The Effect of explicit vocabulary teaching on ESP students' vocabulary acquisition - a quasi-experimental research in Vung Tau Vocational Tourism College = hiệu quả của việc dạy từ vựng một cách rõ ràng, cụ thể đối với sự tiếp nhận từ vựng của sinh viên tiếng Anh chuyên ngành - một nghiên cứu giả thực nghiệm tại trường Cao đẳng nghề du lịch Vũng Tàu. M.A. Thesis Linguistics: 60 14 10 / Nguyễn Thị Nhung ; Supervisor : PhD. Hoàng Thị Xuân Hoa

PART A: INTRODUCTION

1. Rationale

Vocabulary plays an important role in learning a foreign language, especially in learning English for Specific Purposes (ESP). Failing to acquire survival level vocabulary, the learners are unable to understand the target language.

In Vung Tau Tourism Vocational College (VTVC), English is taught as a compulsory subject together with other vocational ones. During the final course, students mainly use the ESP course book "Ready to Order". Listening and Speaking are the primary skills which are designed on a large number of vocabulary for specific purposes (Food & Beverage). However the fact that students cannot retain and use ESP words causes frustration and results in their negative attitude towards the ESP course. This fact needs a reconsideration the method of teaching vocabulary.

So far, there have been many different approaches to vocabulary teaching and learning that were proved to help students understand, retain and use words in the target language.

Howerver, Explicit vocabulary teaching is proved particularly useful for students who access ESP for the first time, they are seen as beginning students who have a limited reading vocabulary and little exposure to incidental vocabulary learning outside of school. So, a Quasi-Experimental Research was conducted on ESP vocabulary teaching in which the Explicit and Implicit Vocabulary Teaching Approaches were implemented**.**

2.Aims of the study

The research was intended to find out the effect of Explicit Vocabulary Teaching on ESP students' vocabulary acquisition.

3.**Research questions**

In order to achieve the above aim, the research was carried out to find the answer to the following research question:

To what extent does the Explicit Vocabulary Teaching help to improve ESP students' vocabulary acquisition?

The answer for the main research question was identified by answering two sub-research questions:

1. Will there be any significant difference in the vocabulary knowledge between the students who are taught vocabulary explicitly and those taught vocabulary implicitly?

2. Will there be any significant difference in the vocabulary knowledge before and after the treatment between the Explicit Vocabulary Teaching and Implicit Vocabulary Teaching?

4. Research methodology

A Quasi-Experimental Research design was conducted to gain the research's aim. Data were collected from a pre-test and a post-test.

5. Scope of the study

The study was carried out to aim at finding the effect of Explicit Vocabulary Teaching on ESP Students' Vocabulary Acquisition at VTVC.

The term "ESP Students" refers to the second-year students in Cookery Classes at Restaurant Management Department at Vung Tau Tourism Vocational College.

6. Design of the study

The minor thesis consists of three parts. Part A, the introduction, provides the rationale, aim, scope, and method of the study. Part B, the main part of the study which is comprised of 3 chapters. Chapter one "Literature review" provides the theoretical background of the study. It focuses on the second language vocabulary teaching of English for General Purposes (EGP) and English for Special Purposes (ESP). Chapter two "The study" reports the collection and analysis of the data and findings of the study. Chapter three " Results and data analysis" presents the results of the study and analysis of the collected data from the tests. Part C summarises the findings, states the limitation of the research, draws pedagogical implications and offers suggestions for further research.

PART B: DEVELOPMENT

CHAPTER 1: LITERATURE REVIEW

1.1. Vocabulary in second language learning and teaching

1.2. Definition of vocabulary

1.3.Vocabulary Teaching

1.3.1. Implicit vocabulary teaching

1.3.2. Explicit Vocabulary teaching

1.4. What about vocabulary needs to be taught

1.5. How vocabulary is to be taught

1.5.1. Presentation techniques

1.5.2. Practice and consolidation techniques

1.6. When vocabulary is to be taught

1.7. Types of vocabulary

1.7.1. Vocabulary classified in terms of morpheme

1.7.2. Vocabulary classified in terms of meaning

1.7.3. Vocabulary classified in terms of functions

1.7.4. Vocabulary classified in terms of frequency of use

1.7.5. Other classifications of vocabulary

1.8. ESP Vocabulary teaching

CHAPTER 2: THE STUDY

2.1. The current situation of the teaching and learning ESP at VTVC

- Vungtau Tourism Vocational College (VTVC) has been trained and provided the workforce to the local Tourism Industry. English for Special Purposes (ESP) has been taught to the second - year students in their fourth semester. Aware of the fact that ESP is important for students who intend to work in the Hospitality industry, the ESP courses for students at different Departments at the college were conducted.

- The main objectives of the ESP courses is helping students obtain many ESP vocabulary.

2.1.1. English for Cookery Staff

The ESP course for Cookery students aims at providing them with a certain number of vocabulary on Food and Beverage so that they can read and create recipes and explain the dishes**.**

2.1.2. The learners

The students at VTVC are aged from 18 to 21 with different levels coming from all parts of the country. Most of the students have learnt English at high school, but many of them have learnt English quite little and some others have never learnt a foreign language. This mixed ability has caused certain problems in teaching and learning English at the college. Moreover, the students are quite passive in learning. Their learning style is characterized as rote learning of vocabulary and rules. They tend to prefer written work which may be resulted from their learning habits at school. They also have a tendency of depending on the textbooks and the teachers for knowledge and do not have the habit of self-study.

2.1.3. The syllabus and materials

The overall curriculum of the College for vocational students lasts for 2 years in which the time allocation for English constitutes a part of 500 class periods. The English course is divided into stages.

The first stage is for General English which accounts for 375 class periods. Students are taught General English during the first, second and third terms in the academic year to achieve basic knowledge of English. At this stage, the major aims are to develop students' basic communicative skills. At the end of each term, students have to take a written exam which mainly focus on grammar and vocabulary.

The second stage is 125 class periods for ESP. Each class meets two 5-period times a week for the English subject. So the students have to spend three months finishing their ESP including revision parts and tests. The English teaching materials used for Cookery students is the book "Ready to Order" by Baude A., Iglesias, M., Inesta, A. (2002). The ESP course aims at providing students with a great deal of food and beverage items and developing students' communicative skills. The content of each unit is separated into different skills: Listening, Speaking, Reading, Writing and Vocabulary.

2.1.4. The teachers and their methods of ESP Vocabulary Teaching

The Management Department consists of ten subject teachers and seven language teachers. All of the language teachers (English language teachers) graduated from universities of foreign languages and two of them have Master degree in Vietnam. None of them has been trained in the English speaking countries. The teachers are not too young (aged from 30 to 39) and have quite much experience in ESP teaching.

With the course book design, the teachers at VTVC tend to apply the Implicit Teaching method in dealing with Listening and Reading sections. In ESP lessons, the main activities are asking and answering questions in context. There are no clear language activities for vocabulary learning.

2.2. Research methodology – Quasi-Experimental Design

2.2.1. Research questions

The main research question which needed to be answered was:

To what extent does the Explicit Vocabulary Teaching help to improve ESP students' vocabulary acquisition?

The research question was answered by answering these two sub-research questions:

1. Will there be any significant difference in the vocabulary knowledge between the students who are taught vocabulary explicitly and those taught vocabulary implicitly?

2. Will there be any significant difference in the vocabulary knowledge before and after the treatment between the Explicit Vocabulary Teaching and Implicit Vocabulary Teaching?

2.3. Methodology

2.3.1 Subjects of the study

Participants were 42 students majoring in Cookery in two intact classes at VTVC. They took ten-period ESP English course per week for their fourth semester so as to enhance their listening and speaking abilities of English in Hospitality. All the participants have learned English for at least three years. After having been successful in the entrance exam they are assigned into different classes randomly. At the time the research was conducted, all the participants were at the pre-intermediate level of English.

2.3.2 Methods of the study

The data of the research was collected from the pre-test and the post-test to find answers for the research questions. The data was analysed quatitatively.

2.3.3 Research design

In this paper, the quantitative approach was followed strictly in order to gather the data for the research questions. The quasi-experimental research was chosen and carefully constructed so that the variables under investigation could be controlled and manipulated.

There are two groups in the quasi-experimental design: an experimental group and a control group. The data are collected at two points in time (before and after the treatment).

2.3.3.1. Pre-test

To find out whether all the participants were at the similar level of vocabulary knowledge before the study in order to obtain the reliability for the research, a pre-test was conducted. The test consisted of 4 parts: Multiple choice, Matching exercise, Odd one out and Cloze-test. The items in the tests were based on the GE course book that students had just studied with.

2.3.3.2. Post-test

After 6 week of the treatment, to compare the two groups' knowledge of the previously learned vocabulary after placing the application of the implicit and explicit vocabulary teaching methods on the two groups, a post vocabulary test consisting of 40 questions testing the previously learnt vocabulary items was administered to the 42 participants to collect quantitative data.

2.4. Data collection procedure

The procedures of the study were done through the following steps:

Two intact classes were assigned to the experimental group which received the Explicit Vocabulary Teaching and the control group receiving the Implicit Vocabulary Teaching. The control group was instructed by the researcher's colleague who has the same considerable concern about how to teach ESP vocabulary effectively, and the experimental group was instructed by the researcher. Before the treatment, all the participants received a vocabulary pre-test to evaluate their vocabulary knowledge before the training. During the treatment, the experimental group received the Explicit Vocabulary Teaching, while the control group was instructed under the Implicit Vocabulary Teaching.

In each unit, as usual, students in the control group would be provided with vocabulary items through the usual method at VTVC, Implicit Vocabulary Teaching. The teacher instructed them to finish the vocabulary tasks in the contexts.

For the students in experimental group, the same vocabulary items were taught, however through an explicit approach. The experimental group received explicit instruction on learning new words through some activities namely: Mind-mapping, English definitions, Word lists, Guessing the meaning, Matching exercise, and Finding Vietnamese equivalents.

The ESP course for Cookery students lasts three months, teachers and students have to deal with a twelve-unit course book. However, due to time constraint and other issues, the research was just conducted in half a course, in one month and a half, so the experimental students had this "treatment" during six units in this time. Each unit consisting 4 skills, Reading, Writing, Listening and Speaking, was taught within 10 periods of 45 minutes. However, the research only focused on comparing the effect of two vocabulary teaching methods (implicit and explicit) which were done through the reading passages in the textbook.

On the last day of the research, both of the groups which were taught vocabulary in different vocabulary approaches from different instructors for 6 weeks, were asked to take an immediate vocabulary knowledge recall posttest consisting of the 40 English words previously studied which then would be rated by a language teacher to measure their learning outcomes. The result of the test was also saved for data analysis of the research.

2.5. Data analysis

Data collected from the students' pre-test and post-test were used to find out the answers for the research questions. The research used descriptive data analysis and experimental data analysis.

2.5.1. Descriptive data analysis

Mean ($\bar{x}$) and standard deviation (**S.D.**) were used to check the effect of the treatment..

2.5.2. Experimental data analysis

The t-test is used to compare the means of two groups, which helps determine how confident the researcher can be that the differences found between two groups (experimental and control) as a result of a treatment are not due to chance.

CHAPTER 3: RESULTS AND DATA ANALYSIS

This chapter analysed the collected data from the pre-test and post-test to find the answers for the research questions.

3.1. Students' performance in vocabulary

The students' vocabulary scores in the pre-test and post-test of the control and experimental groups are presented separately. Then, a t-test is employed to find out whether the difference in the mean scores of the two groups is statistically significant.

3.1.1. Students' performance before the treatment.

The data collected from the pre-test was analyzed and it showed that Control Group and Experimental Group are quite similar in the mean (Control Group is 6.62, Experimental Group is 6.67), this means both groups have nearly the same proficiency.

3.1.2. Distribution of the pre-test scores

The data shows that the distribution of grades in both groups before the treatment has the same bands.

The distribution of grades in both groups after the treatment has completely different bands.

It appears that the distribution of separate scores in each group before and after the treatment of Explicit method is somehow distinctive. Therefore, it is necessary to calculate the mean scores of both groups to see if there is any difference which is then compared by a t-test so as to prove whether the difference is statistically significant.

3.1.3. Comparison of mean scores

On average, participants in the control group achieved higher scores in the post-test ($\bar{x}$ =

6.71, *S.D* = 1.102) than in the pre-test ($\bar{x}$ = 6.62, *S.D* = 1.161). However, the variance was

not significantly different (p>.05). Inferentially, learning with Implicit method was not effective in improving the students' vocabulary acquisition.

Controversy, the participants in the experimental group achieved higher scores after the

treatment ($\bar{x}$ = 7.62, *S.D.* =1.161) than before the treatment ($\bar{x}$ = 6.67, *S.D.* =1.197). The

variance was significantly different (p<.05). This result strongly supported the fact that the participants instructed through Explicit approach developed their vocabulary use after the treatment.

However, the mean score on vocabulary post-test for the experimental group was 7.62 also higher than that of 6.71 for the control group. To know whether this difference was statistically significant, an independent sample t-test was run and its result reveals that the

participants in the experimental group obtained a higher mean score ($\bar{x}$ = 7.62, *S.D.*

=1.161) than those in the control group ($\bar{x}$ =6.71, *S.D* = 1.102) in the post-test. The

variance was significantly different (*p*< .05).

With this result, it could be concluded that Explicit vocabulary teaching better assisted the students in vocabulary acquisition than Implicit one did.

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings on students' achievement

Before the treatment, the students in both groups who shared the same the same range of age (from 18 to 21), similar ratio of males and females (F: 52.4%, M: 47.6% in control group, and F: 47.6%, M: 52.4% in experimental group) had similar competence in vocabulary knowledge. Especially, the differences in means of the scores in the pre-test for

the two groups were proved to be insignificant via the t-test ($\bar{X}$ = 6.62 for control group

and $\bar{X}$ = 6.67, for experimental Group).

After the treatment of Explicit approach in teaching vocabulary, the students in the

experimental group achieved better results ($\bar{X}$ = 6.67 in the pretest and $\bar{X}$ = 7.62 in the

posttest). Clearly, their own results got really much better when they studied with Implicit

method. The control group got less result than that of the experimental group ($\bar{X}$ = 6.62 in

the pretest and $\bar{X}$ = 6.67 in the posttest). The comparison of both groups' results revealed

statistically significant difference.

PART C – CONCLUSION

1. Conclusions

The study was conducted to find out the information to answer the main research question
and its two sub-questions below:

To what extent does the Explicit Vocabulary Teaching help to improve ESP students'
vocabulary acquisition?

1. Will there be any significant difference in the vocabulary knowledge between the students who are taught vocabulary explicitly and those taught vocabulary implicitly?

2. Will there be any significant difference in the vocabulary knowledge before and after the treatment between the Explicit Vocabulary Teaching and Implicit Vocabulary Teaching?

The findings of the present study showed that in terms of students' vocabulary performance, the application of Explicit method in teaching ESP vocabulary helps students improve their vocabulary acquisition.

Specifically,

1. There is no significant difference in the vocabulary knowledge between the students who are taught vocabulary explicitly and those taught vocabulary implicitly that was reflected by comparison of pretest scores of both groups by applying statistical analysis.

2. There is a significant difference in the vocabulary knowledge between the Explicit Vocabulary Teaching and Implicit Vocabulary Teaching before and after the treatment.

2. Pedagogical implications

The pedagogical implication is that the teachers for Cookery in the context should make use of explicit vocabulary instruction in classroom teaching.

As supported by some past research and the findings of the present study, the explicit vocabulary presentation method as compared to the implicit vocabulary teaching method has more positive effects on the subjects' second language vocabulary acquisition. These effects can be explained in terms of students' performance of learnt vocabulary. It can be suggested that explicit vocabulary instruction should not be avoided but used optimally in the classroom when teaching ESP vocabulary. It is worth applying explicit method in order to draw students' attention to vocabulary learning which most students find difficult to learn. However, there are hidden worries that too much instruction may promote lazy learners as explicit vocabulary teaching may require less mental effort, so it is important to

use explicit vocabulary teaching techniques which are more student-centered in order to motivate students to learn from processes and also from using the language. With more interactive explicit instruction on vocabulary teaching, class time can be used more efficiently and effectively to facilitate overall English language acquisition.

3. Limitation of the research and some suggestions for further studies

Without some extraneous limitations, the result of the study will be more reliable. First of all, as each vocabulary lesson lasted only 45 minutes, the effects of the two teaching methods may not be very significant. Second, the sample size was not big enough and the subjects' English language proficiency was low in general. Had the subjects been more able students with higher English proficiency level, the study may have yielded different results. Third, the effectiveness of using the target language to present vocabulary, as Krashen (1988) emphasizes, depends heavily on whether the teacher is skillful enough to present explanations in the target language so that the students understand.

More importantly, it should be noted that the subjects in this study have different background and different learning style. It is impossible to find out a single method good for all students. Different students may prefer different learning approaches. Further research regarding vocabulary learning can focus on investigating the relationship between learners' style and different vocabulary learning methods.

For example, is the explicit vocabulary presentation method better for low-achievers? Is the implicit vocabulary learning method better for autonomous learners? Moreover, this study does suggest that the detailed study of how effective the explicit and implicit vocabulary teaching methods are in VTVC context in terms of learners' vocabulary growth, and how they can be used in complementary ways, is a promising line of inquiry for investigating vocabulary acquisition.