

# The Effect of drawing pictures on Improving Young EFL Learners' Word acquisition

**Kimia Limouchi**

**English Language Teacher at Pegahe No Language Center**

**Elham Moeinmehr MA student (information systems)**

**Linnaeus university Sweden**

## ABSTRACT

Current advances in English as a second /foreign language acquisition highlight that non-native speakers aside from grammar and pronunciation need a solid foundation of vocabulary. Most of the times they have problems in expressing themselves which result from lack of word knowledge. The present study was an attempt to find a method to teach new English words to Iranian young EFL learners. As a result, the researcher decides on the mentioned quasi- experimental study which lasted for one academic semester. There were two groups; one as control and another as experimental. The researcher took the advantage of using pictures to teach new words in the experimental group. The results indicated that the experimental group outperformed in the word post-test. That would be due to the effect of photos and pictures in creating an imagination of words, namely through using pictures in teaching new items, learners could connect the words and the objects together. The collected data was analyzed by means of SPSS.

**keywords:** drawing picture, word acquisition, Iranian young EFL learners

## Introduction

Most people will not give a second thought to the fact that English is a global language. People are strongly motivated to learn English since it functions as an information carrier that put you in contact with more people than any other languages (Crystal, 1997, p.3). Psychologists, linguists and lecturers have been keen on finding vocabulary learning strategies for long time. Lexical knowledge is of indispensable role in learning and using a language. Furthermore language users who are at early stages of language learning, experience somehow deeper problems in learning, recalling and properly use of the new words. Undoubtedly even in first languages words are of active role, ones who have a rich mental dictionary are more successful in writing and also speaking (Zahedi & Abdi, 2012). Surely, if you know more words you will be able to use language in a more active manner. In most of the cases vocabulary acquisition looks as an easy and simple stage, but truly it is one of the most tough, and time taking stages to master. It is even more tricky when it comes to foreign language users, since they don't have enough opportunity to use the new words in real contexts. Consequently, linguists, teachers, educators, try to find the most fruitful ways of teaching words (Shoari & Farrokhi, 2014). In the field of teaching English to speakers of other languages, many trying have been devoted to aid language users to acquire the new words in meaningful manner (Boers, et al., 2004).

The number of words which someone knows is of great role in the effort to learn and to use languages. Words make the rudimentary parts of meaning making structures (McCarthy, 1988). Words are basic stones of the structures of languages. Vocabulary learning is the most essential step of gaining foreign language proficiency. It was found that meaning is conveyed typically by words rather than other parts, consequently lack of word knowledge is the chief impediment in language production. But it can be said that the subject is still a controversial one, because words cannot be taught in effective manner. It has been also demonstrated that the traditional instruction fails to aid learners to learn words effectively, by effective learning; we mean learning in a way that the acquired words will be accessible to use when the situation requires.

The present study was an attempt to find out an answer to the following question:

**Research question:**

Are there any significant differences between the effects of drawing pictures on Iranian young EFL learner's vocabulary learning?

**Null hypothesis:**

There are no significant differences in the effects of drawing pictures on Iranian young EFL learner's vocabulary learning.

**Alternative hypothesis:**

There are significant differences in the effects of drawing pictures on Iranian young EFL learner's vocabulary learning.

**Review of the literature**

There are numerous theories on the role of vocabulary on developing reader. Learning new words has been found to influence the reading comprehension and capability of students. Comprehension is significant for understanding and applying information educated to new situations. Students who have more vocabulary understanding are probable to comprehend more text and learn new concepts (NICHED, 2000). According to Pikulski and Temption (2004) words are important part of life; they have affected the knowledge of the world and will continue to affect.

There are number of studies on the effectiveness of pictures in the process of learning in general and word learning in particular, in this part some of them are mentioned.

According to Paivio & Csapo (1973), one of the most common discoveries of memory study is that pictures are recalled better than words. For instance, when exposed to a list of easily named pictures versus their corresponding verbal labels, participants frequently have an easier time recalling the names of the pictures compared with the verbal labels. Carpenter and Olson (2012) in their study tried to explore if new words in a foreign language are learned better from pictures than from native language translations, they reported that, pictures can facilitate learning of foreign language vocabulary—as long as participants are not too overconfident in the power of a picture to help them learn a new word.

As discussed by Carpenter and Olson (2012) the first known theoretical account of the picture superiority effect was based on Paivio's (cited in Carpenter and Olson ,2012) dual-coding theory. They further add that this view suggests that pictures are recalled better than words since they are more likely to be characterized by both verbal and image codes. Such evidence is based in part on the finding that it is easier to name a picture than to form a mental image of a word. Consistent with levels-of-processing theory , other accounts have proposed that pictures are remembered better than words because they receive a greater degree of elaborative semantic processing This notion has been supported by the finding that pictures can be categorized faster than words (see e.g., Potter & Faulconer, cited in Carpenter and Olson ,2012) and that the picture superiority effect can be eradicated through encoding tasks that boost semantic processing of the words (cited in Carpenter and Olson ,2012).

Shoari and Davatgari Asl (2015) also conducted a study as: involvement load hypothesis: the effect of drawing relevant pictures on Iranian young EFL learners' L2 vocabulary performance. They report that that drawing pictures were indeed contributing to L2 vocabulary learning by the learners, and the experimental outperformed in the posttest. They believed that the findings heavily caused by deeper engagement by the task, namely involvement load.

Emirmustafaoglu and Uygun Gökmen (2015) examined the effects of picture vs. translation mediated instruction on L2 vocabulary learning. The findings of their study established that children did better in providing L2 vocabulary items for pictures than for L1 words irrespective of their instruction method. They further add that therefore, regarding the first part of our research question, whether pictures are more effective than L1 words for learning L2 vocabulary items, the results of their study propose that they are not, since L1 word instructed group performed equally well as the picture instructed group when they were asked to provide L2 vocabulary items for pictures. For the second part of our research question, whether pictures are more effective than L1 words as cues in eliciting L2 vocabulary items, our findings indicate that they are, as both groups scored higher in response to pictures than in response to L1 words (Emirmustafaoglu and Uygun Gökmen ,2015).

Saunders and Solman (1984) conducted a study on the effect of pictures on the acquisition of a small vocabulary of similar sight-word. In their study Two experiments were performed to examine the effects of pictures on learning to read a set of isolated, similar, common nouns. Five groups of kindergarten children participated in the first study. They report that the children in four of the groups learnt each word using a picture of the thing characterized by the word, and in two of these four pictorial groups the children had their attention drawn to the fact that the word and the picture characterized the same thing. They further add that no mention was made of this association to the children in the other two groups, and within each of these association situations one group of children was presented with the word 1 second prior to the presentation of the picture, and the other group received these inputs concurrently. The fifth group of children took part as a control group, namely the learned the words without pictures. They reported that both the instructions to associate the word and the picture and the viewing of the word prior to the presentation of the picture failed to improve learning. The most important point, however, was the observation that those children who learnt the words without pictorial information recognized more words on the critical post-learning trial than the children in the pictorial groups. They also report that four groups of kindergarten children participated in the second study. The children in two of the groups learnt the words with the help of pictures, with one group seeing the picture 1 second prior to the word and the other group seeing the picture 1 second after the word. The children in the remaining two groups took part as controls, with one group viewing a blank card 1 second prior to the word and the other group viewing the same card 1 second after the word. The findings revealed no difference in performance between the first two conditions, but, according to the first study, the children who did not view pictures out-performed those who did. They recommend that when teaching children to identify visually presented words teachers abandon the general practice of using pictures as aids.

## **METHODOLOGY**

### **Design of the study**

The design of the present research is quasi-experimental, namely deprived of randomization. The independent variable of the study was drawing pictures and the dependent variable was vocabulary learning.

### **Participants**

Sixty female elementary learners with an age range of 8-12 participated in this study of which lasted for one academic term. All the contributors were from Turkish background. They were picked from 4classes. The participants were students at *Pegah No* language Institute in Tabriz Iran

### **Instruments**

For the sake of collecting quantifiable data the researcher employed the subsequent materials: One language proficiency test of which was run before starting the program, a pre-test of which was conducted on subjects' word knowledge. All of the words were chosen from the course book of the learners. The last instrument was a vocabulary post-test of which was for measuring the effectiveness of the drawing pictures.

### **Procedure**

for assuring the homogeneity of the level of the participants before starting the study the researchers administered one language proficiency test on Listening, Speaking, Reading, and Writing. After that they carried out one pre-test on word knowledge of the subjects for approving the comparability of both groups. Then they started the program. In the experimental group the researchers asked the children to draw a picture for each new word. While in abstract words (e.g. happiness) learners were asked to draw something more than a single word. Namely in those words' learners should draw a picture which conveys the word meaningfully. The researchers did not limit the learners in the kind of -correct- pictures they were eager to draw for learning new words in effective manner. After 20sessions, one post-test was given to both groups. The collected data was analyzed by means of Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS).

### **Results**

For the sake of collecting data, statistical population was set and treatment was implemented on the experimental group. Then scores were calculated, and the results were analyzed. In order to determine if there is any change in the

results of each group, a paired t-test was used. For the control group as it is shown is in table 1, the mean in pre-test was 12.12 and in post-test was 12.24 respectively.

Table 1 Paired Samples Statistics for the control group

	Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pre-test picture	12.1200	30	1.93226	.38666
Post-test control	12.2400	30	1.72888	.34884

Standard deviation Was 1.93 in pre-test and 1.72 in post-test. SD means a measure of dispersion; According to table 2, correlation coefficient between pre-test and post-test of control group was calculated and the result was 0.846, according to level of significance that is 0.000 and is smaller than 0.05 there is meaningful correlation between scores in pre-test and post-test in control group.

Table 2 Paired Samples Correlations of control group

	N	Correlation	Sig.
Pre- test control & Post -test control	30	.846	.000

According to table 4.3 the difference of two means in control group is -0.12 and standard deviation is 1.06 standard error of mean is 0.22 (standard deviation of sample means). Lower confidence interval is -0.55 and upper confidence interval is 0.31 and t value is -0.569 and degree of freedom is 29 and level of significance was calculated as 0.578. According to values that were calculated and confidence interval which does not include zero there is no significant difference between the scores of pre-test and post-test in control group so, as a result the traditional instruction was not successful in vocabulary teaching, the  $PV > 0.05$  proved the correctness of results.

Table 3 Paired Samples Test for control group

Paired Differences						t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	Lower	Upper				
Pre-test control								
Post-test control	-.12000	1.6355	0.22072	-5.5489	.31489	-.568	29	.578

In the experimental group, paired t-test was used for calculating the scores and comparing the results of pre-test and post-test, in order to decide on the effectiveness of treatment (table 4). As it is shown in table 4 the mean of pre-test is 12.20 with the standard deviation of 2.23 and mean the of post-test is 17 with standard deviation of 2.59.

Table 4 Paired Samples Statistics for experimental group

	Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pretest <i>experimental</i>	12.2000	30	2.24506	.44721
Posttest <i>experimental</i>	17.0000	30	2.60804	.51962

According to table 5, correlation coefficient between pre and post-test was calculated as 0.532 in regard to the level of significance which is 0.006 and is lower than 0.05 so there is meaningful correlation between the scores in the pre-test and post-tests.

Table 5 Paired Samples Correlations for experimental group

	N	Correlation	Sig.
Pre-test <i>experimental</i> & Posttest <i>experimental</i>	30	.532	.006

As reported in table 6, the distance of means of the pre-test and post-test in experimental group is -4.8 and standard deviation is 2.37 and standard error of mean is 0.46, lower bound of confidence interval is -5.78 and upper bound of it, is -3.82. The t value is -10.15 with degree of freedom 29 and level of significance is 0.000. Due to the confidence interval, there is meaningful difference between pre-test and post-test for the experimental group. The null hypothesis has been rejected and it is proved that experimental drawing picture improved the vocabulary learning. When  $PV > 0.05$  result is not meaningful  $0.05 > PV > 0.01$  means significant and  $0.01 > PV$  means very significant).

Table 6 Paired Samples Test for non – control group

	Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	Lower	Upper			
Pre-test non-control	-1.2000	2.37281	0.22072	.46877	-5.78524	-10.155	29	.000
Post-test non-control								

Also based on Leven test for equality of variances in the table 7 sig (2. tailed) for both groups is 0.884 which means, there is no significant difference in means of both groups in pre-tests and confidence interval of the difference can prove the results. According to table 8, and based on Leven test, there is significant difference in the means of both groups in post-tests 0.000. The means of the experimental group were improved so much, and the difference of post-tests was meaningful, Null hypothesis was rejected thus the role of the drawing picture (experimental) in vocabulary learning can be supported.

Table 7 Independent Samples Test

		Levene's Test Equality of Variances							95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig.(2- tailed)	Mean Differences	Std Error Differences	Lower	Upper
Pretest	Equal variances Assumed	0.608	.438	-1.37	58	.884	-.08000	.57251	-	1.1114
				-1.37	47.083	.884	-.08000	.57251	-	1.1124
	Equal variances not Assumed								-	1.2613
Posttest	Equal variances Assumed	1.116	.297	-	58	.000	-4.76000	.62525	-	-
				7.611	41.609	.000	-4.76000	.62525	-	3.50124
	Equal variances not Assumed			-					-	-
				7.611					6.0189	3.49734

## Discussion

The findings of the current study are in line with the previous findings of the processing studies (Chen, 1990; Chen & Leung, 1989) which compared the efficacy of pictures to L1 words in provoking L2 vocabulary items without the mediation of instruction. In these studies children performed better in providing L2 vocabulary items for pictures than for L1 words in terms of retrieval time and correctness. The findings are also in agreement with those of Shoari & Davatgari Asl (2015) who reported strong effectiveness of the pictures in vocabulary learning. But the finding of the present study doesn't provide support for those of which didn't report any positive effect for pictures and their effect on vocabulary learning (e.g. Saunders and Solman, 1984).

## Limitations and suggestion

The most serious limitation of the current study is that the number of the learners is not enough. second point is the gender of them (all female) thus further studies on male learners also required. The next point is the level of the subjects (only elementary), other studies should also examine the effectiveness of the drawing pictures on levels other than elementary. Based on the findings of the study it is suggested that, teachers are to encourage young learners to learn new words through pictures. It is safe to claim that pictures are really effective tools of teaching since create a peaceful and joyful environment for learners. Since young learners love colorful pictures and drawing them, they learned successfully and happily. When they draw picture this help to keep the meanings in their minds.

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