means of the experimental and the control groups in the second task.

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	Task 2	0,5500	20	,51042	,11413
	Task 2B	0,6000	20	,50262	,11239

Table 4.7. Paired sample Statistics

		N	Correlation	Sig.
Pair 1	Task 2 & Task 2B	20	0,492	,027

Table 4.8. Paired sample Correlations

There is a correlation in the second task between the control and the experimental groups: 0.492 at 0.027.

		Paired differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
					Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	Task 2B-Task2	0,05000	0,51042	0,11413	- 0,188	0,28888	0,438	19	0,666

Table 4.9. Paired samples test

The T test was used to determine if there are statistically significant differences. It is a parametric test that is suitable for comparing two sets of data.

From the results shown in the table 3.9., we find that the value of T (0.438) and the probability value (Sig) is 0.666, which is greater than the mean of 0.05 between the post-test and pre-test scores in the second task. Therefore, we accept the null hypothesis (There are no statistically significant differences between the means of the experimental and the control groups ($\mu1 = \mu2$)). Thus, we can conclude that there are no statistically significant differences between the two test scores in the second task.

5. Discussion

The examination of the results obtained from the present research generated the following conclusions:

The results of the first question demonstrated the existence of a statistically significant correlation between the first task and the second task. Besides, concerning the second question where the focus was on the effectiveness of the vocabulary instruction used in the translation tasks, the study shows that the treatment in the experimental group contributes more to translation vocabulary gain with respect to the first task (isolated-word translation vocabulary). In here, more learning of translated words was in favor of the

experimental group, which was assigned to vocabulary instruction through group work enhanced by short text context, definitions and examples.

This result can be sustained by Hulstijn & Laufer (2001) Involvement Load Hypothesis which maintains that task with higher involvement load leads to facilitate vocabulary learning and retention. The positive learning results regarding the first task are indicative because students are engaged in tasks that require a deeper level of processing. As such, enhancing vocabulary instruction by short text context, definitions in addition to examples incite students to invest more cognitive efforts in the comprehension process. In the same line, as cited in (Mohamed, 2016), Watanabe (1997) and Peters, Hulstijn, Sercu & Lutjeharms (2009) support the same results. They point out that text input that contains contextual, lexical, or semantic enhancement lead to vocabulary gains because of the increased processing the learners find themselves involved in.

However, in the second task (Phrase translation within a sentence context), the two instruction methods improved the students' translated word learning with no statistically significant difference. This is most probably due to the groups homogeneity according to their performance in the pretest. This result can be explained by the fact that the second task unlike the first one contains only one question with limited answer choices. Some analogous results were reported in the study conducted by Clark (1984). In his study, the learners were respectively exposed to three different vocabulary instruction methodologies (definitions- context- definitions and contextual sentence examples). However, the three methods improved the learners' vocabulary knowledge with no single preferred method.

6. Limitations

Results of the study cannot be representative of all EFL students in our universities. However, findings should be more reliable and valid on a larger extent by using the same instruments several times, so that one can know if students' translation problems can be reduced significantly through the vocabulary instruction and group work used in the experiment.

7. Conclusion

At the end of the experience, the results make it possible to determine whether or not students have progressed in learning translated words, as well as the degree of progress, by comparing the progression in each task. To this effect, the study helps to approach the students' translation competence with regard to the two task conditions: a) isolated-word translation vocabulary. b) Phrase translation within a sentence context.

The findings of the study revealed that vocabulary instruction through group work enhanced by short text context, definitions and examples is significantly more positive than the same vocabulary instruction without examples. However, this result is performed only in learning translated words with respect to isolated-word translation vocabulary. At the end, we may conclude that much of the difference in the score tests can be attributed to vocabulary instruction. Thus, the results obtained may be useful in assessing the efficacy of both vocabulary instruction methodologies designed for both the experimental and the control group.

References

[1] CLARK, D. B. (1984), A Comparison of the Effects of Three Methods of Vocabulary Instruction On Vocabulary Acquisition and Reading Comprehension. *Dissertation Abstracts International 45(08),* 2462A.

[2] GASS, S. (1999), *Discussion: Incidental Vocabulary Acquisition*. Studies in Second Language Acquisition *(21)*, 319–333.

[3] HONEYFIELD, J. (1977), Word Frequency and the Importance of Context in Vocabulary Learning. *RELC Journal* (*8),* 35-42.

[4] HULSTIJN, J. H & LAUFER, B. (2001), Some Empirical Evidence for the Involvement Load Hypothesis in Vocabulary Acquisition. *Language Learning* (*51)*, 539–558.

[5] JENSEN, J.R. (2009). Examining the Effects of Explicit Teaching of Context Clues in Content Area Texts. *A Master Thesis of Education*. Brigham Young University.

[6] LEARNING EXPRESS EDITORS. (1999), 1001 *Vocabulary and Spelling Questions*. Learning Express, LLC.

[7] MOHAMED, A. (2016), Task-Based Incidental Vocabulary Learning in L2 Arabic: The Role of Proficiency and Task Performance. *JNCOLCTL*, 18, 121–157.

[8] NORD, CH. (1991), *Text Analysis in Translation. Theory, Methodology and Didactic Application of a Model for Translation-Oriented Text Analysis*. Rodopi, Amsterdam.

[9] NORD, CH. (1996), Wernimmt Mal Den Ersten Satz? Überlegungen Zu Neuen Arbeitsformen Im Übersetzungsunterricht. In: Gerzymisch-Arbogast, H., Haller J. & Steiner, E. (eds.), *Übersetzungswissenschaft im Umbruch, Festschrift für Wolfram Wilss*, Narr, Tübingen pp. 313-327.

[10] PACTE. (2000). Acquiring Translation Competence: Hypotheses and Methodological Problems of a Research Project. In A. Beeby, D. Ensinger, M. Presas (Eds.). *Investigating Translation.* Amsterdam/ Philadelphia: John Benjamins.

[11] PACTE. (2003). Building a Translation Competence Model. *Triangulating Translation: Perspectives in Process Oriented Reseach,* Ed. by E. Alves, Amsterdam, John Benjamins, 43-66.

[12] PALMBERG, R. (1988), Computer games and foreign-language vocabulary learning, *ELT Journal,* 42 (4):247-52.

[13] PARIBAKHT, S & Wesche, M. (1999), Reading and Incidental L2 Vocabulary Acquisition: An Introspective Study of Lexical Inferencing. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition, 21(2),* 195-224.

[14] REIDER, A. (2003). Implicit and Explicit Learning in Incidental Vocabulary Acquisition. *Views 12*, 24–39.

[15] WEINERT, F.E. (2001). Concept of Competence: A Conceptual Clarification. In: Rychen, D.S. & Salganik, L.H. (Eds.), *Defining and Selecting Key Competencies*. Hogrefe and Huber Publishers, Seattle, pp. 45-65.

[16] ZEELAND, H & SCHMITT, N. (2013). Incidental Vocabulary Acquisition through L2 listening: A Dimensions Approach. *System 41*, 609-624.

Appendix (1):
The pre and post tests are the same.
There are two tasks:

1) ***What is the meaning of the following words in Arabic?***

Drowsines	تَنْشِيط	طَاقَة	خُمُول
Alertness	لامُبَالاة	إِهْمال	يَقْظَة
Dexterity	إِتّزان	براعة	(حماقة) خُرق
Susceptible	قَوِيّ	قابل للتكيف	رَهِيف

2) What is the meaning of the phrase **intolerant to aspirin** in Arabic in the following context?

3) Do not use this product if you are **intolerant to aspirin?**

غير قادر على امتصاص الأسبرين دون آثار سلبية
غير متأثر بآثار الأسبرين الشفائية
الاحتياج إلى أدوية أقوى من الأسبرين

Appendix (2):
Treatment

1. Answer questions (A–B- C- D) on the basis of the following passage. WARNING: Antihistamines can cause ***drowsiness***, so you should avoid driving or other operations that demand **alertness**, coordination, or ***dexterity***. Do not use this product if you are ***intolerant to aspirin*.** Allergic reactions may occur in ***susceptible*** persons.

A. What is the meaning of the word **Drowsiness** as it is used in the passage?

1 The ability to be active. For example, **he plays tennis with great energy**

2 Apathy: a very sleepy state. For example, **the room is so warm it's making me feel drowsy.**

3 The state of being full of life and energy. For example, **(She spoke with great animation about her latest discoveries.)**

B. What is the meaning of the word **Alertness** as it is used in the passage?

1.The process of paying close and continuous attention**.** For example, **the police said that it was thanks to the vigilance of a neighbour that the fire was discovered before it could spread.**

2.The trait of lacking interest or enthusiasm in things... For example, **when you feel indifference for something, you neither like it nor dislike it.)**

3. Failure to act with the prudence that a reasonable person would exercise under the same circumstances**.** For example**, "Her negligence of the house resulted in its being condemned by the city."**

C. What is the meaning of the word **dexterity** as it is used in the passage?

1. A state where things are of equal weight or force; equilibrium. For example, **(She had to hold onto the railings to keep her balance (= to stop herself from falling).**
2. The ability to perform a difficult action quickly and skillfully with the hands, or the ability to think quickly and effectively. For example, **(He caught the ball with great dexterity.**
3. Awkwardness in movement or manner. For example, **the first mobile phones were heavy and clumsy to use, but nowadays they are much easier to handle**.

D. What is the meaning of the word **susceptible** as it is used in the passage?

1. Able or willing to change in order to suit different conditions. For example, **the survivors in this life seem to be those who are adaptable to change.**
2. Robust (of a person or animal) strong and healthy, or (of an object or system) strong and unlikely to break or fail. For example, **he looks robust and healthy enough.**
3. Easily influenced, changed or damaged, especially by a physical activity or effect. For example, **some people's teeth are highly sensitive to cold.**

E. What is the meaning of the phrase **intolerant to aspirin** as it is used in the passage?

1. Unable to absorb aspirin without **adverse** effects (**adverse**: having a negative or harmful effect on something. For example, **the match has been cancelled due to adverse weather conditions.**

2. Unaffected by the **healing** effects of aspirin. (**Healing**: to make or become well again, especially after a cut or other injury. For example, **the wounds were gradually healing (up).**
3. Needing a stronger **medication** than aspirin (**medication:** medical treatment**)** For example, **He is currently on/taking medication for his heart.**