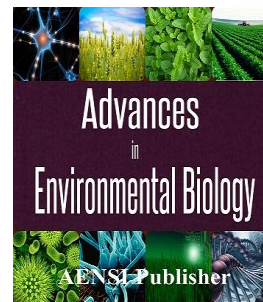




AENSI Journals

Advances in Environmental Biology

ISSN-1995-0756 EISSN-1998-1066

Journal home page: <http://www.aensiweb.com/AEB/>

Investigating the effects of reading short stories and the related word lists on reading skill among Iranian EFL learners

¹Safoora Faryadras (M.A.) ²Akbar Azizifar (Ph.D.),³Habib Gowhari (Ph.D.)

¹Student of Department of English language, Ilam Branch, Islamic Azad University, Ilam, Iran.

²Member faculty of Department of English language, Islamic Azad University, Ilam Branch, Ilam, Iran.

³Member faculty of Department of English language, Islamic Azad University, Ilam Branch, Ilam, Iran.

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 25 October 2014

Received in revised form

26 November 2014

Accepted 29 December 2014

Available online 15 January 2015

Key words:

short stories- word lists- reading skill-
EFL learners

ABSTRACT

It is possible to learn a language in many different ways. One way that is used by many people is reading. This is important to remember that if you wish to speak a new language, second language, nothing will replace the activity of speaking. However, by learning to better use your reading time you may well be able to improve and advance your learning of speaking. This research entitled: Investigating the effects of reading short stories and the related word lists on reading skill among Iranian EFL learners, studied the effects of short story and word lists on reading skill, the research methods is experimental and sample of research was divided to two groups of control and experimental and give both group the post test and pretest. The data were analyzed by SPSS software and results show that there is a positive relation between reading short stories and word lists and reading skill among Iranian EFL learners.

© 2014 AENSI Publisher All rights reserved.

To Cite This Article: Investigating the effects of reading short stories and the related word lists on reading skill among Iranian EFL learners ¹Safoora Faryadras (M.A.) ²Akbar Azizifar (Ph.D.),³Habib Gowhari (Ph.D.) *Adv. Environ. Biol.*, 8(21), 1078-1083, 2014

INTRODUCTION

It is possible to learn a language in many different ways. One way that is used by many people is reading. This is important to remember that if you wish to speak a new language, second language, nothing will replace the activity of speaking. However, by learning to better use your reading time you may well be able to improve and advance your learning of speaking. So, reading as a central skill of learning in second language can be highly effective. Reading skill refers to the specific abilities that enable a person to read with independence and interact with the message of a text. Acquiring vocabulary in L2 is rather a difficult and demanding process and most of the language learners wish to know which vocabulary learning method or activity is more beneficial or even the best one. There are many ways and strategies for learning vocabulary. Among reading materials, reading short stories interested by students as amazing works. EFL teachers can develop vocabulary of their learners by creating a language rich environment which supports vocabulary acquisition. This can be done by providing a range of quality texts which also sustain EFL learners' interests. In that regard, literary texts and short stories in particular can play a very significant role in developing and enriching the vocabulary of EFL learners. They present language in a discourse which sociolinguistic aspect of language receives attention. Reading short stories is a mixture of entertainment and instruction. It deals with topics and experiences common to all human. Reading short stories also help to stimulate students' curiosity about the target culture and language. Reading short Stories stimulate language acquisition by providing contexts for processing and interpreting new language .They also supplement the restricted input of the EFL classroom. Therefore, if an EFL teacher wishes that his/her students learn vocabulary and be successful in reading, be creative in classes, then the best reading materials can be short-stories to make learning easy, independent, motivational, enjoyable and memorable. Vocabulary charts or word lists can be very useful in helping students widen their passive and active vocabulary based on related word group areas. Typically, students will often learn new vocabulary by simply writing lists of new words and then memorize these words by rote. According to Blachowicz and Fisher [2], this method provide learners with opportunities to process words by making connections between what they already know and what they have learned. Word lists are known as decontextualized activities. The learning of

Corresponding Author: Akbar Azizifar (Ph.D.) Student of Department of English language, Ilam Branch, Islamic Azad University, Ilam, Iran.
E-mail: faryadrassafoora@gmail.com

second language vocabulary using lists of word pairs (rote repetition) is a common practice. Although a great deal of work has been done on vocabulary learning, Griffin and Harley contend that where the task of second language learning is concerned, little work has been done on list learning of new words despite the fact that it is one of the most widely-used techniques among learners. Unfortunately, this technique often provides few contextual clues.

2-statement of the [problem]:

Vocabulary refers to the words we must understand and use to communicate effectively. Educators often consider four types of vocabulary: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. There is no general agreement among vocabulary specialists that it is at the heart of communicative competence [6].

Listening vocabulary refers to the words we need to know to understand what we hear. Speaking vocabulary consists of the words we use when we speak. Reading vocabulary refers to the words we need to know to understand what we read. Writing vocabulary consists of the words we use in writing. Vocabulary plays a fundamental role in the reading process, and contributes greatly to a reader's comprehension. A reader cannot understand a text without knowing what most of the words mean. Students learn the meanings of most words indirectly, through everyday experiences with oral and written language. Other words are learned through carefully designed instruction. Zimmerman argues that "the teaching and learning of vocabulary has been undervalued in the field of second language acquisition (SLA) throughout its varying stages and up to the present day" (p. 5).

The high correlation in the research literature of word knowledge with reading comprehension indicates that if students do not adequately and steadily grow their vocabulary knowledge, reading comprehension will be affected.

3. Methodology:

3.1. Participants:

The Participants of this study were 60 female students from ALEFBA language institute in Ilam who were selected from 90 primary samples. The participants were between the ages of 13 and 18 years old. They were enrolled during a spring semester 16 sessions (three sessions each week). All participants were native Persian speakers. They were studying English as a foreign language as intermediate learners. The criterion for choosing these 60 learners was a homogeneity test with the scores of one standard deviation above and below the mean.

3.2. Materials:

The materials of this research are some short stories in English language and Related word lists table based on acquisition from short stories.

A list of the 10 unknown words with definitions given in both Persian and English. Also two research instruments (*Homogeneity test* and *The Vocabulary Levels Test for pre-test and post-test*) were used.

3.3. Instrumentation:

3.3.1. Homogeneity Test (Michigan Test):

Before the beginning of the treatment, it was essential to make sure that the participants of the study were homogeneous in their proficiency level. For this reason, the results of a standardized test, the **Michigan test** which is administered by the institute were used as a criterion for the homogeneity of the participants.

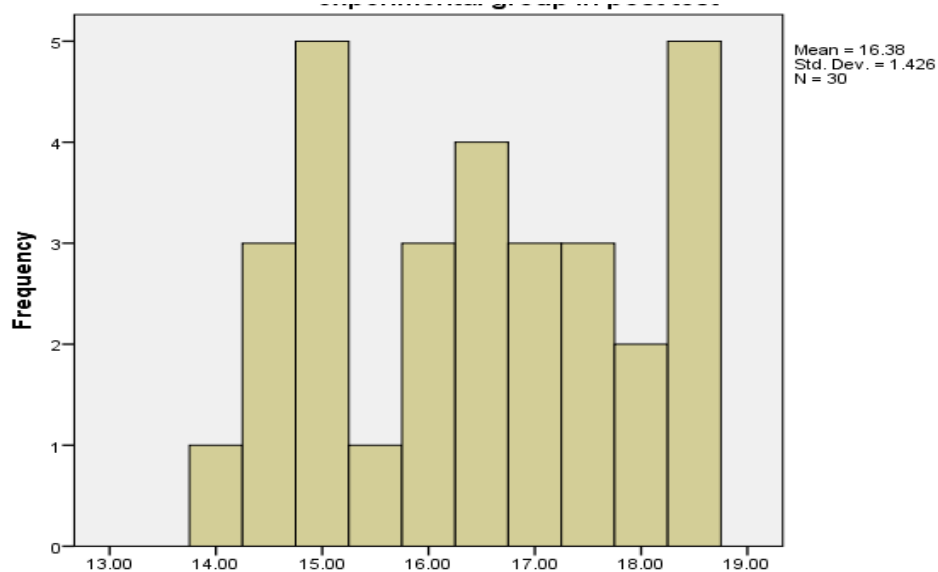
3.3.2 Pre-test and Post-test (Schmidt's vocabulary tests(2001), Version 2):

The Vocabulary Levels Test by Norbert Schmitt, Diane Schmitt and Caroline Clapham, (2001) .Two other tests were required to assess the changes in developing vocabulary domain among participants. One of them was before the treatment (pre-test) and the other after the treatment (post-test). The Vocabulary Levels Test has two versions, 1 and 2 which were designed by Norbert Schmitt, Diane Schmitt and Caroline Clapham, (2001) in order to revised and expanded the before versions of the Vocabulary Levels Test

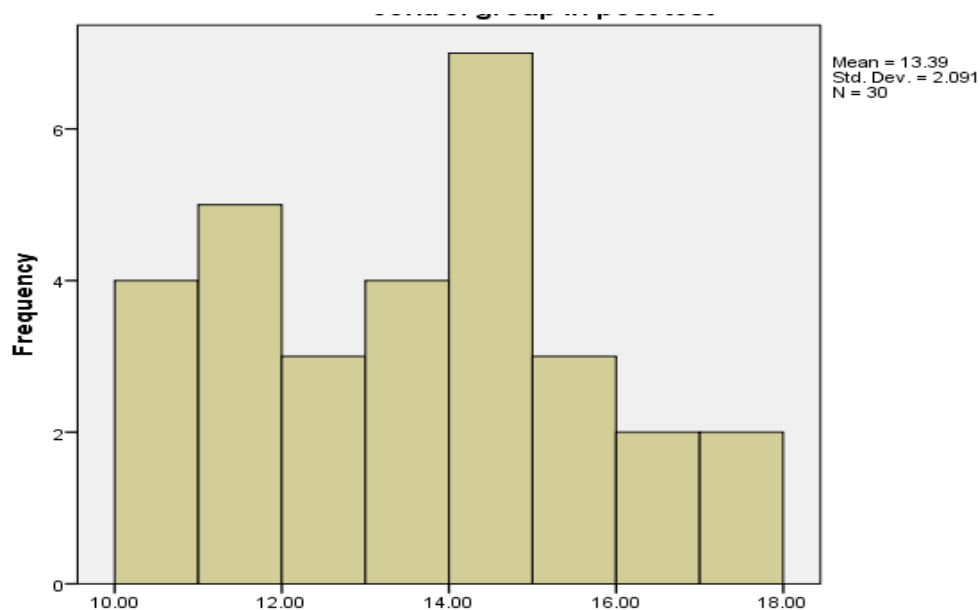
4-data analysis:

Measurement and analysis of quantitative data are standardized and numerical and gives greater objectivity to results. [9]. Quantitative analysis of data collection included numerical ratings obtained from two main tests: pre-test and post-test on the experimental and control groups of intermediate learners. After the treatment, the researcher collected the required data by giving a post- test. Data were analyzed by using the SPSS software program. The frequency and percentage of responses were displayed with descriptive statistics like Mean, Median, Standard deviation, etc. The two groups were compared with each other in order to test the hypotheses of the research. The significant difference between dependent variable across /between groups was so meaningful. Based on the test scores the validity of research hypotheses was denied or was accepted.

4.1 Statistical Analysis of the Control Group pre-test and post-test:

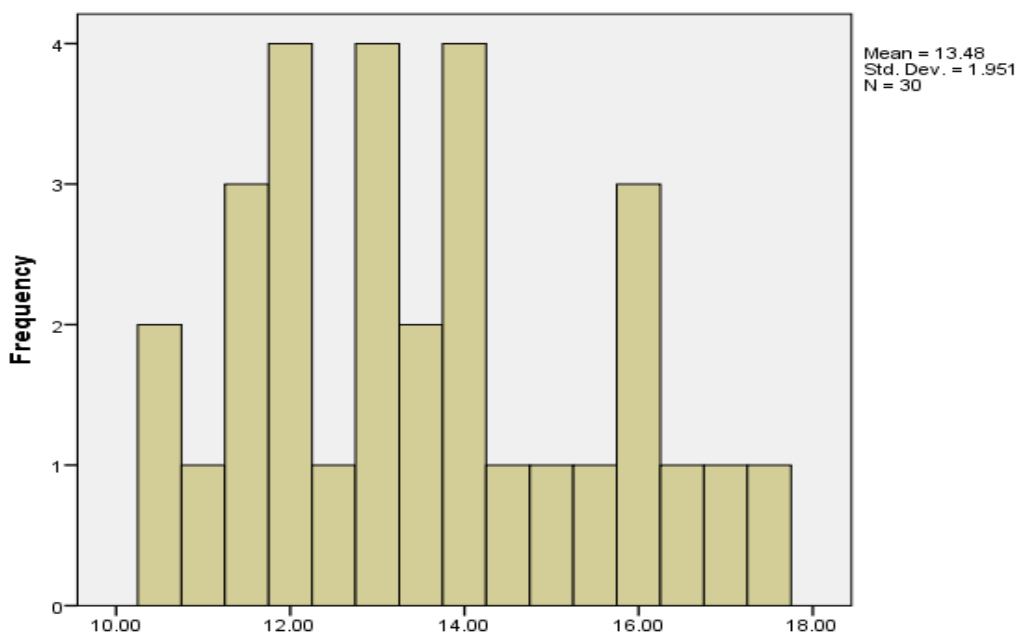


Histogram 4.1: Experimental group in post-test:

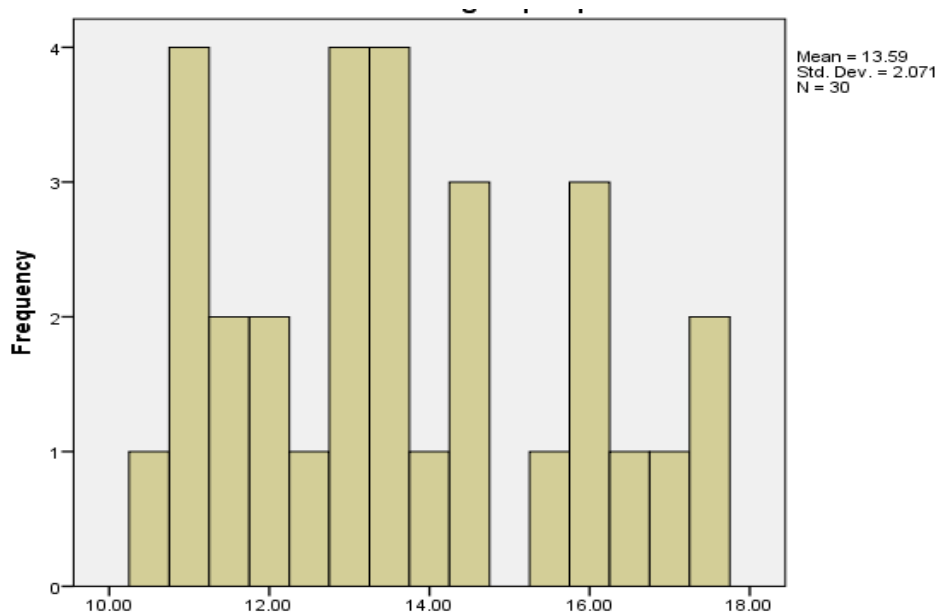


Histogram 4.2: control group in post-test

Diagrams 4.1 and 4.2 show the data distribution, they also represent data frequency. Scores can be seen on horizontal axis and frequency of scores can be seen on vertical axis. Also in the top-right of each histogram descriptive statistics can be seen.



Histogram 4.3: Experimental group in pre-test



Histogram 4.4: Control group in pre-test

Diagrams 4.3 and 4.4 show the data distribution in pretest. They also represent data frequency. Scores can be seen on horizontal axis and frequency of scores can be seen on vertical axis. Also in the top-right of each histogram descriptive statistics can be seen. (Average, Standard deviation, Number of scores). In order to communicate well in a foreign language, students should acquire an adequate number of words and should know how to use them accurately and appropriately [17].

Conclusion:

The goal of this study was to investigate the relationship between reading short stories and related word lists and its effects on Iranian intermediate EFL learners through experimental research. In learning a foreign language, vocabulary plays the most significant role. It is one element that links the four skills of speaking, listening, reading and writing all together. In order to communicate well in a foreign language, students should acquire an adequate number of words and should know how to use them accurately and appropriately [17]. This investigation has been carried out to find the effectiveness of reading short stories and related word lists on performance of reading in intermediate EFL learners in the development of vocabulary. The first step was to

choose the participants of the study with the same language proficiency (intermediate level) who were taught English as a foreign language.

Participants were selected from ALEFBA Institute in ILAM. Before the beginning of the treatment, it was essential to make sure that the participants of the study were homogeneous in their proficiency level. For this reason, the results of the homogeneity test (Michigan Test) were used as a criterion for homogenizing the participants.

The 60 participants were randomly assigned in to two groups (each consisting of 30 students): one group for reading short stories and related word lists (the experimental group), and one group for conventional learning (control group).

A vocabulary test was utilized as a pre-test to check the participant's vocabulary knowledge. During the treatment period, participants in the experimental group focused on reading short stories and related word lists, while participants in the control group received reading instructions through traditional methods.

After the treatment, the same vocabulary test was applied as a post-test to see the probable changes. Data were analyzed by using the SPSS software program; the results clearly demonstrated the contribution of reading short stories and related word lists to reading skill of Iranian intermediate EFL learners. This research has added quantitative support for the effectiveness of reading short stories and related word lists in enhancing reading skills among EFL learners. Specifically, it has shown that vocabulary learning activities based on reading supplementary material were more effective than traditional approaches that used as input. The findings of this study expanded the work of previous researchers in the area of vocabulary acquisition. According to results section, there are significant differences in the performance of the participants in the first group (Reading short stories and related word lists/Experimental group) compared to that of the participants in the second group (Traditional Reading / Control Group). Students did make significant gains, and simple attention-getting devices such as underlining and highlighting seemed to greatly enhance the chance that a given word would be learned. Over longer periods of time, reading short stories and related word lists approaches as extensive reading do indeed seem to be effective in increasing learner's skill in reading.

REFERENCES

- [1] Baleghizadeh, S. and A. Ashoori, 2011. The Impact of Two Instructional Techniques on EFL Learners' Vocabulary Knowledge: Flash Cards versus Word Lists. *MEXTESOL*,35(2): 1-9.
- [2] Blachowicz, C., and P. Fisher, 2000. Vocabulary instruction. In M. Kamil, P. Mosenthal, P.D. Pearson & R. Barr (Eds.), *Handbook of Reading Research*, 3: 503-523. Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.
- [3] Carter, R., 1987. Vocabulary and second/foreign language teaching." *Language Teaching*, 20: 3-16.
- [4] Coady, J. and T. Huckin, 1997b. *Second language vocabulary acquisition*. USA: Cambridge University Press.
- [5] Coady, J., 1995. *Research on ESL/EFL Vocabulary Acquisition: Putting It In Context.*" *Second Language Reading and Vocabulary Learning*.
- [6] Coady, J., 1997b. L2 vocabulary acquisition through extensive reading. In J. Coady and T. Huckin, eds. *Second Language Vocabulary Acquisition*. Cambridge University Press, pp: 225-237.
- [7] Collie, J. and S. Slater, 1991. *The literature in the Language Classroom*(5th ed) Glasgow. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- [8] Gajdusek, L., 1988. Toward Wider Use of Literature in ESL: Why and How. *TESOL Quarterly*, 22, 227-257. <http://dx.doi.org/10.2307/3586935>
- [9] Gay, L.R and P. Airasian, 2000. *Educational research: competencies for analysis and application*(8 th ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ:Merill/Prentice Hall
- [10] Hatch, E. and A. Lazaraton, 1995. *The Research Manual: Design and Statistics for Applied Linguistics*. Boston: *HEINLE & HEINLE PUBLISHERS*. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511667190>
- [11] Huckin, T and J. Coady, 1999. Incidental vocabulary acquisition in a second language. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition*, 21(2): 181-192.
- [12] stories to EFL students. *Journal of Language Teaching and Research*, 2(1): 151-159.
- [13] Krashen, S., 1989. We acquire vocabulary and spelling by reading: Additional evidence for the input hypothesis. *The Modern language Journal*, 73(4): 440-464.
- [14] Macaro, E., 2003. *Teaching and Learning a Second Language*. New York: Continuum.
- [15] Mason, B. and S. Krashen, 2004. Is form-focused vocabulary instruction worthwhile. *Regional Language Center Journal*, 35: 179-185.
- [16] Nagy, W. and P. Herman, 1985. Incidental vs. instructional approaches to increasing reading vocabulary. *Educational Perspectives*, 23: 16-21.
- [17] Pazhakh, A. and R. Soltany, 2010. The effect of extensive reading on vocabulary development in EFL learners in Dehdasht language institute (English Language Department, Dezful Branch, Islamic Azad University, Dezful, Iran) *Practice and Theory in Systems of Education*, 5(4): 387.

- [18] Picken, J.D., 2007. Literature, metaphor, and the foreign language learner. New York: Palgrave Macmillan. *Research Quarterly*, 24(2): 174-1.
- [19] Pitts, M., 1989. Acquiring second language vocabulary through reading: A replication of the Clockwork Orange study using second language acquirers. *Reading in a Foreign Language*, 5: 271-275.