

EXAMINING HOW VOCABULARY DEPTH AND SEMANTIC SET AFFECT EFL STUDENTS' WRITTEN VOCABULARY USE

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Abstract. *This study examines the impact of semantic sets and vocabulary depth on the writing performance of EFL learners. Research on the function of vocabulary depth in EFL writing is still lacking. The study's objective was to investigate how learners' comprehensive vocabulary and semantic sets aid them in selecting relevant words for writing. Seventy lower-intermediate and upper-intermediate EFL students took part. The Oxford Quick Placement Test, the Word Association Test (WAT), and writing assessments were among the tools utilized in this investigation. These instruments were used to assess students' writing abilities and vocabulary. The study focuses on how learners' ability to select relevant words is influenced by vocabulary depth and how better vocabulary use in writing tasks is supported by semantic relationships between words.*

Keywords: *english language, written speech, vocabulary depth, semantic set, semantic relations, EFL learners, word choice ability, tasks.*

ИЗУЧЕНИЕ ВЛИЯНИЯ ГЛУБИНЫ СЛОВАРНОГО ЗАПАСА И С ЕМАНТИЧЕСКОГО НАБОРА НА ИСПОЛЬЗОВАНИЕ ПИСЬМЕННОЙ ЛЕКСИКИ СТУДЕНТАМИ EFL

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***Аннотация.** Это исследование изучает влияние семантических наборов и глубины словарного запаса на письменные навыки изучающих английский как иностранный. Исследования по функции глубины словарного запаса в написании на иностранном языке все еще недостаточны. Целью исследования было выяснить, как обширный словарный запас и семантические наборы учащихся помогают им выбирать соответствующие слова для письма. В исследовании участвовали семьдесят студентов с уровнем английского языка ниже среднего и выше среднего. Оксфордский тест на быстрое размещение, тест на ассоциацию слов (WAT) и письменные задания были среди инструментов, использованных в этом исследовании. Эти инструменты использовались для оценки письменных навыков и словарного запаса студентов. Исследование сосредоточено на том, как способность учащихся выбирать релевантные слова зависит от глубины словарного запаса и как лучшее использование словарного запаса в письменных заданиях поддерживается семантическими отношениями между словами.*

***Ключевые слова:** английский язык, письменная речь, глубина словарного запаса, семантический набор, семантические отношения, учащиеся EFL, способность выбора слов, задания.*

LUG‘AT BOYLIGI CHUQURLIGI VA SEMANTIK TO‘PLAMNING EFL TALABALARINING YOZMA LEKSIKADAN FOYDALANISHIGA TA‘SIRINI O‘RGANISH

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***Annotatsiya.** Ushbu tadqiqot ingliz tilini chet tili sifatida o‘rganuvchi (EFL) o‘quvchilarning yozma nutq faoliyatida semantik to‘plamlar hamda so‘z boyligi chuqurligining ta‘sirini tahlil qiladi. EFL yozma nutqida so‘z boyligi chuqurligining*

o'rni hozirgi kunga qadar etarli darajada tadqiq etilmagan. Mazkur tadqiqotning asosiy maqsadi o'quvchilarning so'z boyligining chuqur darajadagi bilimi hamda semantik to'plamlar yozma jarayonda mos va to'g'ri so'zlarni tanlashga qanday yordam berishini aniqlashdan iborat. Tadqiqotda quyi o'rta (lower-intermediate) va yuqori o'rta (upper-intermediate) darajadagi 70 nafar EFL o'quvchilari ishtirok etgan. Tadqiqot jarayonida Oxford Quick Placement Test, Word Association Test (WAT) hamda yozma topshiriqlar asosiy tadqiqot vositalari sifatida qo'llanilgan. Ushbu vositalar orqali o'quvchilarning yozma nutq ko'nikmalari hamda so'z boyligi darajasi baholangan. Tadqiqot natijalari o'quvchilarning mos so'zlarni tanlash qobiliyatiga so'z boyligi chuqurligi qanday ta'sir ko'rsatishini, shuningdek so'zlar o'rtasidagi semantik munosabatlar yozma topshiriqlarni bajarishda so'zlardan yanada samarali foydalanishga qanday yordam berishini yoritishga qaratilgan.

Kalit so'zlar: ingliz tili, yozma nutq, so'z boyligi chuqurligi, semantik to'plam, semantik munosabat, EFL o'quvchilari, so'zlarni tanlash qobiliyati, topshiriqlar.

Vocabulary is considered as one of the most important components of language learning. Laufer (1998) referred to vocabulary as the necessary factor for comprehensible and easily-conveyed fluent messages in communication. Moreover, according to Read (2004), second language learners are aware of the fact that lack of vocabulary knowledge may hamper effective communication in the target language. The crucial role of vocabulary in language learning has stimulated researchers to address its various aspects including incidental and intentional vocabulary acquisition (Hulstijn, 2001), spoken vocabulary (Adolphs & Schmitt, 2003), written vocabulary (Albrechtsen, Haastrup, & Henriksen, 2008), specific purpose wordlists (Coxhead, 2000), classroom vocabulary (Tang & Nesi, 2003), and computer-adaptive vocabulary learning (Jones & Plass, 2002). Classifying words in a semantic set may result in a more specified vocabulary aspect that makes the results of vocabulary research more specific and meaningful. "Semantic set" refers to the relationship between different words that share a superordinate and numerous common elements in meaning (e.g. encourage, persuade, convince) (Erten & Tekin, 2008; Warring, 1997). However, words

have a “tendency to associate with a certain semantic set or sets, but the tendency often represented only a small percentage of the overall use of the word” (Nelson, 2006, p. 231). In order for a learner to decide which words in a certain context may build semantic set(s), complicated word knowledge is required. Depth of vocabulary knowledge, as contrasted with breadth of vocabulary knowledge (Haastrup & Henriksen, 2000; Read, 2000), may shed light on the process and quality of putting words in a lexically-related set. Depth of vocabulary knowledge refers to the quality-based knowledge of words and how well the learners know about different words (Read, 1993, 2000). This aspect of word knowledge mainly focuses on the idea that learners “should develop a rich and specific meaning representation as well as knowledge of the words’ formal features, syntactic functioning, collocational possibilities, register characteristics and so on” (Read, 2004, p. 155). In vocabulary literature, there have been some attempts by scholars to define learners’ word knowledge ranging from knowledge of its frequency, functional use, and its syntactic and semantic behavior (Richards, 1976); form, position, function and meaning (Nation, 1990); referential meaning, syntagmatic relationship, and semantic and morphological features (Henriksen, 1999) to semantic network models of word knowledge (Miller & Fellbaum, 1991) in which different aspects of a word come together to form a coherent whole of the full meaning of that lexical item.

Vocabulary is generally considered as the most important means through which one can convey or negotiate ideas in writing. On the other hand, writing can be a means of learning and practicing vocabulary. As Raimes (1983) maintains, the structure, idioms, and vocabulary that are taught to the language learners will be reinforced through the task of writing. However, the nature of vocabulary and writing is different. Albrechtsen, Haastrup, and Henriken (2008) point out this distinction by referring to lexical study as “declarative” and writing study as “procedural” and lexical inferencing as the interaction between the two. As for the relationship between lexical knowledge and writing skill, some scholars have attempted to link them in terms of receptive and productive vocabulary (e.g. Engber, 1995). Most of the classifications of vocabulary knowledge are based on receptive measures of vocabulary simply because measuring

productive vocabulary in writing is associated with specific difficulties. The vocabulary which learners produce is so bound to the immediate context of the writing task that it is extremely difficult to judge about the productive vocabulary of learners from a small sample of L2 compositions (Meara & Fitzpatrick, 2000). Ghadessy (1989) concluded that the difference between the compositions of primary third and primary sixth students in Singapore can be related to the use of content and function words. He further raised the question of to what extent the school syllabus is responsible for this difference. Also, as Brown and Payne (1994, cited in Muncie, 2002, p. 226) state, converting receptive vocabulary into productive vocabulary is the final stage in the process of vocabulary learning. Writing seems to be a useful language skill which can play a leading role in this regard. While writing, learners have enough time available to them in order to decide which words to use for a particular topic or to activate the less frequent but more appropriate words which till then were passive in their mental lexicon (Carson, 1997). This can be done through using bilingual dictionaries which may help learners in using sophisticated words in their writing and enhancing the quality of their texts (East, 2006). However, some other linguistic and metalinguistic factors may affect vocabulary knowledge and its use in writing (Schoonen et al., 2003).

As Nation (2001, p. 178) asserts, “vocabulary plays a significant role in the assessment of the quality of written work”. This productivity of vocabulary in writing seems to be problematic in that some students may know what words to use syntagmatically in their writing but do not know what words to use paradigmatically in relation to a particular semantic set. In this regard, depth of vocabulary knowledge may play a significant role and help them towards appropriate use of words in writing. This may be particularly true when it comes to the role of depth of vocabulary knowledge in writing performance as a productive skill, bearing in mind Read’s (2007) suggestion of including appropriateness of vocabulary use in the scoring criteria for evaluating learners’ writing performance. Also, Aitchison (1994) holds that there has been a tendency in vocabulary literature to disregard the role of depth of vocabulary in terms of semantic networking on vocabulary acquisition and proposed the need for research on the complex nature of vocabulary and semantic sets. Similarly, Henriksen (1999)

stresses that deep understanding of paradigmatic relations, as one aspect of the complex nature of words, is necessary to develop precise understanding of words and put this knowledge into productive use. In light of the above-mentioned empirical studies on depth of vocabulary knowledge and semantic sets, it can be predicted that semantic sets and depth of vocabulary knowledge can provide learners with complex vocabulary knowledge which may, in turn, influence their use of words in writing.

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