

A Comparison of Contextual Vocabulary Instruction with Digitized Spaced Vocabulary Learning Through a Quasi-Experimental Design

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Abstract

The effectiveness of contextualized vocabulary instruction over decontextualized vocabulary learning is mostly taken for granted. This study aims to compare these two practices in a foreign language learning setting through a quasi-experimental research design. To this end, two groups of ELF learners (N= 30) at a state university in Turkey were selected for the study; language proficiency levels of the participants varied from A2 to B1. The seven-week intervention process included 110 vocabulary items as the learning outcomes for both groups. At the beginning of the intervention, two pretests were administered to the groups, one of which tested rote recall and the other tested contextual application of the target words. The experimental group studied the target vocabulary items through digitized spaced learning by using an online platform and with minimal instruction while the control group studied them in meaningful contexts through a set of reading materials in an instructional setting. After the intervention, the same tests were readministered to the groups as the posttest. A statistical test of covariance (ANCOVA) was used to see the differences between the two groups. The results indicated no statistically significant difference between the groups in terms of rote recall or contextual application of the target words.

Keywords: foreign language, vocabulary instruction, digital learning, rote learning, spaced learning