THE SIGNIFICANCE OF VOCABULARY INSTRUCTION IN LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY: A SYNTHESIS OF APPROACHES WITHIN CHINA'S EDUCATIONAL FRAMEWORK.

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ABSTRACT

In this study, the vocabulary learning strategies (VLSs) utilised by students who are learning English as a foreign language (EFL) were investigated. Through the completion of a VLSs questionnaire, a total of 71 English majors from a Chinese institution took part in this research project. A wide range of educational levels, from undergraduate to graduate, were represented among the students. According to the findings of the study, students frequently employed strategies that involved cognitive and determination. Using visual and textual repetition, practicing spelling and sound, taking notes with a focus on meaning, memorising fixed phrases and sentences, using bilingual dictionaries, making educated guesses about the meanings of words, and learning Chinese equivalents were all strategies that they employed. In addition, students learnt techniques for engaging in self-talk in order to assist them in overcoming the anxiety that is associated with learning a new language. Metacognitive and social/affective methods, on the other hand, were not exploited to their full potential. Additionally, a smaller number of people relied on memory tricks such as word associations or grammatical patterns. Those students who had completed greater levels of education displayed more pronounced indicators of vocabulary expansion and word association acquisition. As a result, the amount of learning maturity of the students had an impact on the variable learning systems that they selected. It is the responsibility of English teachers to steer their pupils in the proper path by providing them with a plan of action and encouraging the learning of new vocabulary through activities such as group projects and classroom discussions. The researcher's vocabulary can be expanded by reading a lot and reading slowly on the side. This is another piece of advice that The Researcher should take.

Keywords: Importance of Vocabulary, Teaching and Learning, Language Skills and China's Academic Methodologies.

INTRODUCTION

Learning a second language requires students to expand their vocabulary, which is synonymous with learning new words. There are many diverse items that make up a

person's vocabulary. Never forget these three points. Therefore, understanding the meaning, form, and application of a word is made possible by knowing the term. The many components, such as spelling and sound, that make up a word from its shape. In order to understand a word's meaning, one must make associations with its usage, which encompasses the term's grammatical form and any limitations on its application. When learning English, memorisation is not enough since pupils rarely use the words they memorise in actual contexts or for real-life tasks. Acquiring new vocabulary during an EFL class could be challenging. It would appear that many English as a Foreign Language (EFL) program do not use vocabulary acquisition methods but instead rely on students to independently learn new words. Problems like these with picking up new vocabulary words need fixing. Given the importance of VLSs for efficient vocabulary acquisition and strategy training, studies examining EFL students' use of these tools are warranted. The results have significant ramifications for how educators could use classroom instruction to increase kids' vocabularies (Krashen, 2021). To communicate effectively, one must have a deep understanding of the language and an extensive vocabulary. Vocabulary instruction holds paramount importance within the context of language instruction, especially in China. Students' proficiency in Mandarin and other languages, especially English, is becoming increasingly important as the world scene is constantly evolving. Reason being, fluency in English is absolutely necessary in today's globally interdependent world. Memorisation and standardised assessment have long been at the forefront of China's educational system, despite its rich tradition and diverse approach. The problem is that while these strategies work for increasing students' vocabulary, they don't give them enough opportunities to practise language in real-world settings or develop their critical thinking abilities. In recent years, there has been a movement in education towards pedagogical approaches that are more communicative and participative. The goal of these changes is to help students improve their language skills in authentic contexts while also encouraging them to participate in more meaningful activities. The primary goal of this research is to determine whether and how vocabulary training significantly improves language competence. Specifically, the research will analyse the several approaches used by various Chinese educational systems. The motivating factor for this research is the search for effective techniques to facilitate holistic language acquisition. In order to accomplish this, The Researcher will evaluate the relative merits of more conventional and more progressive educational approaches. The significance of vocabulary training in preparing students for the demands of global communication should be recognised in order to design more effective teaching techniques (Abdolrezapour & Ghanbari, 2021).

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Along the Chinese shore, researchers may meet people who speak any one of seven official dialects, among many others. Mandarin Chinese, Cantonese, Hakka, Amoy, Foochow, Wenchow, and Shanghainese are the seven major variations of the

language. Among them, the mandarin is the largest. Due to the significant differences between the two languages, native Mandarin speakers will find it challenging to comprehend speakers of Cantonese or any of the other southern dialects. The written form of Chinese is well-known and used all across the world, even though there are many different dialects of the language. Mandarin Chinese as a foreign language has benefited greatly from the rapid increase in the number of American students interested in studying the language, according to data from enrolments in languages other than. One important reason for this is the increasing influence of China in global politics and the economy. Take 1990 as an example; 412 schools offered Chinese language classes. In 2013, there was an increase of 866 institutions offering these majors. When it opened in 1960, there were just 679 students enrolled. The number of students enrolling in Chinese language programs continues to rise annually (Birgisdottir et al., 2020).

There were 61,055 students enrolled as of the end of 2013. Research on effective strategies for expanding one's Chinese vocabulary is more important than ever before as the number of American students participating in CFL programs continues to rise. This is so because Chinese has so many unique phonological and orthographic qualities that might make studying English a challenge for some individuals. While Chinese does use an alphabetic writing system, the majority of the language is logographic. This language employs a different method than phonetic languages such as English, where each letter generally represents a phoneme. To reiterate what Sun demonstrated in 2006, this language uses phonemes, the building blocks of individual words, to convey meaning at the syllable level. One must become an expert at manipulating the shape (character), sound (phonetics), and meaning (in Chinese) of individual words in order to achieve fluency in written and spoken Chinese (Tian et al., 2022). A word in Chinese is usually one or more characters long. A character's development goes through three distinct stages: the stroke, extreme, and personality phases. There is more than one way to transform a stroke, the smallest unit of character, into a radical (Cadima et al., 2019). When combined with other radicals, they have the potential to produce a broad variety of characteristics. The orthographical depth of the Chinese language means that the written form of characters does not always correspond to their aural representation. The widespread belief that Chinese is inherently different from English adds insult to injury. Pronouncing words accurately based on their spelling is a natural skill for many students of English as a second language. The phonetic representations of many characters are spoken differently nowadays, even though certain Chinese letters have phonetic components that explain how to say them. The fact that numerous separate varieties of Chinese exist explains this phenomenon. When it comes to phonetics, native English speakers have a tough time understanding how the Chinese language uses tones. One of the five tones used in spoken Chinese is neutral. These tones transmit different messages (Fan, 2020).

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

It is the purpose of this research to get a deeper comprehension of the significance of vocabulary in the process of attaining fluency in a target language, taking into consideration the various educational environments that exist in China. Increasing students' vocabulary in relation to their target language competency is the overarching objective of this study, which aims to evaluate the effectiveness of various ways for extending students' vocabulary. Discovering effective methods for language acquisition is the overarching objective of this project, which will be accomplished by investigating the ways in which various instructional approaches influence the expansion of students' vocabulary. From the time-honoured approach of rote memorisation to more contemporary and interactive alternatives, these strategies cover the entire spectrum of learning opportunities. This project intends to improve vocabulary teaching methods that develop comprehensive language competency in order to better equip students to communicate in today's society, which is becoming increasingly globalised.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Methods and approaches used in research on language learning techniques and strategies for vocabulary acquisition are quite similar. Why? Increasing one's vocabulary is a common goal of research on second language acquisition. This section will explore (a) the researchers' approach to categorising language-learning tactics, (b) why it's important to examine these tactics through the lens of second-language acquisition theories, and (c) the conclusions drawn from the most important studies that have examined the relationship between these tactics and the proficiency level learners achieve. This section covers all of these subjects. Since the 1970s, academics have been intrigued by the wide range of individual traits observed in second language learners. By analysing the second-language acquisition technique, a single individual difference variable, a great deal of research has illuminated the process of language learning. An expression like "language-learning strategies" was first used to describe "specific actions taken by the learner to make learning easier, faster, more enjoyable, more self-directed, more effective, and more transferable to new situations." To restate, there is no one best way to use strategies for language acquisition. Different methods for learning a second language have been identified and classified. The Researcher now have a much better understanding of second language learning because to the researchers' efforts and the classification systems they proposed (González-Fernández, 2022).

Two main methods of learning are distinguished by the dichotomous classification system: direct and indirect methods. Indirect methods make up two of the six direct approaches. Verification and clarification, memorisation, guessing (sometimes called inductive inference), deductive reasoning, practice, and monitoring are the six direct approaches. Two examples of indirect methods in use are the creation of practice opportunities and the use of production strategies. Cognitive, metacognitive, and emotional and social learning were all identified by the

researchers. Preparation, prior organisation, self-observation, self-assessment, and selective attention are all instances of metacognitive strategies. Cognitive resources include the abilities to elaborate, organise, infer, summarise, deduce, visualise, and transfer. This class also includes things that are done again and again (Teng, 2021). Collaboration, clarifying enquiries, and self-talk are just a few examples of the many forms that social and emotional techniques can take. The research has shown both direct and indirect ways of learning a new language. Unlike indirect approaches, direct methods actively employ the target language. Speaking the language without any intermediaries is an example of a direct approach. In the classification system, direct methods are further subdivided into memory, cognitive, and compensating strategies; for indirect strategies, the subcategories are emotional, social, and metacognitive (González-fernández & Schmitt, 2020).

RESEARCH QUESTION

What is the effect of vocabulary instruction on language proficiency?

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

RESEARCH DESIGN

The researchers utilised SPSS version 25 for the examination of quantitative data. The utilisation of the odds ratio with a 95% confidence interval elucidated the timing and characteristics of the initial manifestation of this statistical association. Given that the p-value is below 0.05, the researchers may infer the presence of statistical significance. Descriptive analysis enables a comprehensive understanding of the data's fundamental characteristics. Quantitative approaches sometimes incorporate computational tools and mathematical, statistical, or arithmetic analyses to objectively evaluate responses to surveys, polls, or questionnaires.

SAMPLING

People who were involved in the study contributed data by filling out surveys. After determining that the study sample consisted of 1,374 individuals using the Rao-soft tool, researchers distributed 1510 questionnaires. After receiving 1456 responses, researchers culled the sample size down to 1410 after excluding 46 responses deemed incomplete.

DATA AND MEASUREMENT

In the majority of instances, researchers employed questionnaire surveys to gather their samples. Section A solicited fundamental demographic information, whilst Section B assessed the comparative significance of diverse online and offline media on a 5-point Likert scale. A range of secondary sources, including online databases, were meticulously evaluated to acquire the necessary information.
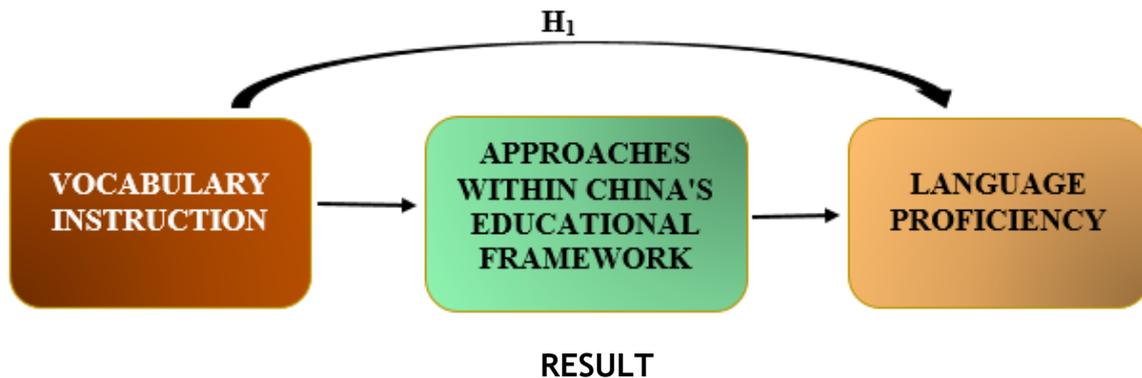
STATISTICAL SOFTWARE

The statistical analysis was conducted using SPSS 25 and MS-Excel.

STATISTICAL TOOLS

To grasp the fundamental character of the data, descriptive analysis was used. The researcher is required to analyse the data using ANOVA.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

RESULT

Factor Analysis: A common use of Factor Analysis (FA) is to identify latent variables within observable data. In the absence of definitive visual or diagnostic indicators, it is customary to employ regression coefficients for assessments. In financial analysis, models are crucial for success. The objectives of modelling are to identify flaws, intrusions, and discernible connections. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) Test is an instrument for evaluating datasets generated by diverse regression methods. The model and sample variables are confirmed to be representative. The data exhibits redundancy, as evidenced by the figures. Reduced proportions improve data comprehension. The KMO output ranges from zero to one. A KMO value ranging from 0.8 to 1 signifies a sufficient sample size. The following are the acceptable levels, as per Kaiser: The further approval conditions established by Kaiser are as follows:

A lamentable 0.050 to 0.059, subpar 0.60 to 0.69

Middle grades often range from 0.70 to 0.79.

Exhibiting a quality point score between 0.80 and 0.89.

They are astonished by the range of 0.90 to 1.00.

KMO and Bartlett's Test for Sampling Adequacy Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measurement: .874

The outcomes of Bartlett's test of sphericity are as follows: Approximately chi-square, degrees of freedom = 190, significance = 0.000

This validates the authenticity of assertions made just for sampling reasons. Researchers employed Bartlett's Test of Sphericity to determine the significance of the correlation matrices. A Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin rating of 0.874 signifies that the sample is adequate. Bartlett's sphericity test yields a p-value of 0.00. A favourable result from Bartlett's sphericity test signifies that the correlation matrix is not an identity matrix.

Table 1: KMO and Bartlett's Test.

KMO and Bartlett's Test		
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.874
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	3252.968
	df	190
	Sig.	.000

The Bartlett Test of Sphericity confirmed the overall significance of the correlation matrices. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin metric of sampling adequacy is 0.874. Researchers calculated a p-value of 0.00 using Bartlett's sphericity test. The researcher recognises the correlation matrix's invalidity, as Bartlett's sphericity test yielded a significant result.

INDEPENDENT VARIABLE

Vocabulary Instruction: The term "vocabulary instruction" refers to the various instructional strategies and methods that are utilised to assist pupils in learning and comprehending new words and the meanings of those terms. In addition to enhancing students' overall language comprehension, the program is designed to increase students' word knowledge, improve their ability to properly employ vocabulary in both oral and written communication, and promote their vocabulary use. This style of education often incorporates the direct teaching of word meanings, contextual usage, word pieces (such as prefixes and suffixes), and strategies for figuring out terms that are foreign to the student. Instruction in vocabulary can be included into tasks including reading, writing, and speaking with the intention of increasing the students' vocabulary and helping them to employ words with more precision and self-assurance in a variety of settings. Teaching vocabulary in a way that is both effective and efficient is critical for supporting literacy development and academic achievement (Kim et al., 2021).

DEPENDENT VARIABLE

Language proficiency: In addition to this, it is the language that is commonly taught in classrooms around the country. As a result of the abundance of minority languages

and regional dialects that are spoken across the country, the levels of competence could vary significantly from one place to another. Although it is possible that local dialects are more frequent in rural areas, studies have shown that metropolitan areas typically have more proficient Chinese speakers. There is a growing emphasis within the educational system on the teaching of English, which is a subject that a significant number of children begin learning in elementary school. On the other side, kids who live in towns and cities typically have greater access to resources, which provides them with an edge in the classroom when compared to their counterparts who live in rural areas. Despite all of the programs that are focused on English, one of the persisting problems is that there is an excessive emphasis placed on memorisation rather than development of real-world communication skills. There are still inequalities in language competency across a variety of populations and places, despite the fact that language competency is receiving an increasing amount of attention (Lan et al., 2020).

MEDIATING VARIABLE

Approaches in China's Educational Framework: The Ministry of Education is responsible for establishing national policies and standards, which contributes to the highly centralised nature of China's educational system. There is a tremendous emphasis placed on examinations, particularly the Gaokao, which is the determining factor in university admission. This results in severe academic pressure and a reliance on memorisation through rote learning. Despite the fact that this method has been successful in assisting Chinese children in excelling in areas such as mathematics and science, it has also given rise to concerns that it may stifle creativity. Education on moral and ethical principles is incorporated into the system, with a particular emphasis on Confucian principles and, more recently, socialism with Chinese characteristics. In addition, there has been a growing drive for the incorporation of technology, with online education becoming an increasingly significant form of education. The competitive nature of the system is reflected in the increase of private tutoring, sometimes known as the "shadow education" system. However, this rise also contributes to the worsening of inequality. Students have access to alternate educational paths through vocational education, and reforms are currently being implemented to alleviate pressure, encourage critical thinking, and solve imbalances between rural and urban areas. China is also strengthening its attention on global competitiveness, with a growing emphasis on education in other languages and international collaborations. Early childhood education is also developing, and China is becoming more committed to global competitiveness. By highlighting China's complex blend of ancient values, technological innovation, and global aspirations in education, these endeavours bring attention to China's educational system (Luo et al., 2021).

Relationship between Vocabulary Instruction and Language proficiency: The correlation between students' vocabulary knowledge and their language

competence has been the subject of an explosion of research in the last three decades. The vast majority of these research focused on students of English as a second language or as a foreign language. Research has consistently shown that students' vocabulary knowledge is significantly related to their language ability, even if the strength of this link varies across studies. There is strong evidence that students' vocabulary knowledge correlates positively with their academic performance, according to studies that have investigated this link (Qian & Lin, 2020).

Research has shown that ESL students' depth of vocabulary knowledge, rather than their vocabulary size, is a better predictor of some of the four macro language abilities, despite the broad link between vocabulary knowledge and language ability. There has been a lot of research on how a learner's vocabulary relates to their reading and listening skills, but much less on how it relates to their writing and speaking skills, likely because of the disparity between these two aspects of vocabulary. This chapter reviews the research literature in three areas, drawing on the main studies in the field: first, how different learners' vocabulary sizes and depths of knowledge predict the four macro language skills; second, how different learners' vocabulary sizes and lexical thresholds affect their ability to process written and spoken language data or handle different reading and listening levels; and third, how to measure lexical richness in learners' writing using metrics like lexical frequent In addition to identifying key research challenges and proposing desirable routes for future research, this chapter will conduct a critical evaluation of the pertinent literature (Ramsook et al., 2020).

Subsequent to the above debate, the researcher posited the following hypothesis, which aims to analyse the correlation between Vocabulary Instruction and Language proficiency.

H_{01}: **There is no significant relationship between Vocabulary Instruction and Language proficiency.**

H_1: **There is a significant relationship between Vocabulary Instruction and Language proficiency.**

Table 2: H_1 ANOVA Test.

ANOVA					
Sum					
	Sum of Squares	**df**	**Mean Square**	**F**	**Sig.**
Between Groups	39588.620	412	5654.527	1053.769	.000
Within Groups	492.770	997	5.366		
Total	40081.390	1409			

This investigation will produce substantial results. The F statistic is 1035.059, indicating significance with a p-value of .000, which is below the .05 alpha threshold.

The hypothesis "**H₁: There is a significant relationship between Vocabulary Instruction and Language proficiency.**" The alternative hypothesis is validated, whereas the null hypothesis is rejected.

DISCUSSION

This is in line with what the researchers discovered; they discovered that students in China utilised a wide variety of VLSs. As a result, it seems that VLSs are well-received by Chinese EFL students. The majority of Chinese students used mechanical approaches, but they attempted to apply a variety of VLSs. The implication of this finding is that Chinese students preferred memorisation over other forms of language acquisition. More precisely, when it came to learning new words, written and oral repetition were the two most popular methods employed by Chinese EFL students. Consistent with earlier studies, this one found that Chinese EFL learners were more likely to repeat words. Beyond that, most of the Chinese EFL students who participated in this study committed fixed collocations and phrases to memory and learnt new words by searching up their Chinese equivalents. Dictionary and word guessing were more popular than rote-based strategies, according to the study. The results mentioned earlier are contradicted by this. The disparity may be due to the different study settings, but it appears that people's cultural backgrounds do affect how they use VLSs. For this study, the majority of students used dictionaries or attempted to infer definitions from context. That EFL students frequently used dictionaries and educated assumptions to acquire new words is supported by this and previous study. Bilingual dictionaries were more popular than monolingual ones, and students mostly utilised them to verify the accuracy of the Chinese explanations rather than the English meanings, according to the study. Previous studies shown that pupils learnt more than just the definitions using monolingual dictionaries, therefore this finding contradicts those findings. Reason being, Chinese students in EFL classrooms tended to rely on their L1 more and less while conversing in English. These new results are a result of the updated VLSs questionnaire, which includes more questions about personalised strategies. Finally, it was shown that Chinese students related mechanical VLSs with activities like practicing, remembering, and taking notes. This study backs up their findings about the least popular VLSs: pupils do not like using flashcards and word lists. Furthermore, Chinese students view them as a waste of time, therefore they don't utilise them much either. The outcome backs up Liu's suspicions: pupils favoured memorisation of example phrases over actively learning new words through sentence buildup. Similarly, students in this study did not employ metacognitive strategies. This evidence supports the view that students of English as a foreign language rarely challenge themselves. In addition, the results of this study corroborate those of Wang and Ma, who had previously discovered that Chinese EFL students did not like using social strategies like group activities or seeking for help. The increased number of strategy items in the VLSs questionnaire gives fresh results that differ from past research. In particular, students' utilisation of emotional strategies and memory approaches, such as the

keyword approach and grouping and association, was reduced as a result of the learning environment and inspiration.

CONCLUSION

Finding out how students in a rigorous Chinese language program increased their vocabulary and how it related to their overall performance in the program was the driving force for this study. Assessments of auditory and textual comprehension served as endpoints. Because of orthographic differences, English speakers learning Chinese have had to modify their learning methods and use tactics unique to the Chinese language in order to overcome the issue of memorisation of a huge number of characters. This view is supported by the fact that participants frequently proposed the use of orthographic knowledge-based processes. Students' orthographic knowledge-based techniques in this course mostly centre around the visual qualities of the characters. Since it was cognitively challenging to examine the appearance of such a large diversity of characters, it is probable that students were distracted from the phonetic features of the characters they were learning. Important phonological processes, such as visualising and pronouncing the character, may be underutilised; this could explain why. Because Chinese is an orthographic language without a sound-to-script relationship, an emphasis on the phonetic characteristics of Chinese characters may assist students in expanding their vocabulary more efficiently. Raises the bar for academic achievement. In class or in the reading, The Researcher must prioritise these strategies. The results show that the classroom atmosphere has a significant effect on students' choice of method. Compared to students in less demanding programs, those enrolled in this course and contributing to the research will need to employ a wider range of metacognitive skills to stay up with the dynamic nature of learning. Writing is not a part of the evaluation process. Because of this, children fail to grasp the significance of learning their ABCs. The proliferation of word-learning programs might explain, at least in part, their rising star power. This should be one's go-to resource for significantly increasing their vocabulary in Chinese.

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